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# The Sexual Identity Development of Gay Men in China

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Stephen Pijanowski

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

The Sexual Identity Development of Gay Men in China

by

Stephen Pijanowski

MAS, Roosevelt University, 2009

BA, Northeastern Illinois University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Psychology

Walden University

May 2018

Abstract

Limited research describes the impact of ethnic groups and mores, especially those of Asian ethnicities, on the development of a global queering theory of sexual-identity development. The purpose of this grounded-theory study was to investigate the sexual-identity development of homosexuals in a non-Western collectivist culture and the extent of influence Western gay expatriates have on Chinese gay males' sexual-identity development. Five identity-development models served as the theoretical foundations of this study: Cass, Troiden, McCarn and Fassinger, D'Augelli, Gock, and the conceptual theory of global queering. NVivo aided in data organization, while coding and analysis were applied to the data. Individual, Skype interviews were held with 22 Chinese gay men. Participants explained how Western influence changed and was adapted to cultural norms even when no similarities emerged in the combining cultures. This research increases understanding of collectivist cultures and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities embedded in them. Understanding can create positive social change affecting the coming-out process, cultural diffusion, and same-sex couples in collectivist cultures. This study may spur a call for additional research into LGBT communities globally on sexual-identity development, particularly in relation to race and culture.

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# Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Phyllis Pijanowski, for showing me life is what you make of it. I would also like to send my gratitude to Ed Kappus, the father and conscious I needed in life and showing me the path and value of education. Alexandra Billings and Chrisanne Blankenship- Billings for being a divine and spirit guides in my life, without whom I would not be here today. My friends Rachael Smith, Elea Crowther Nielsen, and Kirsten Olsen for always believing in me even when I did not believe in myself.  Lastly, Dr. John Astin for his help and guidance throughout the process.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this grounded-theory study, I investigated the sexual-identity development of homosexuals in a non-Western collectivist culture, discerning how Western culture may have influenced this development. Although previous scholars examined sexual-identity development, limited research describes the impact of ethnic groups and mores, especially those of Asian ethnicities, on the development of a global queering theory of sexual-identity development. By using the experiences of mainland Chinese gay men, I added this aspect of sexual-identity development to the extant literature.

## Background

In this study, I examined the extent of influence that Western gay expatriates have on Chinese gay males' sexual-identity development. This influence can be seen in disclosure, behaviors, or changing attitudes toward homosexuality. Researchers have conducted many studies on sexual-identity development. However, limited research describes sexual-identity development in collectivist cultures or in Asian countries. I found no quantitative studies. Many scholars explored sexual-identity development from a Western viewpoint, limiting cultural diversity in this exploration. Other researchers tried to adapt Western sexual-identity theory to non-Western cultures with limited success, due to differences in ethnic groups, like the Chinese. In this study, I attempted to fill the gap in this research area by investigating perceptions of Chinese gay men in mainland China.

## Problem Statement

Homosexuality issues have become more visible over the last decade. As the most populous country in the world, it is likely that China also has the largest gay and lesbian

community in the world (Neilands, Steward, & Choi, 2008). Basic rights relating to housing, education, employment, health care, social status in the family or community, or becoming a target of discrimination are issues gays and lesbians face in China, owing to the traditional collectivist cultural values still prevalent in that country (Neilands et al., 2008). These values, along with other obstacles, have created a unique gay and lesbian community in China. Legislators removed the criminalization of homosexual acts from the Chinese criminal code under hooliganism in 1997 (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). Homosexuality was finally dropped as a psychological condition in China in 2001 (Neilands et al., 2008). However, homosexuality challenges aspects of collectivist culture, which has led many in China to continue to see homosexuality as an illness.

In China, Confucian beliefs are the foundation for duty to parents and a person's family, particularly for men. A son caring for parents is a long-standing value espoused by collectivist cultures. A person does not develop an individual identity without first representing the family (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). Asian families build ties to the community based on respect and "face." Every member of the family has a duty to keep face intact. Dignity, self-esteem, and the public persona (face) require high levels of maintenance (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). Shame or negative actions by an individual are seen as threats to the wellbeing of the entire family unit. The individual's wellbeing is secondary in importance.

A gay man is challenged in navigating culture and maintaining the family public persona while often facing social disapproval of his homosexuality (Zheng, Lippa, & Zheng, 2011). Social and cultural stressors for gay men create higher levels of anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, and general neuroticism (Zheng et al., 2011). However,

questions remain regarding the extent to which these stressors may be lessened or exacerbated by Asian gay men's exposure to Western culture.

Asians in collectivist cultures in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community try not to bring attention to themselves as individuals; however, they are part of larger groups. People prefer harmony and simplicity over conflict. Asian LGBT individuals attempt to maintain harmonious relationships. These same individuals do not want to bring shame or attention to themselves and their families. Traditional values for many Asians identifying as gay cause them to lead dual lives or to limit relationship contact to their family and the gay and lesbian community. Mao, McCormick, and Van De Ven (2002) noted that individuals in similar cultures, like Asian collectivist cultures (China and Thailand), share common experiences in sexual-identity development. In each ethnic group, society accepts sexual identities with societal culturally specific behaviors (i.e., Chinese lack acceptance of transgender sexual identity whereas in Thailand, transgender individuals are embraced and are active members of the community).

To maintain cultural identity first, many gay Asians struggle with their sexual identity and are often hesitant to "come out" (Mao et al., 2002). Disclosure of homosexual identity goes against the collectivist view that emphasizes group identification first, often devaluing individual differences. Despite limited overt homophobia directed toward gay Chinese nationals, they continue to face a lack of acceptance societally. Culture, ethnicity, religion, and other factors intersect sexual identities. In China, sexual identities tend to be less visible than the collectivist culture given precedence, which emphasizes family or group identity. Many Asian gay and

lesbian community members lack a positive social identity. Therefore, a need persists to consider gay men in Asian cultures and explore the extent of Western influences among these groups.

## Purpose of the Study

In this dissertation, I addressed an underresearched area of cultural diffusion on Chinese gay men (Mao et al., 2002). The purpose of this study was to describe the extent to which the sexual identities of gay male Chinese nationals have been influenced by exposure to Western culture. The results of this study provide insight into the influence that increasing numbers of gay Western expatriates are having on global queering and diffusion of a Westcentric gay identity. Specifically this study discerned what influence Western gay expatriates have on Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development. Researchers can use the findings from this study to seek a better understanding of Western cultural influences on collectivist gay and lesbian communities.

## Research Questions

I used the research questions to examine components of mainland Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development. The use of a grounded-theory study provided a basis to build a theory explaining non-Western cultural processes, experiences, and influences on sexual-identity development. I hope this knowledge will add to the models of homosexual-identity development in ethnicity, specifically in collectivist cultures. The research questions follow:

RQ1. Has the sexual-identity development of gay male Chinese nationals been influenced by exposure to Western culture?

RQ2. To what extent has living in China's collectivist culture impacted Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development?

RQ3. How has exposure to Western gay culture affected the sexual interactions (personal, social, familial) of Chinese gay men?

## Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for the Study

The central framework for the study was the tension between collectivist and individualistic cultural values and how these may influence the sexual-identity development of gay men living in a country where this tension is prevalent. In contrast to collectivist cultures that emphasize group identity and goals, individualist cultures stress the importance of the individual's goals and identity (Mao et al., 2002). Five identity-development models formed the theoretical foundations of this study: Cass (1979), Troiden (1989), McCarn and Fassinger (1996), D'Augelli (1997), and Gock (1992).

Cass (1979) developed the first homosexual-identity-development model. The model built on Cass's clinical work with homosexuals. Cass believed homosexuals would pass through six stages on their sexual-identity-development journey, ending in acceptance. I used this model in this study because it was the original identity-development model created to explain homosexual-identity development. Troiden (1989) created a 4-stage homosexual-identity-development model. Troiden showed the starting point for sexual-identity development began with certain childhood behaviors and ended when a person committed to being homosexual. I included these two models because they were developed around the same time; but, they approached the theoretical construct from a different perspective and drew different conclusions regarding homosexual-identity development.

Gock (1992) focused on Asian Pacific individuals and homosexual-identity development. Gock introduced the idea that people adapt their attitudes and lifestyle changes into sexual-identity development. An individual alters behavior and adopts a different identity to accommodate various social situations. I used this model in this study because it is the first model to look at a group of Asians. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) created a homosexual model that was more ethnically inclusive. McCarn and Fassinger replaced the word *stage* with *phase*, but also identified a 4-step model. These researchers developed parallels between homosexual- and ethnic-identity development in a framework of oppressed group dynamics. I used this model because it incorporates ethnicity into a homosexual-identity-development model. D'Augelli (1997) took a different approach to homosexual-identity development by connecting social constructs to sexual-identity development. D'Augelli showed that the processes of sexual identity development are fluid and changing as a person ages. I explain these models in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Chinese gay men must choose between dual cultural perspectives. One choice emphasizes traditional collectivist values and staying loyal and obedient to the family. The other choice demands open acknowledgement of a homosexual lifestyle, one more in line with the individual cultural focus found in Western countries. I introduce this concept of dual identities in detail in Chapter 2.

The last conceptual theory used in this study was the idea of global queering. Global queering became a popular term during the gay "roaring 1990s" in Asia. The 1990s led to the expansion of Asian economies and increased Western business activity in Asia. This expansion resulted in more expatriates working in Asia, which allowed for

increased cross-cultural interaction. In the homosexual community, Asian nationals looked to Western expatriates as protector-providers (Altman, 1997). As a result of Western capitalism and globalization, indigenous sex and gender practices are changing such that they more closely resemble Western concepts of gay and lesbian identities. I explain this concept in detail in Chapter 2.

## Nature of the Study

This study used a qualitative, grounded-theory approach. I used grounded theory to develop an emerging theory regarding influences Western gay expatriates are having on Chinese gay men. I examined whether the influence in the collectivist homosexual Chinese culture from individualist homosexual Western expatriates was similar to the findings of Mao et al. (2002), who examined Asian gay men's experiences in Sydney, Australia. In this qualitative analysis, I identified the nature and extent of influence that homosexual expatriates have on gay male Chinese Nationals.

I recruited gay male participants from Shanghai Pride and LGBT Shanghai web lists and other connections in China, focusing on two or three cities. I sent a generic e-mail, inviting people to participate in the study on the Listservs. I asked if the receiver was willing to participate or knew someone who would be willing to participate in this study. I received permission from Shanghai Pride and LGBT Shanghai upon initial contact. Using NVivo 2014 for Mac, I coded and analyzed the data.

## Definitions

I used the following terms and definitions in the study.

*Collectivist culture*: The concept of a culture where macro-, group-oriented, family, and interdependency are the focus of members in the culture (Mao et al., 2002).

*Coming out/Disclosure of sexuality*: The action of sharing a person's gay or lesbian identity, once accepted by the individual, to friends, family, coworkers, or other individuals in a person's social life (Ward & Winstanley, 2005).

*Content analysis*: A research tool used to find patterns, concepts, or words in text, data, or research.

*Cultural norm*: A pattern of behavior in a group. These behaviors are learned from socialization among family, friends, and educators. The culture of the group is visible in values, attitudes, and beliefs in the culture-specific group (Lynch, n.d.).

*Dual identity*: Creating one or more identities such that shifts between each identity, such as race and sexuality, change and become compartmentalized according to the social context (Operario, Han, & Choi, 2008).

*Global queering*: The concept that queerness is global; that advertising, the arts, media, the Internet, politics, globalization and economics, and discourses on human rights in emerging democracies affect homosexuality. Global queering is the idea that all homosexuals should share the same experiences of their sexual identity in any culture. (Jackson, 2009).

*Homosexual-identity development*: The process of a person developing, questioning, and eventually acquiring an understanding of himself or herself as homosexual (Cass, 1979).

*Individualist culture*: The concept of a culture where micro-, individual-oriented, individual nature, and independence are the focus for the members of that culture (Mao et al., 2002).

*Shanghai pride*: A gay pride event in Shanghai. This is the 9th year of the week-long celebration of LGBT culture and the first large-scale gay event in mainland China (ShanghaiPRIDE, 2014).

*She-jiao-quan:* The Chinese word for the three collectivist social circles of family, friends, and coworkers.

*She-jiao-wang-luo:* The Chinese word for a person's social network consisting of three overlapping circles of interactions in collectivist culture: family, friends, and coworkers.

*Social processes*: A process through which people use culture and socialization to assist in the formation of a group, allowing for change or preservation (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

*Wellbeing*: Quality of life is based in social, economic, and psychological interactions and happiness (Veenhoven, 2008).

## Assumptions

Being an open homosexual in China still holds negative connotations. In this study, I assumed participants would be as honest and truthful as possible when discussing their personal homosexual-identity development. I assumed participants would share their personal sexual experiences. I anticipated participants would express similar experiences, but with unique life experiences and histories. I assumed that grounded-theory research methods would best allow for participants to answer the research questions.

## Scope and Delimitations

Researchers lack understanding of the nature of sexual-identity development in mainland Chinese gay men. I chose the grounded-theory method, embedded in this

research design, to highlight this unexamined and often invisible group. I developed the research design to examine Western influences on mainland Chinese gay men as they navigated their sexual-identity development and determine if these participants were creating a dual identity to assist in this navigation.

Participants were only men because the study researched gay men's sexual-identity development. Participants needed access to e-mail and spoke English or Chinese. I recruited 20 Chinese national gay men between 18 and 65 years of age who identified as gay. Chinese national gay men who had access to bars, events, restaurants, or LGBT-oriented meetings, including Shanghai Pride, and had at least one encounter or interaction with a Western gay expatriate constituted the population.

I used cluster sampling in two cities in China. This population may not represent all gay men's sexual-identity development in all of China and, thus, limited the generalizations to be drawn from this research. I hope only to create a greater understanding of how mainland Chinese gay men may made sense of their sexual-identity development during a time of change for gay and lesbian individuals in China. The goal of this study was to develop an understanding of Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development through their individual perceptions and experiences.

## Limitations

This study had several limitations. The first was size. I only interviewed 20 participants in two cities. Generalization was limited due to the small sample and may not define the total population of gay men. China is vast in size and city populations. Some cities have limited Western influences. The removal of homosexuality from the Chinese version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) is recent

(Wu, 2003). Rural Chinese often do not understand or think homosexuality constitutes normal sexual development.

The second limitation was age. Responses from participants between the ages of 18 and 65 varied as a result of significant differences in how homosexuality has been viewed historically in Chinese culture. For example, I anticipated that Chinese gay men over 40 would retain negative recollections of their homosexual experiences from their youth because homosexuality held higher levels of stigma and negativity during the Cultural Revolution.

## Significance

Collectivist cultures tend to lack knowledge of gay and lesbian communities (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). With the limited number of studies—qualitative and quantitative—this study provided information and insights into how mainland Chinese gay men navigate sexual-identity development and how Western individualist expatriates impact a collectivist culture such as China. Social-change issues will be a factor facing China in the near future. Gay Chinese nationals are seeking acceptance of their homosexuality, making homosexuality an issue for the communist party. Research in China's collectivist gay male community will assist future scholarly work aimed at better understanding cultural-influence differences in and outside of the homosexual community. Researchers have primarily focused on the less strict, less imposing, and more open areas of Asia and Southeast Asia, from Thailand to the Philippines to Malaysia. Limited research exists on the communist and more traditionally collectivist culture of China.

## Implications for Positive Social Change

Study findings may assist in creating positive social change in the current Chinese culture. Lack of understanding and misconceptions regarding homosexuality still affect parts of China. This research will increase understanding of collectivist cultures and LGBT communities embedded in them. Understanding can create positive social change affecting the coming-out process, cultural diffusion, and same-sex couples in collectivist cultures. I hope to start a call to arms for additional research into LGBT communities globally in regard to sexual-identity development, particularly in relation to race and culture.

## Summary

The limited research on LGBT communities outside of Westerncentric cultures, specifically collectivist cultures, calls for the need for research into Chinese gay male sexual-identity development. This chapter provided the foundation of the dissertation. I outlined the problem and purpose of the research, explaining the framework of homosexual-identity theories and defining terms used in the dissertation. I stated the research questions and ended the chapter with assumptions and limitations. In Chapter 2, I examine extant literature.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

Although researchers have explored LGBT communities, detailed examination of ethnic-diversity issues, in particular collectivist cultures, in the LGBT community is only now emerging. Although individualist cultures place greater importance on individual rather than group identity, membership in the group assists fulfilling individual goals (Mao et al., 2002). Collectivist cultures value group goals and identity over the individual, allowing for forfeiture of individual interests to further the collectivist vision (Mao et al., 2002). Behind the Great Wall, scholars have not examined Chinese gay men and their collectivist dual identity. These individuals face social disapproval of their homosexuality, and these social and cultural stressors contribute to higher levels of anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, and neuroticism (Zheng et al., 2011).

Confucian beliefs lay a greater burden on men for duty to parents and family. A son caring for parents is a long-standing collectivist value. Typically, a Chinese person will not exhibit individualist values without first fulfilling collectivist duties. Chinese families maintain status based on respect and public image (face), with each family member having a duty to bring honor to the family. Dignity, self-esteem, and the public persona require high levels of maintenance (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). Shame or negative actions will threaten the wellbeing of the family unit. Bringing shame to the family has repercussions because it not only affects the individual, but the family and community as well (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). The individual's wellbeing is seen as secondary in importance. A Chinese gay man is challenged to balance his family's public persona and his individual sexual-identity development.

However, questions remain regarding the extent to which these stressors may be affected (i.e., exacerbated or attenuated) by Asian gay men's exposure to Western culture. This chapter includes a discussion of literature-review search strategies, a review of key sexual-identity theories and their relevance to homosexual-identity development, a discussion of the concept of dual identities in Chinese gay men, a discussion of the history of homosexuality in China, and a consideration of why the global gay concept may not be adaptable to collectivist cultures.

## Research Strategy

The Walden University Library was the primary source for finding research articles. Google Scholar, PsycINFO, LGBT Life with Full Text, Academic Premier, and ProQuest Central were the main databases accessed to find articles. Research terms were used in various combinations until key words began to yield results. These terms were *LGBT, gay, homosexuality, gay males, cultural diffusion, cultural influence, queer theory, China, Chinese nationals, sexual identity development theories, men who have sex with men, queer, global queering, collectivist culture, individualist culture, collectivist vs. individualist, sexual identity, cross-cultural sexual identity,* and *expatriate influence.* I contacted Dr. Jackson who had researched global queering in Thailand. Questions to Dr. Jackson included what terms or combination of terms could be used in the literature research as well as a few questions on Thailand's collectivist cultures and openness to homosexuality.

Limited information existed on sexual-identity development in LGBT communities comparing collectivist and individualist cultures. Additionally, a paucity of research examined possible influences of expatriates in gay and lesbian communities.

Several journal articles cited other researchers, which led to new articles based on prior research. I assessed these articles by content analysis to find information with connections to cultural diffusion, gay men, the LGBT community, sexual identity, or collectivist versus individualist cultures.

## Theoretical Foundations

Here, I review four major sexual-identity-development theories: Cass (1979), Troiden (1989), D'Augelli (1997), and McCarn and Fassinger (1996). These four models pose homosexual-identity development as stages or phases through which people pass before reaching self-acceptance. Researchers in the West discussed the multiple identities that non-Western gay men face in Western culture. Despite evidence for the existence of these sexual-identity stages/phases across non-Western cultures, the literature on homosexual-identity development has failed to address their relevance in collectivist cultures such as China. It is this lack I intended to address in the study by suggesting the creation of a dual identity, one fitting into the Chinese collectivist culture and encompassing a gay identity.

### Cass Homosexual-Identity-Development Model

Cass (1979) first attempted research into homosexual-identity formation with a six-stage model. This model continues to be the most cited and reviewed homosexual-identity-formation model (Yarhouse, 2001). Cass created a homosexual-identity-development theory based on several years of clinical work with the homosexual community. In the first stage, identity confusion, a person is allowed to experience information about homosexuality they might find irrelevant or adopt meaning. Simply interacting with homosexual information can cause the first stage to emerge. An

individual will begin to develop different ideas or concepts between actual homosexual behaviors and questions or assumptions. This stage is typically internally experienced rather than externally expressed.

The person then moves to Stage 2, identity comparison (Cass, 1979). The recognition that a person may be homosexual is indicative of this stage. A person begins to understand that he or she is different in Stage 2. However, this stage also involves a denial or lack of acceptance regarding a person's homosexual identity. Some individuals questioning sexuality will end up being a homosexual. Cass (1979) assumed that everyone who starts to question his or her sexual identity and experiences some stage of the model will become homosexual. This assumption is questionable, however, because not all individuals become homosexual during sexual-identity development. People in Stage 2 react in three ways: excitement, nonconformity, and belonging. A person can also start to develop negative feelings, including depression.

Coming out of the denial and the emergence of acceptance represents the beginning of Stage 3 (Cass, 1979). This is the start of navigating away from a heterosexual lifestyle. The shifting away from a heterosexual toward a homosexual lifestyle may lead to greater isolation or alienation from others.

Moving into Stage 4 begins the acceptance of a person's homosexual identity (Cass, 1979). This is validation or normalizing the idea of leading a homosexual way of life, shifting to a more positive view of being homosexual. Not all homosexuals reach or pass to this stage. Cass (1979) failed to address culture when discussing the development into this fourth stage of acceptance. For instance, in countries such as Russia or Uganda,

currently, the cultural norm is imprisonment or death for proclaiming a person's homosexual identity.

Stage 5 relates to identity pride. Cass (1979) posited that, at this stage, a person becomes aware of the differences between individual acceptance and societal views of homosexuality. Cass suggested that friendship and identification with the gay subculture lead to public and private identities becoming parallel. Stage 6 creates a "them and us" mentality. A person's identity and lifestyle become comfortable, contrasted with previous incongruent identity struggles. By integrating homosexuality into all aspects of life, a person combines the public and private identities of the previous step into one positive self-image (Cass, 1979).

Until the early 1990s, research in gay and lesbian studies had limited scope in considering issues of ethnic diversity, and globally gay was often seen as a White and Western phenomenon. People in parts of the world continue to challenge the idea of homosexuality as a legitimate part of their culture or ethnicity, thereby challenging homosexual researchers to become more culturally sensitive and inclusive when finding participants. The study of identity development with gay Asian Americans had its most visible start with Chan (1989) using the Cass (1979) model. Chan proposed a dual-identity concept based in sexual identity and ethnic identity, using the Cass identity model. Chan claimed no frames of reference exist to understand Asian American homosexuality. The collection of respondents for the Chan study came from Asian community groups, some including gays and lesbians. Because the study had limited participants from the Asian gay and lesbian community, Chan decided to limit generalizations to choosing gays or lesbians over an Asian identity. Chan recruited

participants from gay- and lesbian-friendly Asian organizations. Chan's assumptions could have already been in place for some participants who might have already been navigating the dual identity of being gay and Asian in different cultural circles.

**Troiden Homosexual Identity Development Model**

Troiden (1989) employed a snowball sampling method and interviewed 150 gay men in New York and Minneapolis, gathering data subsequently used to create a four-stage homosexual-identity-development model. The sample did not reflect the ethnic or rural United States. Troiden discussed the recollection of youth behaviors to show the possible indication of being homosexual. These reflections could sway results, based on the positive or negative impact of each individual's homosexual interactions. In the Troiden and Cass (1979) models, relationships and quality of contact with other homosexuals was considered an important factor. If interactions with other homosexuals are not positive, resulting feelings of negative self-identity, depression, or despair can follow. Yarhouse (2001) discussed Stage 2 of Troiden's model in which people spend time reflecting on feelings of sexual identity, giving significance to the feelings, holding meaning for a person.

The first stage for Troiden (1989) was sensitization, which involves experiences and interactions that will later be used to evaluate the individual's homosexual-identity development. This stage begins in early adolescence when individuals begin to notice that they are different from others, do not fit in, or have gender differences and homosexual feelings that may be expressed in social, emotional, and genital circles. Troiden stated this is not homosexual identity but is part of everyone's sexual-identity development.

The shift to the second stage, dissociation and signification, involves moving away from heterosexual ideas to homosexual interactions (Troiden, 1989). Troiden's participants recalled the possibility of being homosexual, although some could not identify as such. This time period is when shame, disgust, and mental illness are still possible aspects relating to homosexuality. This period of questioning, outgrowing, or emerging as a homosexual is frequently a struggle for the individual.

Troiden's (1989) third stage is referenced as "coming out." This is the self-definition of a homosexual identity and the start of acceptance. Troiden distinguished between homosexual behaviors and homosexual identity and posited that a person must embrace homosexual identity by interacting in a gay and lesbian environment at least once a week and committing to a positive and viable homosexual lifestyle. This is a defining stage for a homosexual.

Troiden's (1989) last stage is commitment. According to Troiden, this stage involves adopting homosexuality as a way of life. Troiden described this as a shift from possessing a homosexual lifestyle to actually identifying as gay. A person's actions change to committed relationships and social, emotional, and intellectual encounters with others in the homosexual community. Troiden described this as a stage of commitment, visible as committing to a gay identification and denying the return to a heterosexual sexual identity. A person will show commitment to being gay or lesbian.

**McCarn and Fassinger's Gay- and Lesbian-Identity-Development Model**

The impetus to reexamine homosexual-identity models occurred about 15 years after the Cass (1979) and Troiden (1989) first introduced their models. HIV, ethnicity research, and cultural diversity in the LGBT communities accompanied a shift in sexual-

identity focus. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) presented a quantitative research study with 34 diverse gay male participants. The participants, according to McCarn and Fassinger, represented "educated, financially secure, and socially and politically active adult gay men" (p.63). McCarn and Fassinger started with changes to the previous models by shifting away from stages to phases through which a person would pass. The shift from stage to phase was used by McCarn and Fassinger to show greater flexibility and concentricity: each interaction can raise issues during any phase in an individual's development (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). These phases are multidirectional and can be influenced by past or future events, shifting a person ahead into the next phase or back into a previous phase. McCarn and Fassinger incorporated racial and gender identity as factors in the model design. They identified parallel paths to identity, one being internal individual sexual identity and the other, navigating and understanding group membership identity in the person's oppressed group.

The first phase of the model is awareness of feeling different or the discovery of people with similar sexual interests. Fassinger and Miller (1997) discussed the reciprocal nature of individual and group identity with differences in development based in contexts such as family, workplace, or friendships. This exposure to viewpoints other than heterosexual and sexual identities created possible confusion or bewilderment.

Exploration constituted Phase 2 for Fassinger and Miller (1997). An individual begins to explore, question, and examine same-sex relationships, and relationships with same-sex individuals increase. Although the model indicates that gay men explore sexual behaviors, lesbians might not feel the same need for sexual exploration. The individual in this phase searches for a possible place in the gay community, where this place would be,

and the role the individual would want to perform in that group. A person may adopt the attitudes and explore gaining membership in the LGBT community.

Fassinger and Miller's (1997) third phase is a deepening of commitment wherein the individual creates self-knowledge about sexual-identity choice. This can entail an acceptance of a positive self-concept. The person may display attachment to a group identity that is generally viewed as a negative minority group. The individual accepts sexual identity as personal identity.

The final stage is internalization/synthesis. Fassinger and Miller (1997) conceptualized this stage as a commitment to a gay or lesbian identity with a correlation to visualizing being a sexual minority. People enforce these actions in relationships and friendships with other gays or lesbians and show an openness to heterosexual friends. Fassinger and Miller pointed out that an individual must internalize and accept homosexual identity to share an active role in the LGBT community or other groups. A person cannot truly be gay or lesbian, in this phase, without positively choosing to whom they disclose sexual identity.

**D'Augelli Homosexual Identity Model**

D'Augelli (1997) discussed the social invisibility of homosexual-identity development. D'Augelli argued that a person can choose to develop a dual identity, keep secret, or ignore a homosexuality identity altogether. The social constructs of sexual identity have positive and negative connections to self-discovery. D'Augelli suggested that sexual identity development has interactive details over the life course, not merely a development that occurs during adolescence but one that continues into adulthood. The process is fluid, ever changing, reevaluated, navigated, and modified based on social

interactions. D'Augelli developed a six-step process with levels of identity and identity status.

The first area for homosexual identity development D'Augelli (1997) discussed was exiting heterosexuality. This is a new identity or a change from heterosexual to homosexual, transsexual, bisexual, or other sexual identity. D'Augelli believed one needs to disclose a gay or lesbian identity to another person. Although other models suggest that the concept of being different happens only during youth or adolescence, D'Augelli observed that this acknowledgement can happen at different times in life by labeling and identifying same-sex attraction.

Moving into developing a personal LGBT-identity status is the next level D'Augelli (1997) addressed. In this phase, the individual initiates contact with other LGBT individuals, learning how to be homosexual. Thoughts, feelings, and desires build socioaffectional stability. Navigating this stage presupposes an understanding of positive aspects that could affect a personal gay identity, including overcoming homophobia. Individuals tend to break down stereotypes or seek positive influences in their personal life, according to D'Augelli, when reaching this phase in sexual-identity development.

Developing homosexual social identity is the next focus of D'Augelli (1997). Happening over the life course, this is the continual growth of social identity. People seek a network to reinforce a positive affirmation during this level. This development is a changing part of identity because influences, such as dating or being in a conservative workplace, can alter the way an individual adapts to the social identity. Family is often an important factor in identity development. D'Augelli built a case for being an LGBT offspring. This can be seen in two different ways. The first is a resolving issues with a

person's family of origin. The second is creating and adopting a family of choice with individuals who support a person's homosexual identity. D'Augelli argued that it is the primary responsibility of the individual to initiate reintegration and find common ground with the family of origin.

Developing a LGBT intimacy status is the next focus of the D'Augelli (1997) model. D'Augelli discussed the complexities of LGBT relationships. Invisible relationships in the LGBT communities, views of solitary gay men, and lack of positive relationship stereotypes create psychological issues for LGBT individuals as they navigate intimacy. Individuals feel the social construction of oppression on homosexuality by witnessing the reinforcement of heterosexism in everyday life and are challenged to accept and overcome this view when developing their homosexual identity.

Entering the gay and lesbian community is the final phase of an individual's development of a homosexual identity. D'Augelli (1997) suggested this is the most difficult focus of homosexual identity. This level involves learning to navigate the social and political heterosexist constructs. Individuals can empower themselves by challenging the orthodoxy of heterosexism. A person will identify individual oppression and develop a commitment to resisting it.

## Critique

In the late 1970s and 1980s, Cass (1979) and Troiden (1989) were the first researchers to examine the homosexual-identity-development process in gay and lesbian populations. After AIDS and the cultural sensitivity of the early 1990s, Fassinger (year) and D'Augelli (1997) shifted the research to models that were more inclusive of the diversity found among gay and lesbian populations. Cass and Troiden identified

homosexual behaviors as a requirement for identity development, whereas other scholars suggested that an individual can achieve a homosexual identity without ever engaging in homosexual behaviors (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002). Cass attempted to build a model to explain homosexual identity formation, but the model is likely not adaptive to all cultures. The need for homosexual research in the 1970s allowed Cass to examined the limited and negative views of homosexuality. However, the central issue in Cass's model is the limited and ethnocentric samples used to develop it. Access to ethnic homosexuals during the development of the Cass model would have been limited due to a lack of openness in the homosexual community in the late 1970s. Cass presumed that all people started out heterosexual and shifted to a homosexual identity.

Cass (1979) and Troiden (1989) created identity models that represented individuals as being in different stages of self-actualization. The greatest numbers of self-actualized individuals lived out and open lives and had political and socially active networks. Cass and Troiden did not neglect the importance of class, gender, ethnicity, or other factors relating to sexual-identity development, but did not account for the influence of these factors in creating an open and out sexual identity. The most current theory is D'Augelli's (1997) interactive processes affecting nonheterosexual development. This process-oriented model has some advantages over the previous models. Specifically, D'Augelli recognized that sexual-identity development occurs over the entire life course. The experiences of individuals vary, showing nonsuccessional interactions in a person's sexual-identity development. D'Augelli acknowledged the social construct of homosexual identities in different contexts in an individual's development, such as class, ethnicity, gender, culture, or other factors: interrelated variables and context factors in

each individual's sexual-identity development. These interactions over the life course can happen at any point, place, or part of people's lives, allowing them to navigate their accepted homosexual identity.

This shift from a linear stage model to a circular phased process is important when addressing homosexual-identity development and the collectivist nature of this research. Parks, Hughes, and Matthews (2004) viewed development as a fluid, continuous, and evolving process. Yarhouse (2001) suggested that the shift from using the word stages to phases allowed for increased flexibleness in the formation of sexual identity, inferring stages have a linear structure whereas phases suggest a more flexible and fluid process. Linear models include some individual differences that could influence identity development, but neglect factors like age, race, ethnicity culture, age, locality, and religion, each of which may influence identity development (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002). Stage models oversimplify and deny individual experiences and differences facing homosexuals during identity development (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002). The acceptance of one theory over another is often difficult, based on individual homosexual-identity development because experiences vary to such a degree that some researchers have no empirical validation (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996).

## Asian Dual Identities

Limited studies describe the intersection of ethnic and sexual identities. Although homosexual-identity models are largely accepted, some researchers challenge these models, claiming other components of sexual-identity development like religion, culture, or economic status have not been addressed (Operario et al., 2008). No current empirical data exists on gay men living in Asia (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). Akerlund and Cheung

(2000) theorized that Eastern religious beliefs do not address homosexuality, unlike Christian-based, Western religious traditions. The Western shaming of homosexuals based on religion has not been a focus for Asian Americans. African and Latino Americans gays face discrimination, oppression, rejection from family, lack of social support, lack of community identity, and navigating the choice between cultures (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000). A comparison of Asian American gays showed higher levels of education and economic status than ethnic U.S. groups, suggesting that socioeconomic factors may play a role in sexual-identity development. Operario et al. (2008) stated that being gay was a concealed part of identity and ethnicity a more visible component. The intersection of race and sexuality forms new types of identities (Han, 2006).

Gock (1992) discussed an Asian Pacific lesbian- and gay-identity model. Gock's work built on a model developed by Morales reflecting individuals' attitudes and lifestyle changes to integrate multiple identities into their lives, such as being a female, Asian, and lesbian. An individual will adapt and alter sexual identity based on lifestyle situations. Gock argued individuals move through five states as they come to greater affirmation of their Asian identity and gay or lesbian identity. Positive feelings about people's Asian identity will affect the level of acceptance and pride they are able to feel about their gay or lesbian identity (Gock, 1992).

Gock's (2002) first state is status quo, in which individuals see themselves as similar to others. Even while experiencing subtle discrimination from the Asian and gay and lesbian community, individuals feel part of a group or community, often creating a positive experience (Gock, 1992). The next step, awareness of identities, then begins to

develop. Gay Asian men experience racial and sexual oppression (minority status) because of being gay, Asian, and male (Han, 2006). Individuals perceive a difference leading to an acknowledgement of double- or triple-minority status (Gock, 1992). This creates the sense of living in two different cultural worlds: the Asian community and the gay and lesbian community. These two worlds cannot remain in harmony forever as the dilemma of allegiance creates conflict for the individual (Operario et al., 2008). Navigating between two opposite communities forces an individual to choose one, generating internal feelings of betrayal toward one community or the other, because the communities are not in harmony for the individual (Gock, 1992).

An individual will experience the selective-allegiance stage next. Here, a person begins to feel ties to one of the two communities. The person feels the inadequacy of affiliation to one or the other community, while expressing longing to be accepted into both communities (Gock, 1992). The last state allows for a more "fluid and contingent identity" (Gock, 1992, p.250). At this time, the individual learns to navigate between both communities. Individuals alter behaviors, actions, and thoughts between groups (heterosexual or homosexual) based on situations experienced in daily life. Gock (1992) believed this is a lifelong process.

Operario et al. (2008) suggested that gay Asian men experience tension or discomfort related to their identity. Western developed nations, like the United States, Britain, and Australia, have individualist cultures, whereas Asian developing countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, and China are more collectivist in nature (Mao et al., 2002). This creates tension and internal conflict for Chinese gays who are hesitant to disclose

their homosexual identity in the collectivist-dominated culture for fear of bringing shame to the family.

Following on the Operario et al. (2008) research, Zheng et al. (2011) showed that gay men in China have higher rates of anxiety and neuroticism than gays in the United States. Zheng et al. used the social-stress hypothesis to evaluate these personality traits. This hypothesis states higher negative acceptance and social attitudes toward homosexuality contribute to higher rates of negative mental stability in individual homosexuals. Mental instability, HIV status, and disclosing a person's homosexuality are factors that could bring shame to a Chinese family. Collectivist and Confucian values affect homosexual-identity development.

Gil (1992) and McLelland (2000) posed similar ideas about what constitutes a Japanese and Chinese gay identity. Both authors discuss the balance among work, family, and choosing to expose sexual identity to others. They acknowledged a Western idea of gay in Japan and China, but homosexuality is expressed through different political, social, and cultural actions (Gil, 1992; McLelland, 2000). The collectivist nature of Chinese gay men rests on navigating dual identities: the collectivist duty to family and the individual duty to self-identity. This duty to family sometimes results in gay men marrying lesbians to please the family and keep their homosexuality secret. These actions force the homosexual couple to live far from family, usually in Beijing or Shanghai, to keep the family from visiting (Ruan & Tsai, 1988).

The greater social discrimination faced by homosexuals in collectivist cultures such as China has a more detrimental impact on mental health than in Western individualist societies. Increasing psychological distress and life disruption occur when

hiding homosexual identity for long periods of time (Neilands et al., 2008). In Chinese studies on HIV prevention, men who have sex with men (MSM) have shown a social diffidence to acknowledging their homosexual identity. MSM frequently lead double lives; they marry, are heterosexual at work and home, but have sex with other men (Neilands et al., 2008). Individuals in collectivist cultures place high value on relationships, often avoiding confrontation. Collectivist individuals are more apt to comply with and abide by social norms to prevent possible negative consequences, sanctions, or even ostracism from members of the group (Mao et al., 2002). Gil (1992) used an ethnographic approach and found that openly homosexual individuals in China felt the need for adaptive strategies to navigate collectivist cultural norms that condemn gay and lesbian identity. Negotiating the cultural stigmatization is, however, possible if one learns to adapt and view the stigmatization as inconvenient (Gil, 1992).

Coming out ("outness") in Western cultures is fundamental in sexual-identity formation. Promoting self-acceptance, self-growth, empowerment, and self-integration are positive factors benefiting from outness (Chow & Cheng, 2010). Although coming out (disclosure of homosexuality) is becoming more common in the West, Chinese gay men still display apprehension about this (Ngo, 2012). The importance of the coming-out process in individualist Western cultures allows for an often-positive development in homosexual identity; in contrast, in collectivist and Asian cultures, negative consequences often result.

Western researchers have neglected research on the importance of strong family relationships in Chinese culture (Ngo, 2012; Wang, Bih, & Brennan, 2009). Chow and Cheng (2010) were the first researchers to consider outness in mainland Chinese lesbians,

finding outness was only visible in lesbians with a strong positive lesbian identity. Varney (2001) observed that Asian American immigrants see coming out and homosexuality as a Western behavior. Many gay Asian American immigrants fear coming out or homosexual identity due to family rejection, individual consequences, and even shame to the family, leading to a crippling effect on family structure and their standing in the community (Ngo, 2012; Yang, 2008). Asians who went to a university abroad and disclosed their sexual identity were allowed to explore this identity without fear of bringing shame to family (Mayo, 2013). Upon return to their home country the same individuals faced the challenges and fear of returning to hiding their sexuality. Chinese fathers were seen as least supportive and tolerant, with high levels of negative reactions when their daughters disclosed their lesbian identity (Chow & Cheng, 2010). The gay Asian male experiences higher levels of internal distress by not performing the role of dutiful son, thereby betraying his collectivist culture (Mao et al., 2002).

Technology is allowing Chinese gay men to establish a positive online homosexual identity. Western-based gay websites are allowing Chinese gay men to communicate and discover social acceptance of a homosexual lifestyle (Ho and Tsang, 2000 Yinhai, 2001). The use of technology is also creating negativity, myths, and stereotypes in the Chinese homosexual community. With access outside of China, Chinese homosexuals are seeing gay pride, marriage equality, coming-out stories, and LGBT rights abuses in Nigeria and Russia as dominant images in a homosexual's identity. Gay and lesbians who marry each other to keep their families happy shift to a higher level of technological use and limit internal family communication to only cellphones. These individuals have created a way to keep their homosexual identification away from the

family learning their secret lives. The couple will create previously discussed responses for family, friends, and others in frequent communication to ensure that, from the outside, the couple looks like any other heterosexual couple (Fang, 2004).

## Global Gay

The idea of a sexual-identity-development model that applies universally across all cultures is untenable. Culture is an essential component of sexual-identity development. The inclusion of cultural ideals and cultural histories addresses an emerging culture-specific sexual-identity-development model. Reviewing the current theories of homosexual-identity development provides a springboard to incorporating cultural determinatives and creating a new paradigm addressing sexual-identity or dual-identity development in collectivist cultures like China. Researchers in the West often focus research on conformity to the Western standard of gay- or lesbian-identity development, which often limits studies of culture-specific expression of sexuality to be more inclusive of the general nature of sexual-identity development (Kauth, 2002). Western researchers often look at sexual identity as an individual concept, outside of societal factors. A structural inventory of sexuality would conceptualize the interrelationships among political, economic, and cultural structures, addressing local and transnational intersections of sexuality (Altman, 1997).

As the world increasingly adapts Western culture and style, the Western idea of gayness should start to be attractive to those in non-Western cultures (Altman, 1997). The questioning of the encompassing power of Western images into Asia is allowing for blending and adapting these images to force a fit into Asian culture. The variety and visibility of gay and lesbians is increasing, even in developing countries. These more

visible gays and lesbians are self-identified homosexuals, defining themselves as part of the global gay community without neglecting race or nationality (Altman, 1997). Western researchers have not accounted for the existence of homosexual identities in a culture prior to increased Western influences. Homosexual identity emergence has increased during the 20th century in the West and Asia. Researchers should not assume all sexual identities have Western beginnings, instead questioning the common processes of developing sexual identity in Asia and the West (Jackson, 2009).

Asian homosexuals assumed and adapted "import–export fluxions" creating new genders and sexualities not visible in the Western concepts of sexuality and Western systems of currency (Jackson, 2009). The intersection of local agency and foreign influence create cultural hybrid sexualities in Asian cultures. Commonalities in sexual development exist between local and international agencies, which must be sought, examined, and developed to allow for emergence of transnational homosexual identities (Jackson, 2009). Western research, despite different locations, cultures, and ethnicities, has tended to view all Asians as a singular unit (Han, 2006). In the present study, I examined the extent to which previous models of sexual-identity development are applicable to gay men living in the collectivist culture of China. To place the present study in context, a brief history of the concept of homosexuality as it has evolved in China follows.

## The History of Homosexuality in China

According to stories and tales told prior to the 13th century, homosexuality was recognized, tolerated, widespread, but not completely accepted. These stories sought to explain why homosexual behavior existed by using nature versus nurture terminology

(Ruan, 1991). Chinese people believed that homosexuality was not part of the identity of the person and the concept of "gay or Lesbian" did not exist because a homosexual act was seen as a behavior performed even in marriage. Young men viewed older male lovers as masters grooming them to find suitable women (Samshasha, 1997). Marriage was essentially part of a man's social status and the means to continue his family lineage.

Samshasha (1997) listed three negative consequences of homosexuality in ancient China. Social mobility was determined by examinations given to upper class men (servants were allowed to take the examination). Men labeled as homosexual could not test into a new social status. Admission to being homosexual could lead to punishment or removal from a position. Finally, even discussion of homosexual behaviors without an attempt to explain why the behavior was happening could lead to curtailed privilege or social acceptance. Unlike the European response to homosexuality, which included serious punishment or death, Chinese civility was an essential response to homosexuality.

Around 1850, the shift to a more contemporary (and Western) view of homosexuality in China became apparent. Britain forced an opening into China's economy and culture, leading to the creation of "Western Movements" (Chou, 1997). New ideas required the creation of new words. The origin of the current term for homosexuality of the three character word, tong—same, xing—sex or sexual, and lian—attachment or romantic love, reflects Western influence. In response to the early 20th-century Western idea that homosexuality was a mental disorder, the Chinese added homosexuality as a mental illness to the *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders*. So strong was Western influence, it took 40 years after the United States removed homosexuality from the DSM for China to take the same action in 2001.

During the 20th and 21st centuries, the idea of cultural diffusion in China was overwhelming with the expansive growth and obsession with Western goods. This capitalist push is forcing changes to visa restrictions in China's major cities. Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou are allowing 72 hours without a visa. Shanghai is allowing 5-year work permits over the previous 1-year application process. Shanghai alone has about 210,000 expatriates living full time and this number is expected to grow by 6.7% in 2014. Estimates of gay and lesbian populations would place about 21,000 gays and lesbians in Shanghai living full time. This Western influence is seen in new gay bars, establishments, and an emerging gay community. In 2013, Shanghai celebrated its 5-year LGBT pride anniversary. However, the idea of gay pride is not a celebrated Chinese tradition. The collectivist pride of being Chinese supersedes the idea of a gay or lesbian identity. Thus, grounded theory was my choice for this dissertation.

## Choosing Grounded Theory

Although more recent theories of homosexual-identity development (those of McCarn and Fassinger, 1996; Fassinger and Miller, 1997; and D'Augelli, 1997), are beginning to look more deeply into ethnic diversity and its relationship to homosexual-identity development, the theories have yet to specifically consider collectivist cultures, the examination of socioeconomic factors, or technology as driving forces relating to an individual's sexual-identity development. The present study examined expatriate influences on the identity development and experience of gay Chinese Nationals living in mainland China. Kimmel and Yi (2004) were unable to find, "any quantitative studies of gay males, lesbians, or bisexuals living in Asia" (p. 147). Similarly, I was unable to

locate any specific studies that addressed the collectivist nature of homosexual-identity development in China.

The descriptive nature of qualitative research and grounded theory assisted in three areas: (a) exploring the experiences of Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development, (b) allowing participants to share rich details allowing for possible patterns among individuals, and (c) using gaps in existing theory to develop a novel theory of homosexual-identity development that is more inclusive of and therefore relevant to collectivist cultures such as China.

## Summary

After perusing 145 qualitative and quantitative articles, none addressed sexual-identity development in a collectivist culture. Kimmel and Yi (2004) acknowledged the gap in the literature, failing to find research focusing on collectivist culture. Western researchers tend to say issues of coming out, sexual-identity development, and or other LGBT issues are simple to define, examine, and fit into patterns. However, researchers have developed no scientific theories or patterns for the collectivist LGBT community.

In this research, I used grounded theory to develop an LGBT collectivist culture-specific model of identity development. These are important data, as China becomes a rising economic power in the world and Western influences continue. Allowing participants to share their experiences of sexual-identity development in a collectivist community was an effective approach to finding patterns in their experiences.

Many articles examined for this study reflected a Western perspective. Researchers need a global worldview to examine LGBT issues. A more culturally sensitive and aware discussion of sexual-identity development needs to take place in

academia. This study begins this discussion. Chapter 3: Methodology presents the research design used for this study.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

In the methodology section, I discuss the overall structure of the research design including the rationale for the study. Next, I present the role of the researcher in the study, followed by a brief overview of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to address Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development. Procedures, the data-analysis plan, trustworthiness, and ethics end the methodology chapter.

Culture, ethnicity, religion, and other factors intersect sexual identities. In China, sexual identities tend to be less visible because the collectivist culture, which emphasizes family or group identity, is given precedence. Many Asian gay and lesbian community members lack positive social identity. Therefore, in this study, I considered gay men in Asian cultures and explored the extent of Western influences among these groups. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the experience of gay male Chinese nationals and explore the extent to which exposure to Western culture has influenced their sexual identities.

## Research Design and Rationale

The three main research questions presented in Chapter 1 follow.

RQ1. Has the sexual identity development of gay male Chinese nationals been influenced by exposure to Western culture?

RQ2. To what extent has living in China's collectivist culture impacted Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development?

RQ3. How has exposure to Western gay culture affected the sexual interactions (personal, social, familial) of Chinese gay men?

I selected constructivist grounded theory as the research methodology. Given the research questions and theoretical framework of this study, a methodology that facilitates the discovery of a theory through data analysis seemed most appropriate. As I developed the research questions and examined the extant research, the idea of discovering new theoretical pathways to defining a global gay culture evolved. A lack of data describes on the effect of Western mores on individual cultural markers, such as collectivist identification. Due to sexual-identity theories, Asian dual identities, and Western influences, a need persisted for a structure to be developed encompassing these concepts (Charmaz, 2000). I used a grounded theory to develop an explanatory model or an outcome describing general features of sexual-identity development in mainland Chinese gay men in light of the lack of available research in these areas.

Generalizations would not be ideographic but would evince a pattern of a collectivist communal nature. The experiences and differences among participants would fall on the same spectrum, but still address an understudied diverse group. The use of grounded theory for this study allowed for "simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of the research" (Charmaz, 1996, p. 28). Grounded theory yielded an in-depth analysis of Western influence on the interpersonal relationships of Chinese gay men in the larger collectivist culture and how these participants navigated the struggles of creating a dual identity. This analysis identified larger social processes affecting these relationships.

## Role of the Researcher and Bias

Scholars have failed to identify any theoretical understanding of homosexual identity development among Chinese gay men; therefore, I chose to use grounded theory

as the design. Scholars use grounded theory to inform an analysis rather than direct the outcome. This design approach allowed me to "explore integral social relationships and the behavior of groups where there has been little exploration of the contextual factors that affect individuals' lives" (Crooks, 2001, p. 13). Additionally, it allowed me to find the underlying process of what is occurring in participants' primary concerns (Glaser, 1978). As the sole researcher, I had no personal or professional connection with any participants. I had no educational, instructional, or managerial relationships to hold power over the participants.

I am a Caucasian gay man who has worked in China for about 30 months. I had interactions with expatriates and mainland Chinese gay men, but have not had significant contact or connection to the experiences of Chinese gay men. I had preconceptions as to what respondents would discuss during the interviews. I had some difficulty communicating with people who did not speak any English despite my use of Chinese interpreters that could have led to bias in interpretation of the responses given. Some Chinese exhibit a sense of reluctance when trying to communicate with a Westerner. This could have led to transference and countertransference when interviewing.

I am not from a collectivist culture, and I had preconceptions of Western expatriate influence on Chinese gay men or the feelings a person may experience when creating a dual identity. Preconceptions relating to Chinese gay men are family issues, hiding feelings about sexuality, getting married to have a grandchild for a person's parents and being gay, emotional stress and depression, and navigating circles of relationships. I had no conflict of interest, employment issue, or power disparity with participants.

## Addressing Bias

The aim of the study was to address the possible influences on Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development. Potential bias in the selection of participants was addressed through random selection. As I screened participants, I waited until the allotted time was over before the selection of participants began. The goal was to recruit more than the stated target of 20 individuals and then randomly select those to be interviewed from that larger pool of individuals who were screened and who met study inclusion criteria.

During data collection, I used a two-column approach to field notes and reflexive journaling. One column was a verbatim description of the interview and interactions whereas the other included my personal views about the interactions. This format helped minimize any untoward influence of researcher bias. Because sexual-identity development has many components, I endeavored to remain open to the ways the term can be understood and defined and to any information participants might have shared that did not fit into preconceived notions of the constructs being investigated.

The data were organized, transcribed, and coded in a way to decrease bias. The first step was to read all the transcripts before starting the coding process. I used respondent validation to create triangulation, thereby helping to reduce potential bias. I also crosschecked codes and inferences against field notes and comments from the reflexive journal, employing a three-part triangulation process. The first step of this process was to find cogent themes in the in-depth interviews by coding the data obtained through interviews. The next step was comparing those themes to the observations listed in the two-column field notes collected during interviews. The field notes had my personal reflections, as well as participant observations noted as I conducted the

interviews. The last step was member checking as the interviews occurred. I might have asked a participant to clarify a given answer. If salient changes emerged in the response, these were documented in the field notes and the recorded interview. I cross-checked the data in three places to ensure validation of the responses. I also sent a small summary of bullet points to participants from their interview, corresponding to the interview questions to member check the data.

I am a gay man and I am a researcher. I know how my sexual identity developed. I have spent more than 10 years researching in the LGBT community. Even with my passion for my topic and culture, I needed to maintain objective methods and procedures throughout the research process. This included discussions with my dissertation chair during the research process including data collection and analyses to crosscheck any issues of bias that may have arisen during the process.

## Participant Selection Logic

I recruited Chinese national gay men aged 18 to 65 who identified as homosexual (gay). No participants were under 18 years of age. I accepted participants over 65; however, I suspected this group would be all but invisible as their generation equated outsiders who come asking questions about sexual orientation to the secret police. Participants had to speak Chinese and English. Samples with criteria, in qualitative research, can be nonrandom or purposive (Creswell, 2009).

## Sample Saturation

Research studies reach saturation when new participants do not provide new or additional information to answer to the research questions (Creswell, 2009). For this study, using a grounded-theory approach, I expected the point of saturation to be reached

at 15 to 20 participants, with an approximate maximum of 30. I planned to use more than 20 participants if new concepts, ideas, or themes continued to emerge during coding of data from the last participant.

I recruited participants from Shanghai Pride and LGBT Shanghai (the same group with different names). Using their electronic mail lists or Listservs, I sent a generic e-mail inviting participation in a study. In this e-mail, I asked if the receiver was willing to participate or knew someone who was willing to participate in a study by answering social and cultural questions about being gay in China on a short demographic data questionnaire. Shanghai Pride and LGBT Shanghai gave permission to use their Listservs. Participants had to be Chinese national gay men who had access to bars, events, restaurants, or LGBT-oriented meetings, including Shanghai Pride; Chinese national gay men had to have had at least one encounter or interaction with a Western gay expatriate; Chinese national gay men had to have helped, worked, volunteered, or participated in any LGBT events and engaged in homosexual behavior within the last 12 months. See Appendix A for screening questions.

## Instrumentation

Basic demographic-data questions, as well as questions detailing internal and external factors associated with being a Chinese gay man in a collectivist culture navigating experiences with expatriates, are listed below.

1. Can you tell me about your experience of “coming out” and disclosing to others in your life that you are gay?
    a. How old were you when you first shared this with someone in your life?

b. Are there people in your life who you have not shared this with (e.g., friends, family, coworkers) or with whom you would not be comfortable sharing this part of yourself? If so, can you share with me why you feel this way?

2. I'd like to ask you about your identity as a gay person and how that may have developed over time—can you recall when in your life you started to realize this about yourself?

   a. What difficulties did you experience when you first began to realize this about your own sexual identity? Describe any specific struggles or resistance within yourself about acknowledging this truth about your sexual feelings/orientation? How has knowing about your identity affected your relationships with others in any way?

   b. Who else in your life you could talk to about what you were discovering about yourself? How have you struggled at all with self-acceptance related to your sexual identity/orientation? If so, are there certain circumstances where (or certain people with whom) you experience that struggle more acutely?

3. I'd like to talk with you now about your perceptions of what it is like being gay for someone who is Chinese, living in China. Have you experienced any negative judgments/prejudice directed toward gays in China?

   a. What groups of people/sectors of the society who you believe are less open and accepting of gays and gay culture in China? Are there certain

sectors of the society who you feel are more open and accepting of gays and gay culture in China?

b. How do you think about exposure to Western culture has served in any way to change people's attitudes toward gays in China? If yes, can you share, how/why you think this might be the case?

4. Have you experienced any conflict between your sexual identity and your identity as a Chinese person? In what circumstances in which (or people with whom) you feel the conflict between those two worlds (i.e., being Chinese and being gay) more acutely?

   a. Are there visible Western gay cultural markers, identifiers, or information visible and accessible in China for Chinese males to access?

   b. To what extent do you participate at all in the Western gay community that lives here in China? How, if at all has that experience been different for you than being part of the non-Western gay community in China?

5. If it's okay I'd like to ask you a question about your sexual activity.

   a. To what extent do you engage in sexual relations exclusively with other Chinese? With non-Chinese? With both? If you have a preference, why do you feel this way?

Feedback from individuals in the Chinese LGBT community helped gauge a question's respectfulness and appropriateness. If necessary, I reworded a question. To ensure the correct translation of the data, as well as its reliability and validity, I asked participants if I could confidentially audio tape their responses. If the participant did not feel comfortable with audiotaping, I considered using the fallback research protocol.

A team of professional transcribers translated the data verbatim. One academic reviewed the transcript to ensure the concepts were translated correctly. Because Chinese and English concepts might not translate verbatim, the academic made a conceptual translation, to make sense of the concept or word.

## Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

Participants were recruited through Shanghai Pride, other LGBT organizations, and outreach groups' e-mail lists, as well as by posting messages to gay Internet message boards. I asked participants if they knew anyone else who might like to participate and asked them to put them in contact with me. The duration of this process rested on the accumulation of responses. Screening participants took about 4 weeks. Initial contact was in the form of e-mail. No conflict of interest existed with these organizations because I was not an active member in any of these groups.

## Data Collection

Initial contact with qualified participants was through e-mail. I screened participants to determine if they met the study's inclusion criteria. Once I deemed a participant met the criteria, I asked them to read and sign an informed-consent document and a confidentiality agreement in English and in Chinese. The next step included asking participants to fill out a demographic questionnaire. Following this, I arranged interviews on the dates I would be in Shanghai and conduct interviews on Skype. This format allowed participants to accept or reject participation in the study. Participants returned paperwork over an additional 2 weeks and I set up a time to audio tape an interview.

The data collection took place in Shanghai with interviews scheduled over a 2-week period. I attempted to screen and schedule participants prior to going to Shanghai,

planning one to two interviews Monday through Friday and up to five interviews each weekend day. If the majority of the interviews were not completed in one trip, a second visit was scheduled. If the majority of the interviews were completed, I recruited and completed the final few interviews through a social-media outlet like Skype or Facebook. Only the participant and I accessed the e-mail address used by the participants after initial contact, screening, and agreed participation. I scheduled participants for an interview for 30 to 60 minutes (based on responses to questions, some participants did not need a full 60 minutes to answer the questions). If I identified more than 20 initial eligible participants, I would have chosen the sample randomly.

I asked participants to meet in a place secure to both parties. A Chinese research assistant signed a confidentiality agreement and was available for translation services. Participants agreed to have this person present. I did not foresee any potential psychological risk to participants. Because some information was sensitive to the individual, I minimized risk as much as possible. I told participants they could ask questions, discuss problems occurring during the process, or withdraw from the study at any time. Follow-up details to clarify any data collected were conducted by e-mail or a Skype-recorded conversation, as indicated on the informed-consent form. If participants had questions about answers provided after the interview in English or transcribed Chinese, I contacted the participant to clarify an answer. Chinese to English had multiple meanings for some translations. I e-mailed a generic Skype ID and password to the participant, along with the agreed time to conduct the follow-up, to ensure confidentiality and minimal risk. An example was, Skype ID Participant G—Password G participant.

I used letters, such as Participant A, to identify participants, and recorded no personal information for the research study. No data sets included identifying factors to ensure confidentiality. Data remains on an encrypted hard drive in a small safe with only my access, following translation. Data will be stored for 5 years, as required by the university.

## Reflexive Journal and Nonparticipant Observation

I recorded field notes after each interview including thoughts about those interviewed, personal notes, recollections from the interviews, observations made during the interviews, and initial thoughts on data transcription. Audit trails and reflexive journaling allowed me to track the order of the processes, facilitating documentation of events and their order. Reflexive journal notes, as part of the data-analysis process, accompanied transcripts from interviews. The reflexive journal was the record of methodological and theoretical decisions made in the research process. These steps ushered the study development from raw data to research completion, increasing the transparency of the study.

## Discrepant Cases

Unique and varied experiences reported by some study participants did not match those of other participants (as in Creswell, 2014). Such unique experiences were considered discrepant cases. The treatment of a discrepant case, for this study, was not definable until data collection was completed and the coding process was developed. In the research process during the coding phase, I actively sought discrepant data. I were recorded, analyzed, and reported discrepant cases during the research process. This

process acted as a counterbalance, helping to minimize the tendency to impose initial impressions and identification of themes onto later data.

## Data-Analysis Plan

The intended result of the data analysis was to identify patterns to develop a theory of Western influences on Chinese gay male sexual-identity development and dual-identity formation. Data gathering and analysis focused on developing theory (aligned with Charmaz, 1996). Thick data description allowed for thematic formulation leading to theoretical development. Following Charmaz (1996), I used five factors when evaluating the data. These include the person's:

> (1) Stated explanation of his or her action, (2) Unstated assumptions about it, (3) Intentions for engaging in it, as well as (4) Its effects on others and (5) Consequences for further individual action and interpersonal relations. (Charmaz, 1996, p. 32)

Close attention needed to be placed on the language used by Chinese nationals to understand and report the lived experiences of study participants. This was important in coding the data. This analytic work, when collecting data, is part of the grounded-theory approach (Charmaz, 1996). Questions from the instruments focused on repeated ideas, concepts, and themes to discern Western influences on participants, as well as dual identity, and if the participant seemed to have a more collectivist or individualist self-identity.

Focused coding helped identify participants' experiences of events or processes of overriding significance to the study. Charmaz (1996) discussed making coding categories as abstract as possible, but to be consistent and data focused. The focused coding allowed

for examination of the data for embedded information, especially in regard to personal information and disclosure of choices (Charmaz, 1996). This means certain codes became categories, with other codes becoming subcategories. The process of assigning categories to a coding structure follows four rules from Charmaz: "(1) to explicate its properties, (2) to specify conditions under which it arises, is maintained and changes, (3) to describe its consequences and (4) to show how this category relates to other categories" (1996, p. 214). NVivo for Mac was the tool used to analyze content. Content accrued from interviews of mainland Chinese gay men. NVivo allowed for work in audio, video, PDF, and documents. The program allowed building a "how it works" shared-group process (Creswell, 2014).

## Issues of Trustworthiness

I created trustworthiness using four factors applied in this study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (as suggested by Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first, credibility, is the confidence a person has in the truth of the findings. I achieved credibility through triangulation, member checking, and negative analysis. Data triangulation included data gathering with various sources with interviews, raw data, coded interviews, and nonparticipant observation. Data triangulation is a tool of confirmation to ensure data collection of multiple sources, methods, and investigations. I used these factors to create credibility and internal validity with greater confidence in the study conclusions (as in Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Member checking involved contacting respondents, when needed, to check the accuracy of the rich details provided. This happened when a participant spoke Chinese and the data were transcribed. Language differences have multiple meanings and could

lead to needed clarification. Crosschecking allowed reflexivity to enhance self-awareness and self-correction (aligned with Bowen, 2009). Once interviews were transcribed, if questions arose based on the interview or the translation, I contacted the participant to clarify any information.

Transferability allows other researchers to apply the findings of the study to their own (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I provided sufficient detail to create a well-defined context of the data. To provide for greater transferability, I presented findings with rich and thick descriptions of the homosexual-identity development of Chinese gay men.

Dependability refers to results being consistent over time and across researchers. Validity in qualitative research comes from incorporating audit trails into the research process. These processes help decrease bias in the research. Creswell (2009) advised to explore interpretations, assumptions, and conceptions before starting the data gathering. Thick and rich details and descriptions were employed when gathering data. An audit trail ensures that the data have all aspects recorded and kept including raw data, data reductions, analysis, synthesis, and any other processes used on the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bowen (2009) suggested "(1) listing all codes, (2) presenting excerpts from the data that provide examples of the codes, and (3) schematizing propositional statements reflecting linkages between categories and the developing theory" (p. 39).

Conformability assumes the findings do not rest merely on the perceptions or biases of the researcher, but are reflective of participants' perspectives, shown evidentially in the data. My assumptions about homosexual-identity development in Chinese gay men were a result of reflection on my personal contributions to LGBT issues. In the study, all these practices were incorporated alongside data collection and analysis.

## Ethical Procedures

Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study prior to data collection. I had the required certification from the course at Walden University with my National Institute of Health certificate and number recorded on the IRB application (approval number XXXXX). Once I screened the participant, each signed an informed-consent form and completed an initial questionnaire. Coding the data with numbers and keeping identification confidential protected the sensitive nature of the research. I provided confidentiality agreements to anyone assisting with transcription of data. I will maintain the study data for 5 years, then use HDDErase to destroy the data using the data-removal software. Data are stored on an external, password-protected hard drive, locked in a water and fireproof box. The key or combination to the lock box was sent to my committee chair in case I am unable to continue my research for any reason.

No conflicts of interest occurred. I had no connections or relationships with any participant. Because participation was confidential, recruitment took place through an e-mail address created for the study. Participants were allowed to create a confidential e-mail address if desired for contact with the researcher. I reminded participants they could withdraw from the study at any time if they experienced distress from questions. Although I anticipated no adverse event, I contacted a counseling center to offer support, if needed. I advised participants of low- or no-cost options for assistance if needed. All data collection was electronic (audio). At the end of the study, I offered a copy of the research summary to participants upon e-mail request.

## Summary

The Walden University IRB granted approval prior to conducting a pilot study and data collection. I had the required certification from the course at Walden University with my National Institute of Health certificate and number recorded on the IRB application. Once I screened a participant, they signed an informed-consent form and completed an initial questionnaire.

# Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the sexual-identity development of Chinese gay men. Specific interest was on the possible role of exposure to Western culture in the development of Chinese gay men's sexual identity. In this chapter, I detail how the data accrued, detailing discussion of the sample, including demographic information. In this chapter, I summarize patterns and dominant themes from the data analysis. Data saturation allowed for completion of data synthesis.

## Research Questions

RQ1. Has the sexual identity development of gay male Chinese nationals been influenced by exposure to Western culture?

RQ2. To what extent has living in China's collectivist culture impacted Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development?

RQ3. How has exposure to Western gay culture affected the sexual interactions (personal, social, familial) of Chinese gay men?

## Setting

Data collection was completed over Skype. I conducted some interviews in Shanghai and the rest in Bangkok. Participants could request an interview in Chinese. All other interviews were in English. After the first few interviews, I adapted the questions based on field notes taken during the interviews; the questions used phrasing more knowledgeable to Chinese–English culture.

## Demographics

A total of 22 participants took part in interviews. Participants aged ranged from 21 to 36. The majority of participants, 17, were between the ages 21 and 28. The majority

of participants lived in Shanghai. A few had moved to other cities after living or attending a university in Shanghai. Participants evidenced differing levels of disclosure regarding their sexuality. Some stated that they were open to everyone, if asked about their sexuality, whereas others were not out or open to anyone about their homosexual identity.

## Data Collection

I contacted Shanghai Pride by e-mail requesting permission to send the recruitment flyer and post it to their direct social media on November 22, 2014. Shanghai Pride posted this information with a list server of about 2,500 people. These 2,500 were LGBT and followed Shanghai Pride by e-mail. In the recruitment flyer, I asked possible participants to e-mail me if they were interested in the study. The initial e-mail responses arrived between November 23 and November 28, 2014 and yielded 31 responses. I sent these 31 possible participants the demographic data consent forms. I asked them to read, save the consent form, and return the demographic data form to me to set up an interview. I contacted all 31 participants. I received responses from 25 participants who completed demographic and consent forms. No other responses arrived after November 28, 2014. I requested interviews with the 25 participants over a period of 1 week, asking when participants had time. Three participants did not respond to this correspondence, leaving 22 total interviews, six in Chinese and 16 in English.

I audio recorded the interviews over Skype with the participants given the option to call me or have me contact them through their Skype ID. I made contact from my hotel in Shanghai and my location in Bangkok. Interviews in Chinese took place over Skype with the translator and me. The translator asked the questions in Chinese, with me present.

I contacted the translator and then contacted the participant. I recorded the interviews in Chinese and sent the translator/transcriber the interview audio file to transcribe from Chinese to English. As the interviews progressed, I simplified the interview questions. I used the word gay instead of sexual orientation and simplified other questions after several participants asked for clarification.

## Data Analysis

The start of the analysis process followed Charmaz's (2006) grounded-theory methodology: an independent three-step-process model. The first step was to peruse the Chinese-only interviews to develop preliminary codes; then the same for interviews in English. The second step was to combine the codes seeking major themes across the different cohorts. The final step was to partition the themes to focus code each research question, seek quotations in each code factor, and apply axial coding to find themes between the codes.

### Step 1: Focused Coding

I conducted a word-by-word examination of the data, highlighting quotations relating to preliminary codes on sexual-identity development in Chinese gay men. I separated these codes with color-coded notecards and scrutinized the narratives to allow for the emergence of natural codes from the words of participants. Avoidance of explanatory frameworks based on previous research allowed for the collected narratives to more fully represent the voices of the 22 interviewed participants, similar to a mind map. I laid out initial codes and placed color-coded cards when patterns started to develop as I accessed each interview. A critical point in this step was to allow the codes to come from participant interviews rather than forcing data into a predetermined code or

theme. Grounded theory leads to substantial variation in themes and codes. This first step was a detailed analysis leading to the development of codes for the second step of the process. Table 1 shows the initial codes developed from examination.

Table 1

*Initial Codes*

| |
|---|
| Code–Duty to Family |
| Code–Traditional–Conservative values |
| Code–Social circle–*she jiao quan* and Social network–*she jiao wang luo* |
| Code–Societal fears |
| Code–Rural and small cities |
| Code–Groups less accepting |
| Code–Expatriates (Westerners in big cities) |
| Code–Groups more accepting |
| Code–Age of acknowledgement of sexual difference |
| Code–Government (lack of recognition and understanding) |
| Code–Sexual activity |
| Code–Gay pride and gay social activities |
| Code–Individualistic ideas |
| Code–Coming out, experience coming out, openness to others (disclosure) |
| Code–Seeking others |
| Code–Positive self-acceptance |
| Code–Internet |
| Code–Media–TV shows or Movies |
| Code–Social Media |
| Code–Pornography |

**Step 2: Focused Combining and Revising**

Step 2 involved using minimal words to identify the central idea coming from the narratives. I applied a focused coding system across interviews rather than coding each interview. As the codes developed, I applied field notes to enhance understanding and

context of the narratives. The narratives allowed for codes to become visible. The codes came from similar answers and information from participant interviews. I saw themes in these codes where narratives held similar content, allowing quotations to be highlighted, based on codes under each theme. I added the main codes to NVivo with subcoding. NVivo analysis sought similar key words that would match the previously identified codes and subcodes. Manipulation of codes and quotations showed repeated themes in the data, allowing me to match quotations to each subcode, increasing validity of the data.

Saturation was met based from responses in the interviews. No new codes emerged. Charmaz (2006) described interviews as reaching a point of saturation based on no new or fresh codes being visible. NVivo allowed quotations and data to be manipulated, keeping the context and understanding of participant responses to each interview question. Coding revealed links among participant responses. After entering data into NVivo, codes could display to allow a clearer picture of concepts and codes (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Focused Codes Examples Based on Interviews*

| Focused codes | Examples/descriptions | Meaning units |
|---|---|---|
| Duty to Family | (P16) You as a Chinese, need, this is your duty to me to get married and have a baby, that's what your responsibility to me is and take care of me when I'm older. | 18 |
| | (P6) I think in China one of the greatest conflict is filial identity, to show your filial piety, you should get married. | |
| | (P10) The conflict for me is with my parents. My family is very traditional and very conservative and the conflict is I'm Chinese and my parents expect me to get married. I think that's a pressing problem for everyone within this culture over 30 years old and everyone expects you to get married. | |
| Traditional – Conservative Values | (P1) I cannot share that I'm gay with my parents. It's too hard for me. They are too old and they're too traditional Chinese. And I know that they cannot accept this. | 24 |
| | (P22) It is in the tradition that one must get married in the future. I get a lot of pressure from my family that I am the only son. I mean and for the bigger family for my grandpa I am the only male child. In that family I have a lot of pressure. | |
| | (P4) I think personally, it certainly from parents, a great influence from China's culture of filial piety. At first I need to tell you that I come from a remote country in Province Hunan, where the thought of the people is conservative, and even I myself cannot accept it well. Therefore, I don't plan to tell them this, in nowadays. | |
| Social Circle (*she jiao quan*) Social network (*she jiao wang luo*) | (P20) And but mostly in the friends' circle, but not the work environment. Not because I am afraid of coming out in the work environment. Especially in China I do not want to draw top much attention from my co-workers. So actually this is why. | 16 |
| | (P12) Because it's a little bit nervous topic in China especially. And I don't feel like I need to tell the secrets to my coworkers because I think the orientation is only part of my, it's not nothing with my work. Some of my coworkers doesn't ask me individually I think I will never tell them about my orientation. | |
| | (P1) Their social circle is quite small and tiny and yes maybe being gay It's just about hook up and sex and not having friends. It is hard to tell people in fear the social can get back to family or others. | |

| Focused codes | Examples/descriptions | Meaning units |
|---|---|---|
| Societal Fears | (P15) I was a senior in high school I told a boy a classmate of me and I told him and he were shocked and it was very embarrassing and we get um the distance between us it is a little bit far than before. | 19 |
| | (P6) I go to gay clubs but I don't like the you know, the pride I don't like to show out myself in the world. I don't feel very comfortable. | |
| | (P20) And but mostly in the friends' circle, but not the work environment. Not because I am afraid of coming out in the work environment. Especially in China I do not want to draw top much attention from my co-workers. So actually this is why. | |
| | (P17) Yes. Like when I work I don't want to share this with my colleagues. Especially with my boss. I don't know if they're homophobic but just in case I just want to get equal treatment. | |
| Rural and small cities | (P10) Okay it was a little difficult for me because like I said I lived in a very small town in rural area in the small town. At that time in China not everyone has that same attitude. About gay stuff for I don't know I didn't know what determine. For this long time I didn't want to ask people if they have is a feeling are not. | 8 |
| | (P4) I think it will be very hard, for they are very conservative. Coming to the area, the cities by the sea are more open and accept it easier than remote second or third tier cities. That is my opinion. | |
| | (P3) Because I live in a relatively small city, network is not very developed, I began to slowly understand the gay community until after high school, and then slowly began to let go. Before I just was worried about this group was too small to find a partner in the future. | |
| Groups less accepting of gay culture | (P11) Old people. My parents over 50 years think they just can't understand that or need a long time to accept that. | 21 |
| | (P5) Parents and elders of acceptance the education level is not high, there is no window to contact this kind of knowledge. If you are out of the closet, they might think you're sick. | |
| | (P4) For the seniors, I think it will be very hard, for they are very conservative. | |
| Expatriates (Westerners in big cities) | (P13) I think this is my chance to point for me to meet some western guys. Because I don't have any western friends and I really want to get one. This is why I come to Shanghai. | 16 |
| | (P21) More Western people in big cities. For me, for example, I think western people have a very good self-worth and they would not get married to a woman just to get married. So what's different yeah. So I think they're raised in the background that's different from ours in China. | |
| | (P15) But when I moved to shanghai I think almost all westerners are people I want to meet. | |

| Focused codes | Examples/descriptions | Meaning units |
|---|---|---|
| Groups accepting of gay culture | (P1) I think the young… Yeah, western gay man and young generation. | 13 |
| | (P11) I think in the big city it's more international and different people come together and they share the opinion and more influenced by western culture, so it's easier to accept gay people and gay culture. | |
| | (P20) Young generation and with higher education background think gay ok and not think bad about. | |
| Government (lack of recognition and understanding) | (P2) Maybe because of national policy, the government does not admit homosexuality, but in a laissez-faire state. | 20 |
| | (P7) And China I don't like the government. But the question is there all one of us. So what's the general quality of people. If the Chinese government gives freedom to people they can do nothing. What can they do they're not prepared to do anything without the government telling them they can do it. They would just make a mess they're not ready for freedom. | |
| | (P13) I mean they don't like Chinese culture they like the Chinese government because there's no protection for gays. But we want to go out just like normal people. So they are struggling. And they shouted the government but they cannot change. | |
| Sexual activity | (P7) I have to say Western. First probably when I was 16 or 17 years of my life. I did some Chinese. I think you change your taste when you get to know more types. You see all the fruit in the basket. You sleep with many people. | 22 |
| | (P14) The only thing I want to leave China is to get married. But it's not allowed here. I love my country I really love China. I think it's easier for gay people to live in other countries. | |
| | (P21) Western people are more attracted to me but I would meet Asian people and a lot of them we become friends. But yeah yeah my preference would be for western people. I like to speak English. It's more comfortable to speak English when you're speaking about these kinds of gay life for these kind of issues I'm not comfortable speaking to Chinese people. | |
| Gay pride and gay social activities | (P13) Earlier this year I went to the Gay bar angel. I went to join a gay party to meet new friends. Angel is organized by Westerners. So they approach gay culture to Chinese people. And more and more young people are attracted to send like to go to the gay bar. And they want to go and meet others. | 13 |
| | (P17) I was when I was a volunteer first thing hi gay pride last year when I was working in Shanghai. I found the information on the Internet and I connected with the leader and we have a meeting and that's how I started to volunteer work for them. | |
| | (P1) Chinese gay bars are open for everyone. There are many Chinese people who would love to talk with foreigners. I go to gay bar to meet Westerners. Because it is a community where is it. Gay bars Are places where we can talk. Gay Pride is new to Shanghai only few years. | |

| Focused codes | Examples/descriptions | Meaning units |
|---|---|---|
| Coming out, experience coming out, openness to others (disclosure) | (P13) Many young gays also come out to their friend. And more and more people know who is gay. | 24 |
| | (P10) In China most people don't come out at work or especially at work. They will tell other coworkers. | |
| | (P16) Because it's a little bit nervous topic in China especially. And I don't feel like I need to tell the secrets to my coworkers because I think the orientation is only part of my, it's not nothing with my work. Some of my coworkers doesn't ask me individually I think I will never tell them about my orientation. | |
| | (P9) Because, I think I'm more attracted by Western people … the culture … their appearance and their; I think they're more open minded and they don't care about the … they're don't influence by their parent's law. | |
| Age of acknowledgement of sexual difference | (P22) It was very early when I actually realized when I was gay was when I was in middle school. Junior high about 14 or 15 years old and before when I was younger I can feel I am a little bit different. Because when I watch the TV there was someone very masculine guy they have muscles and I can feel some chemicals in my body. | 14 |
| | (P3) Clearly knowing homosexuality this concept and determining my identity, I don't remember the specific time, should be before 5th grade. I remember at that time, Leslie Cheung (Chinese famous star) died, everyone was talking about he was gay, I also confirmed my gay identity. | |
| | (P20) I started to have this feeling in middle school. I started to feel quite comfortable and happy with certain boy. So I try my best to make friend with him and get close to him. And throw out a little drama to draw attention but that was the furthest I can go at that time. But I did not realize that was someone sexual related I thought it was just for attention. | |
| Positive self-acceptance | (P19) I think when I was 5 to 7 years old I have a feeling with men or boys um. … And is not quite difficult to accept that feeling. I feel comfortable and happy to be gay. | 8 |
| | (P18) I realized I was gay when I was pretty young when I was like 5 or 6 years old. Before I know in early school, because I know I am into like males instead of females. I was not afraid when I realized that, I thought there would be some other who share the same interest as me. So later I used the Internet to search there are other people who like so are into the same sex. So I found that. And I was not afraid to be gay. | |
| | (P3) Clearly knowing homosexuality this concept and determining my identity, I don't remember the specific time, should be before 5th grade. I remember at that time, Leslie Cheung (Chinese famous star) died, everyone was talking about he was gay, I also confirmed my gay identity and was happy with it. | |

| Focused codes | Examples/descriptions | Meaning units |
|---|---|---|
| Internet | (P7) I was young about 15 years ago, it was not about blocks, it about you don't know you don't know what to find you don't know how to search then you still like figure out a little bit then you know use the Google to doing internet searching, by getting to some website, I found gay website and step by step I get to know. | 12 |
| | (P13) So I search the Internet and I found. I used QQ. And I use groups and I chat with them. I found more and read how to believe in this gay world. | |
| | (P16) We cannot get access to Google so that is a problem. It really sucks when you want to search something because Chinese search engine when you want to search English. So we have to look for Western information. | |
| Media – TV shows or Movies | (P1) I think Western culture including movies and other things I think it is because. For me I have watched a lot of TV shows. Many of these TV shows Do not think gays are freaks for different. It's a part of this culture that is not part of Chinese culture. So since I have watch the shows I have more. I want to show more people I am more interested in gay. | 14 |
| | (P17) I think thanks to movies. Brokeback Mountain. It was a movie I was watching when I was in high school. And before that I had no idea. I had not realized any gay things about me I just thought I was normal. But after that movie it was kind of like another window and through that window I saw a completely different world. And from that time I start to realize. That I love a man. Love man to man in this love was just amazing and it should be respected. | |
| | (P21) Chinese are more wealthy and rich and they by themselves televisions and they watch American TV series. Sometimes there is gay story lines and these. I know All the TV shows about gay things are more found on the Internet anyway. | |
| Social Media | (P11) Maybe just for the Internet or the Internet you can see the young generation the Internet; they can use Facebook and things that are around so they can know that more gay things from Western culture can. | 12 |
| | (P20) But for the pictures and not for the articles, but in Chinese here there are more and more social media. Not really public and out load social media they approach and bridge Western information gay information for Chinese. I do not have to go to Western social media sites. | |
| | (P12) Weibo, I haven't found any other places like this yet. Weibo is Chinese Facebook. You can find all information there. | |

| Focused codes | Examples/descriptions | Meaning units |
|---|---|---|
| Individualistic ideas | (P11) I am normally shy, but compared with Chinese I am not. And if I see someone I like who I think is attractive in club I might say hi after a few drinks. | 24 |
| | (P15) Shanghai pride to you is to you probably a more Western-oriented event for coming out and telling people you're gay, being very individual would you know when you know, I'm very proud of being gay. | |
| | (P4) It may not solve the conservation of Chinese thoughts from the root. But I think the process is gradual and accumulative. That is, the more open, the more foreign thoughts come into our country, which will have an effect more or less. You want to be who you are. | |
| Pornography | (P8) I noticed the more I learned about homosexuality, the more I began to watch pornography. | |
| | (P21) When I was looking for information on the Internet about being different I found most of the information was about gay sex. You know porn. | |
| | (P16) I wanted the touch of a man. I started to watch gay porn. I was addicted. I was watching porn whenever I could and jacking off a few times a day. | |

**Step 3: Axial Coding**

I examined the focused codes to identify possible relationships between them and then combined to create axial codes. Table 3 shows each axial code with the corresponding focused codes that constitute it. Responses listed as "meaning units" after each axial code represent the total number of text segments that matched the main code. Meaning units listed for each subcode appear under each main code heading.

Table 3

*Axial Coding and Supporting Focused Codes*

| Axial code | Supporting focused codes | Meaning units |
|---|---|---|
| Chinese collectivist culture | | 78 |
| Research Questions 1 and 2 | Duty to family | 18 |
| | Traditional—conservative values | 24 |
| | Social circle—(*she jiao quan*) and social network—(*she jiao wang luo*) | 16 |
| | Government (lack of recognition and understanding) | 20 |
| Sexual identity development | | 68 |
| Research question 1 and 3 | Sexual activity | 22 |
| | Coming out, experience coming out, openness to others (disclosure) | 24 |
| | Positive self-acceptance | 8 |
| | Age of acknowledgement of sexual difference | 14 |
| Chinese society | | 61 |
| Research Question 2 | Societal fears | 19 |
| | Rural and small cities | 8 |
| | Groups less accepting | 21 |
| | Groups more accepting | 13 |
| Western influence | | 99 |
| Research Questions 1 and 3 | Gay pride and gay social activities | 13 |
| | Individualistic ideas | 24 |
| | Pornography | 8 |
| | Internet | 12 |
| | Media—TV shows or movies | 14 |
| | Social media | 12 |
| | Expatriates (Westerners in big cities) | 16 |

**Axial Code 1: Chinese collectivist culture.** Interviewees described a strong connection to Chinese collectivist culture expressed in four ways: traditional conservative values, duty to family, government (lack of recognition and understanding), and social

circle (*she jiao quan*) and social network (*she jiao wang luo*). Participants established this connection in early childhood through indoctrination by family members and the local community.

Traditional and conservative values are ubiquitous in rural China and only somewhat less so in urban settings. One participant expressed,

> I think because in China the traditional thing because I would say it's from the family you need to get married and have a baby for me, not for me it's like the family is pushing, pushing you, pushing you especially like I have big family I go back home my sisters is gonna take turns to talk to me. (P7)

Another participant described his parents as old and traditional, leaving him no choice but to keep his sexual identity a secret. Participant 3 stated, "I cannot share that I'm gay with my parents. It's too hard for me. They are too old and they're too traditional Chinese. And I know that they cannot accept this."

In defining traditional values, many participants expressed a duty to family. Participant 12 shared, "I think in China many families are so traditional. You must have children you must get married. If you're gay you can't. If you get married to a woman you must treat her and it's not happy." Another interviewee indicated the strong message of duty to the family:

> This year, my mother has been a more and more, trying to imply I need to marriage a woman in the future. And it's a must in China because they think it's our duty to have a family. They don't even want, they don't even expect that I will love the girl. They only think I should marry somebody, have a child and try to, try to, how do you say it? Try to continue your family. (P16)

Along with duty to family, many participants expressed concerns about lack of government support or understanding of homosexuality. Within the decade, homosexuality was removed from the DSM in China and decriminalized under the law. Recently, Yeng Teng sued a clinic over being given electroshock therapy to "cure his homosexuality." The High Court sided with Yeng, saying homosexuality was not an illness to be cured and the clinic was ordered to pay compensation. This is the first such case in Chinese history. Following the verdict, Yeng said he would try to reconnect with his parents, stating, "I'm going to take this verdict and show it to my parents so they can see a Chinese court said homosexuality isn't a mental illness". Participant 2 added, "The resistance is from forced marriage, you are forced to get married, but I know I don't like girls, so it is more tangled. However, I don't know how to solve this problem." Other participants shared the concept that their parents expected them to get married and have a baby. One participant discussed a gay couple who had come out to their parents, noting, "It's really funny I have a friend. There are a couple in Nanjing. They come out to their parents. One of the mothers said I don't care who you've been with. You must have a baby" (P14).

The final way interviewees expressed Chinese collectivist culture was the foundational concepts of social circle (*Shèjiāo quān*) and social network (*Shèjiāo wǎngluò*). These concepts in Chinese culture highlight the quantum differences in the concept of self, expressed in a collectivist versus individualist culture. The Chinese build social networks from family, coworkers, and old classmates. Emphasis placed on judgments of societal worthiness emanating from these groups defines the social standing

of an individual and general merit of the family. In these circles, marriage is a large component of worthiness. Participant 22 stated,

> Because it's a little bit nervous topic in China especially. And I don't feel like I need to tell the secrets to my coworkers because I think the orientation is only part of my, it's not nothing with my work. Some of my coworkers doesn't ask me individually I think I will never tell them about my orientation.

Another participant acknowledged being in conflict with many aspects of social life because of pressure from the family circle. Participant 3 stated,

> This step if you were wrong, then the family would be pointing by other people. I think this is a Chinese-style behavior, everybody would think we should stand in a family point of view. Social benefits, marriage, adoption and other aspects are in conflict.

Although some participants disclosed their sexual identity to some people in their social circles, many others expressed ambivalence regarding making this declaration for fear of being rejected or discriminated against in these social circles. Another discussed how the discrimination felt when one does not conform: "Firstly, I am not going to tell my family, because our thought is feudal over there. With outside the circle of friends and classmates also not going to say, because of discrimination against gays in China is very serious." (P2).

**Axial Code 2: Sexual-identity development.** Many participants expressed high levels of sexual activity since monogamous homosexual relationships seem difficult to maintain. All participants expressed a sexual preference for men. Most participants wanted to connect with a Western non-Chinese partner, expressed by Participant 10 as,

> But I prefer Western. For me, for example I think Western people have a very good self-worth and they would not get married to a woman just to get married. So what's different yeah. So I think they're raised in the background that's different from ours in China. I think I have an understanding of gay culture they don't have to hide something I feel more comfortable with them. Yes just like when I would have a Western boyfriend.

The physicality of Western men was an attraction for some Chinese men. Participant 16 stated,

> A little preference For the Western guy. The reason is I like muscular guys masculine guy Western guys are more masculine and muscular than Chinese guys and also I prefer someone with a beard so western guys literally have more hair than Asians.

Self-acceptance increased when interviewees were away from their family. Many expressed an openness to share their sexual orientation with some in their social circle. Participant 18 stated, "I am now ok to share with everyone except for my parents" (P18). Another stated, "I feel comfortable and happy to be gay" (P9). Others seemed to deflect the discussion of marriage with family members by expressing happiness at being single. Participant 13 discussed,

> Every time I talk my parents I feel very happy. They asked why you not have a girlfriend by do not want to get married yet, I tell them I want you to want me to be healthy and happy I don't have to be married to be happy. I enjoy myself I enjoy my single time it is very good for me. And a lot of my friends in Shanghai are single as well.

Coming-out stories encompassed a wide range of experiences. Some felt comfortable to share with everyone, including family. Others would never be open because it would bring shame to their family if people were talking about sexual identity. Younger participants seemed to have an easier time expressing their sexual identity to people in their social circle:

> I think the first time I came out. I think that was to my best friend. I really try to force myself to come out and say it he was my best friend. He was going to be my friend for life. I feel when I say I have a big secret I have to tell him. He said I know you mean homosexual? I said you know. He said yes I can tell. That's what he said. (P6)

Another stated,

> But I not tell anyone until university. It made me feel comfortable to come to people. I feel closer. And but mostly in the friends' circle, but not the work environment. Not because I am afraid of coming out in the work environment. Especially in China I do not want to draw too much attention from my coworkers. (P20)

Some talked about coming out at work. Participant 16 stated, "When it come for job. I have not come out to my colleagues. And in China we do not put too much on this sexuality question when we get a job." For some, being in a big city like Shanghai, with Western influences, made it easier to share their sexual identity. Participant 14 expressed,

> I don't know it's kind of natural. I never had any problem with it. Let's say I still hold back to my parents. Some friends I probably met. That would be before not in Shanghai. I generally tell everybody. It's easier for my work.

Participants also identified age of acknowledgement of sexual difference, as part of sexual-identity development. Most participants started questioning their sexual-identity development or identity at an early age. Participants knew they were different but were unable to name that difference. Some stated, as early as grade school, they liked boys over girls. One interviewee stated,

> The first time maybe it was yes it was in middle school. I was watching a movie a Western movie. And I was quite interested in the actor body. His muscles and feel very different very excited. And I was more interested in this guy instead of a woman. (P1)

Another participant expressed, “When I was a six-year-old boy I was a kisser I would kiss the boy’s face and then feel maybe crushed” (P19). Many participants had a clear memory of an event or action that confirmed a homosexual identity. Participant 3 expressed,

> Clearly knowing homosexuality this concept and determining my identity, I don’t remember the specific time, should be before 5th grade. I remember at that time, Leslie Cheung (Chinese famous star) died, everyone was talking about he was gay, I also confirmed my gay identity.

**Axial Code 3: Chinese society.** Younger Chinese urban society is currently evolving away from traditional cultural norms while still trying to maintain strong familial relationships. This is not a new concept. Major cities around the world create concepts, ideas, and trends (and often cultural norms) that slowly shift outward to other areas. This diffusion in the large Tier 1 and Western-influenced cities creates a stronger, more tolerant educated population. Traditional culture in small rural cities remains

largely untouched. As previously stated, some participants left small cities to go to Shanghai or another big city to more easily embrace themselves and create distance from their families. Participants shared ideas about small and rural cities. Participant 1 stated, "They live in China. It becomes hell. Some do not want to show themselves in small cities." The participant conveyed the idea that bigger cities like Shanghai are easier places to express their sexuality.

In addition to rural communities, participants identified other groups as less tolerant of homosexuality. The groups mentioned included the Chinese Communist government and older people, which included parents, grandparents, and coworkers. China is governed by The Standing Committee of the Central Politburo of the Communist Party of China, a group of five to nine key Communist Party members whose decisions become the law of the land. This group maintains control and order over all Chinese citizens. Participants expressed concerns that the government was not ready to accept homosexuality in China. Participant 9 expressed, "You know here in China we don't have an organization within the government to manage gay people. There's no laws to protect gay people. But in Western culture they have that.

Change in Chinese society is strictly managed by the government and generally not questioned by older generations. These older generations evince traditional values based on antiquated ideas and education. Therefore, elders have a limited understanding of homosexuality and the evolution of thought concerning sexual identity. For instance, the removal of homosexuality from the *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders* in 2001, was not major news in China. Participant 4 stated, "For the senior, I think it will be very hard, for they are very conservative." Participant 5 shared, "Parents and elders of

acceptance the education level is not high, there is no window to contact this kind of knowledge. If you are out of the closet, they might think you're sick."

The groups identified by the interviewees as being accepting of homosexuality were Westerners and expatriates, people in larger cities, and the young. Simply being in a Tier 1 city in China exposes an individual to Western influences. Shanghai has a population of 24 million people. China has four Tier 1 or megacities (defined as those with a population over 10 million people that contribute a large portion of national GDP). For reference, in the United States this would be New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. In this case, four cities contribute 22% of China's national GDP. The next level, Tier 2 cities, includes a total of 17 developed provincial capital cities that contribute 21% of China's national GDP. Tier 3 and 4 cities are in smaller rural areas of China.

Participant 9 discussed, "I think in the big city it's more international and different people come together and they share the opinion and more influenced by Western culture, so it's easier to accept gay people and gay culture." Expatriates who return to China to work are usually more culturally accepting and open, due to their exposure to many cultures, personalities, and diverse populations. Some activities in the gay community in China are organized by Westerners. Younger Chinese gay men are open to being part of this community. Participant 13 stated,

> Pride and other events are organized by Westerners. So they approach gay culture to Chinese people and more and more young people are attracted to send like to go to the gay bar. And they want to go and meet others.

**Axial Code 4: Western influence.** Western businesses are opening and launching brands to capture Chinese market share. As China is expanding its global economic reach,

more Westerners and expatriates are spending time in China. Western people visiting or living in China are frequently unaware of their influence on Chinese society. Many participants expressed the idea that gay-pride events were a Western idea. Gay pride was an unknown concept to many Chinese gay men. Participant 1 stated, “I go to gay bar. I go to gay pride once. Pride is not a community.” Another participant shared ideas of not wanting to be a part of pride because of negative connotations. Participant 22 stated, “You mean like gay pride I never participate I want to get involved in this community but the gay pride in Shanghai give me negative impressions.”

Interview data indicated that some participants were taking on more individualistic traits, based on experiences in Western areas. These traits can be pride, the work place, or even sharing with their family that they were gay. Participant 17 stated,

> I was when I was a volunteer first thing hi gay pride last year when I was working in Shanghai. I found the information on the Internet and I connected with the leader and we have a meeting and that’s how I started to volunteer work for them.

In the workplace and university, several participants discussed the idea of being different from the group and showing their inner self to others. Participant 11 said, “Many young gays also come out to their friends. And more and more people know who is gay.” These events can link to a more visible Western culture in the larger cities.

The Internet is a major tool of communication in China, used daily by more than half the Chinese population. The Internet is monitored and sites with excessive hits are examined and blocked if their content is deemed unacceptable. Google, Facebook, and You Tube have been blocked by the Chinese government to stop the flow of information. Many LGBT activists who want information use a virtual private network (VPN) or

backdoor to access information outside of the restricted Chinese Great Firewall. But the Internet represents a seemingly unstoppable tidal wave of Western influence. TV shows, media, and movies are often accessed from China without government interference because it is simply impossible to monitor millions of websites. Participant 11 opined, "the Internet you can see the young generation. The Internet, they can use Facebook and things that are around so they can know that more gay things from Western culture can have." A younger participant stated, "So I use the Internet when I was in primary school. I was affected very much by Western culture. I can say that I think I'm more positive to Western culture then Chinese culture" (P16). Participants described the effect the Internet has on Chinese people. The more visible an idea or concept is on the Internet, the more the concept is accepted as normal. Participant 7 noted, "Chinese people they learn things and if they see a lot of people are things on the Internet even if they don't understand it they think it's normal because many people are talking about it."

Even with limits on Western films shown in China, Chinese people go to the cinema to escape the routine. Street vendors in most cities have the latest Western TV shows and movies for sale on illegally formatted DVDs. Participants expressed details of seeing positive images of gay people on TV, specifically on Modern Family and Transparent. These images are allowing Western TV media to be used as a tool for some Chinese gay men to access information not visible on Chinese TV. Participant 8 discussed,

> For me, I have watched a lot of TV shows. Many of these TV shows do not think gays are freaks for different. It's a part of this culture that is not part of Chinese culture. So since I have watch the shows I have more interest in being open.

The movie Brokeback Mountain was not in Chinese cinemas but was accessed on DVD by many Chinese gay men. A few participants mentioned the movie as a window into a new world. Participant 17 said,

> Brokeback Mountain. It was a movie I was watching when I was in high school. And before that I had no idea. I had not realized any gay things about me I just thought I was normal. But after that movie it was kind of like another window and through that window I saw a completely different world.

Pornography was easy to find. Many participants discussed pornography when trying to find more about why they felt attracted to men; the Internet led them to pornography. This made associations for some that gay sex was foundational in being a homosexual. Others discussed how much more led to random sex and addictive behaviors, including masturbation several times a day. “Porn was easy to find, but information about gay life was not” (P18). Addition to pornography was mentioned by several participants. “Porn became part of my life. I had to hide my sexuality, but I could live a fantasy when I watched sex” (P10).

Because Chinese citizens do not have direct, state-sanctioned access to Facebook, Google, or You Tube, some sites have taken these concepts and built popular social networks accessed by most Chinese. Because collectivist values and *she jiao wang luo* (social network) are important structures in Chinese society, these platforms have also allowed Asian LGBT individuals to find others like themselves. Weibo (Chinese Twitter) has allowed gay men and other LGBT individuals to create small underground support and social networks, invisible to family, friends, or coworkers. Savvy Chinese gay men have accessed VPNs and use Facebook and Google outside the Chinese firewall.

Participant 20 averred, “Chinese hear there are more and more social media. Not really public and out loud social media they approach and bridge western information gay information for Chinese.” Social media is a lifeline for some individuals in rural areas to meet and access other gay men in larger cities. Chinese Weibo has about 503 million members and transports more than 100 million messages a day. These numbers show the importance of social media in Chinese culture. Participant 13 discussed, “And I use groups and I chat with them. I found more and read how to believe in this gay world.”

Shanghai is the economic capitol of China, whereas Beijing is political, leaving Guangzhou as a major industrial area. These areas have large populations of expatriates and Western people coming in for business. In 2012, the Chinese government estimated that approximately 175,000 Western expatriates were living in Shanghai. Expatriates interact with and influence Chinese nationals, sometimes in unknown ways. One participant discussed working at a company where he did not have to hide his sexuality. Participant 8 stated, “My boss has known that I am gay because we knew on Pride. I choose the company with open working environment.”

Expatriates sometimes come in with a different outlook and style of interaction, often with individualist tendencies. Chinese gay men know that larger cities leave more room for interaction with expatriates. Participant 9 stated, “I think in the big city it’s more international and different people come together and they share the opinion and more influenced by western culture, so it’s easier to accept gay people and gay culture.”.

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

This study achieved data credibility through the three-part plan laid out in Chapter 3: triangulation, member checking, and seeking items not supporting the research. I

combined the interview raw data with the field notes taken during each interview and integrated this information with the transcribed data to assist in focused coding. Once the data were transcribed and initial coding was processed, I sent a bullet-point summary of each interview to participants to validate the responses. Once the participant responded to the member checking e-mail, coding continued. During the member-checking process, participants questioned no information.

Interviews resulted in richly detailed answers to the interview questions. Participants asked some minor questions to clarify questions before answering. Interviews led to detailed descriptions of participants' homosexual-identity development.

## Summary

The deep and informative personal narratives gave way to clear distinct information that I coded to address each research question. The three research questions had different contextual factors relating to a Chinese gay man's sexual-identity development. The narratives revealed several important themes regarding the effect of Western influence on Chinese gay men. The first theme, "Chinese Collectivist Culture" highlighted a deeper understanding of the impact that the conservative nature of Chinese culture, duty to the family, and the Communist government has over citizens. The second major theme, "Sexual Identity Development," focused on an examination of participants' sexual activity, their coming-out experiences, and the early ages at which Chinese gay men are discovering their sexual identities. The third theme, "Chinese Society," illustrated the ways certain groups and cities are more open and accepting of and hence significantly influencing the growing LGBT culture in China. The final theme, "Western Influence," detailed the growing influence of Western culture (including expatriates) on

the Chinese LGBT community, the power of social media and the Internet including pornography, and activities linked to the Shanghai LGBT social circle. The final chapter will discuss the grounded-theory developed from the narratives, other important implications of the study, and recommendations for further research.

# Chapter 5: Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the potential influence of Western culture on the sexual-identity development of Chinese gay men and to examine the extent to which the findings support or diverge from previous models of sexual-identity development found in the literature. Westerncentric gay-identity-development theories have tended not to consider regional or cultural distinctions that might be influential. Issues specific to non-Western cultures, in particular Asian collectivist cultures, have been underresearched. Chinese gay men of various ages face unique situations in navigating gay life in mainland China. The research findings provided a foundation to assist cross-cultural psychologists researching collectivist gay and lesbian communities.

I chose this topic to investigate the sexual-identity development of Chinese gay men at a time when China is becoming an economic power, leading to greater global scrutiny of their human-rights issues. This scrutiny is primarily Westerncentric and does not incorporate cultural considerations unique to China. Whereas current sexual-development theories focus on an individual recognizing and embracing a gay sexual identity in a sequential process, these theories have not considered the Chinese collectivist culture and its bias in favor of traditional male responsibilities of procreation and family continuance and its continuing effect on sexual-identity development. Increasingly, Chinese gay men want to express their individual sexual identity while seeking ways to protect their cultural imperatives. The number of expatriates working in China challenges this collectivist cultural marker, exposing Chinese people to Western individualistic concepts of sexual identity. Also, higher numbers of gay pride and gay community events are happening in China.

Several findings emerged from the study. One was the collectivist cultural norm to maintain traditional values. Participants expressed this norm as a duty to their family to get married and have a child and to avoid bringing shame to the family name. Many participants feared losing their relationship with their family because the concept and the expression of homosexuality was incomprehensible to family members. Homosexual-identity development is a fluid and changing expression for each individual. Also, internal, external, and cultural factors appeared to affect the development of a homosexual identity.

In addition to this fluidity, different periods or ages in the life course evidenced different behaviors. Stage models of homosexual-identity development did not account for all trajectories and experiences of the men in this study. Many of the models (i.e., Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989; Gock, 1992; McCarn and Fassinger, 1996, Fassinger and Miller, 1997) did not explain the life course in the Chinese collectivist culture. Identity is a sequential process of stages or phases through which a person passes when developing and discovering his or her homosexual identity. Yet, many participants in this study appeared not to pass through or experience consecutive stages, due to external or personal interference or obstacles. Homosexual-identity development in Chinese gay men was a more fluid, culturally influenced, and multidimensional experience than previous theorists would suggest.

## Interpretation of the Findings

I researched the issues influencing mainland Chinese homosexual-identity development. I examined the narratives of Chinese gay men to determine if current homosexual-identity-development models actively reflect culture norms and mores.

Homosexual-identity-development models have differing concepts, but all address the process of homosexual-identity development. The interview questions intended to answer the following:

1. Has the sexual-identity development of gay male Chinese nationals been influenced by exposure to Western culture?
2. To what extent has living in China's collectivist culture impacted Chinese gay men's sexual-identity development?
3. How has exposure to Western gay culture affected the sexual interactions (personal, social, and familial) of Chinese gay men?

The interviews provided answers to these research questions, explained in the specific categories below.

## Homosexual-Identity Development

This study supported some prior research. Troiden (1989), who developed the idea of sensitization or feeling different from a person's peers, posited that adolescents focus on conformity or nonconformity in the activities and social experiences of their peers, but generally did not label these activities or experiences as heterosexual or homosexual. Most of this study's participants acknowledged feeling different from their peers at an early or preteen age. Participants knew of the concept of homosexuality, but did not know it was part of their sexual identity. Most participants discussed this as the starting point for self-discovery.

Cass (1979) discussed the idea of identity foreclosure such that a person could choose not to take an active role in continuing a homosexual identity. The idea of choosing not to be an active homosexual was present in several participants and may

underscore the cultural marker of duty to the family. Other factors limiting the active expression of a homosexual identity included lack of positive social networks, or of negative experiences in the workplace.

Another concept from current research is positive self-acceptance. Positive self-acceptance is a visible stage in the individual's homosexual-identity development. Most previous theories postulated a stage or phase in which an individual develops a positive self-image. Cass (1979) identified this stage as identity pride, when the individual witnesses the differences between homosexual and heterosexual identities. Troiden (1989) noted that homosexuals seek places where their homosexual identity is accepted, ensuring positive reinforcement of their identity. Fassinger and Miller (1997) characterized positive self-acceptance as exploration wherein an individual seeks possible places in the homosexual community that has positive influences. Gock (1992) concluded that positive self-acceptance often involves building parallel identities, one in the gay community and one in the social circle—*she jiao quan*—and social network—*she jiao wang luo.* In this study, self-acceptance happened earlier in Chinese gay men than was proposed for non-Chinese gay men. Participants needed to find a positive connection to places, people, or a community as they started to disclose a homosexual identity. This connection reinforced participants' positive self-acceptance. Nevertheless, they had limited disclosure in nongay social circles and networks.

All participants were sexually active. Participants had choices when seeking a sexual partner. Cass (1979), Troiden (1989), Fassinger and Miller (1997), and D'Augelli (1997) discussed a step in which an individual will seek out sexual experiences in the gay

community. These experiences help solidify a homosexual identity. Some participants looked for Western expatriates, whereas others only wanted a Chinese sexual partner.

Many participants in the study discussed identifying their homosexual attractions at an early age (in elementary school), the earliest being 5- to 6-years of age. Other participants spoke about not having same-sex attractions and labeling themselves as heterosexual growing up; only in later life did they question their sexual identity. Participants who discussed questioning their sexual identity in later life would not fit into any of the prevailing theories of homosexual identity development. Cass (1979), Troiden (1989), and Fassinger and Miller (1997) discussed a stage in early life where a person questions and begins to see him or herself as different from others. A person would have no need to question their sexuality if they had no feelings of same-sex attraction at an early age.

Sexual identity cannot be listed as a stage or phase the participants passed through. Significant familial and societal obligations and pressures present in the non-Western life course alter the Western idea of sexual-identity development for Chinese gay men. These men were taught from an early age about their obligations to their parents, and these obligations came with a psychological price for individuals. Participants expressed various ways they experience pressure from youth to young adulthood. Some participants stated their parents guided them into what they would study in school and what universities they would attend, and assisted them in finding a suitable wife for the future. In these examples, the cultural family dynamics may have hindered the expression of individuality including sexual identity.

**Exposure to Western Culture**

The coming-out process detailed in previous theories such as D'Augelli (1997), defining the concept of coming out as making connections in the LGBT community, lacks understanding or discussion of specific ethnic or cultural definitions. Coming out for mainland Chinese gay men is still a personal issue and often part of a dual identity. Individuals typically are active in the gay community while unwilling to disclose their homosexuality to family, friends, or coworkers. Chinese gay men did not feel the need to come out, citing their duty to family and their feeling that coming out to others in their social circles would bring shame to the family.

As noted in Chapter 2, limited direct research on Asian communities describes issues specific to homosexual development and this population's struggles with family, discrimination, social support, and other issues. No identified research explored the creation and maintenance of dual identities in mainland Chinese gay men. This study's participants conveyed the existence of a dual identity as they fit their behavior to meet the cultural norms (i.e., not being out) while living as sexually active gays. When around family and friends, their behavior reflected a heterosexual orientation and when back in cities, far from their family, they would go to gay bars and be part of the gay community. Interestingly, the apparent lack of shame attached to this expression of dual identity spoke to the sense that it was normal. Dual identity has become a new norm in Shanghai gay men. I found no evidence of distress caused from creating a new homosexual circle outside of a person's original social circle—*she jiao quan*.

Gay pride is a Western idea and the associated shame with being gay does not seem to resonate in Asian collectivist cultures. Most theorists have a stage or phase when

interactions with the gay community signify embracing a homosexual identity. For Cass (1979) and Troiden (1989), this occurs in the coming-out stage. Fassinger and Miller (1997) discussed this stage as exploration, when the individual searches for a possible place in the gay community. D'Augelli (1997) introduced a nuance by being the first to build the concept of developing a homosexual social identity. D'Augelli suggested that an individual adapts their identity to different situations (i.e., a conservative workplace or a gay bar). Participants in the present study discussed a similar idea of changing behaviors and actions based on place and situation. Some participants left their job because of a conservative work environment. Others took on behaviors that were more stereotypically masculine with family or in their hometown. They did not seem to view simply being gay as shameful. Individual separated their ability to fulfill certain traditional expectations from their identification with homosexual behavior. Continuing strong traditional cultural values allowed for the creation and maintenance of a homosexual social circle.

Shanghai is often called the most Western city a person can experience and still be in China. A person can find almost everything needed for a Western way of life somewhere in Shanghai. Many participants stated they moved to Shanghai to find people like themselves or because they knew they would have greater exposure to Western culture in Shanghai. Gock (1992) discussed "fluid and contingent identity." This fluid identity was present in some participants, but not as a dual identity. Participants adapted behaviors, emotions, and actions to reflect their personal life over their sexual life. They clarified that being a homosexual is a small part of their life, unlike the Western idea of gay being a cultural identifier for many. Some participants were out to some friends,

coworkers, or one family member, and navigated their personal life around people with greater impact and influence in their life.

According to Chinese labor statistics, about 200,000 expatriates were working in Shanghai in 2013. This number has slowly been increasing since 2010, at about 6.5% a year. As this number has increased, so has the impact of Westerners working and living in Shanghai. Applying the 10% ratio, each year, Shanghai could have 20,000 LGBT expatriates living and working. These expatriates were visible in creating and assisting in the organizing of the seventh Shanghai Pride in 2016. This exposure to the idea of gay pride to mainland Chinese gay men created a struggle for some participants. A division emerged in responses from participants saying gay pride is a Western concept and others who believe it is important for China to start to see in these celebrations the recognition that being gay is not an illness or a phase. Taiwan and Hong Kong both have large and positive gay-pride festivals and are territories of the People's Republic of China. A few participants expressed wanting to visit Hong Kong or Taiwan pride because they heard or saw video of the positive celebration. Taiwan is said to have the largest gay-pride festival in Asia, including Southeast Asia.

Participants expressed high levels of Internet usage and the ability to access a VPN or other ways of accessing information outside the Chinese-controlled Internet. Many participants expressed searching the Internet for confirmation of the feelings they were experiencing. These searches usually ended at pornographic images, most often, Western pornography.

Participants expressed the need to search Chinese versions of many Western gay social-networking sites because the Western versions did not translate English into

Chinese. Because the Chinese government blocks all parts of Google, YouTube, and Facebook, one would think access to Western information would be hindered. However, a growing number of Chinese versions of Western social-media sites are becoming popular in the gay community. An example of a Chinese version of a Western social-media application is Grindr, made into Blued. Many participants expressed an initial use of the gay hook-up phone application Grindr. Because Grindr, an application that used Google maps and a person's phone-location service to find other gay men close to them, stopped working when Google was blocked, Blued (the Chinese version of Grindr) emerged with over 15 million members in the first year. Grindr currently has 6 million users.

Virtually every Western social-media site (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram), has a Chinese equivalent. Many participants expressed higher than normal levels of social-media usage. Most stated they sought people with similar ideas as themselves or found out about their homosexual feelings. Technology is playing an important role for Chinese gay men who are seeking sexual partners for sex and relationships. Most participants used translation features built into social media to attempt communication with other gay men who did not speak Chinese, or used their limited English skills.

**New Discoveries**

No theory of homosexuality-identity development emerged that addressed interactions with family dynamics in a collectivist culture. Most participants in the present study expressed a need to hide their homosexual identity from their families because of familial duty and responsibility to marry and have a child to satisfy their parents. This family obligation is so strong that Chinese gay men leave their hometowns

and travel to Beijing or Shanghai to physically and culturally distance themselves from this obligation and seek others like themselves to build the fourth circle in their Social Circle—*she jiao quan*. Participants developed a partial dual identity: one side is the collectivist role as the good son working in a big city to care for the family when he gets older; the other side reflects an individualist role of leaving the family to seek others like himself and enter a different community away from the family and traditional social circle. All participants reported they engaged in different actions and behaviors when in their hometown or near their family.

The older generations of Chinese parents and people in rural areas hold a strong connection to traditional and cultural values. No current theories of homosexual-identity development mention the integration of Chinese collectivist culture or Chinese traditional values as an influence or identifier. Some 20 to 24-year-old participants stated they are slowly beginning to share with parents, mothers more often, their homosexual identity. These participants also stated some level of disrespect toward their parents who expected them to carry on the family name and have a child.

The Chinese government has a strong influence on the almost 1.7 billion people living in China. Obedience, loyalty and duty are instilled at a very early age. People are taught not to question life or their place in it. Several participants mentioned the lack of freedom and recognition from the Chinese government. One participant even discussed the idea that Chinese people could not handle democracy or freedom because they would not know what to do when someone did not tell them how to act and conform. This structure has been in place for 5,000 years, adapting sexual and gender roles into a strong conservative order. Current theories of homosexual-identity development have not

accounted for a Communist controlled country and what role it might play as different sexualities develop in it. D'Augelli (1997) claimed homosexuality-identity development is fluid and ever changing as a person ages. Nevertheless, the theory does not discuss the constraints placed on an individual when making choices in these types of cultural and political influences.

China is continuing its development as an economic global leader. With this economic leadership comes the need to import Western goods and services to China and reconcile its age-old antithesis to integrating other and specifically Western expatriates into China. About 200,000 expatriates work yearly in Shanghai. Chinese nationals in Shanghai interact with these people as bosses, coworkers, business contacts, friends, and dating partners. With these interactions comes the conveyance of differences in values and beliefs. Western bosses and coworkers can influence the work dynamic by integrating Western individualistically focused work ethics into these businesses. The interactions work reciprocally. Both parties learn to incorporate the differences into social norms. Some international businesses require a more Western-oriented workplace. Some participants stated not wanting to work for a Western boss who made fun of homosexuals. Other participants wanted to work with Westerners to become proficient in English and feel supported in the work arena.

No current theory of homosexual-identity development discusses the impact of technology (e.g., social media or the Internet) on homosexual-identity development or in a gay community. In the West, people can go to urban areas and access many levels of gay community from shopping centers and restaurants to bars or coffee shops catering to the gay community. These sites are not as ubiquitous in China. The largest cities have a

limited gay community, mostly reflected in gay bars and a small number of gay saunas. Theories of homosexual-identity development like those of Cass (1979) and D'Augelli (1997) need to incorporate the role of intrapersonal meetings through social media and the Internet.

Individualistic ideas are becoming more mainstream in Chinese younger citizens. Chinese top high schools are seeing 50% to up to 90% of students wanting to go abroad for their bachelor's and master's degrees. Gay Chinese men working with Shanghai Pride are younger citizens who do not want to conform to the traditional influences of their family. These participants are moving away from their families to create a more positive life course.

## Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were minimized through the use of data triangulation, member checking, and negative analysis. Data triangulation established data-collection recruitment from various sources, coding the raw data, and reflective journaling and field notes. Member checking sent the axial-coded responses back to participants e-mail to verify the summary of responses. Participant responses from member checking confirmed the details and summaries of the interviews. No discrepant case emerged from the data collection or analysis.

The first limitation discussed in Chapter 1 was sample size. Charmaz (1996) stated the saturation point was 20 participants. This research included 22 participants from various parts of China, all having had lived or currently living in Shanghai. The normative participant was a Chinese gay man, but differences noted in participant

responses came from the family dynamic, commitment to traditional values, or self-acceptance.

The second limitation was age of the participants. The study parameters established an interview pool of individuals between the ages of 18 and 65. Actual participation was 18 participants aged 18 to 30 years old and four over 30 years old. During the interview process, I sought to recruit more interviewees over 30 and asked participants if they knew others who might want to participate. A few limited responses came from possible participants over 40, but none wanted to be interviewed, even in a confidential setting. The younger generation seemed to be more open and flexible talking about their homosexual-identity development.

A third possible limitation was the level of self-acceptance. Most participants recognized a high level of self-acceptance. This begs the question, however, what is a normal level of self-acceptance in a Chinese gay man? Participants had positive images of the formation of their homosexual identity that underscored their level of self-acceptance.

Another possible limitation is that it is not clear the degree to which the participants were diverse in terms of socioeconomic status (SES). As a result, it is unknown the degree to which Chinese gay male sexual identity development might vary as a function of SES.

## Recommendations

Many participants asked where to find information or support for their homosexual identity. Mainland Chinese gay men wanted to be better informed, politically and socially, regarding sexual identity in general and homosexual identity in particular, as

it related to their own collectivist culture. Given the LGBT political advancements in China over the last few months, the need to examine LGBT issues in China is evident. On December 20, 2014, the Haidian District court ruled in favor of a 30-year-old gay man whose family pressured him to “cure” his homosexuality. The clinic used electroshock therapy and hypnosis when the man had expressed homosexual thoughts. Judge Wang Chenhong stated homosexuality was no longer a mental illness and could not be treated as such. Yet many rural areas will not hear or understand this court ruling. Research into rural Chinese gay men’s navigation of sexuality identity is critical to assist in the heteronormative deconstruction of rural traditional thinking. A recent group of activists, in August 2015, sought to discuss the homosexual-conversion therapy still happening in many places in China. Shock therapy was offered to activists who expressed their homosexual feelings but wanted to conceal this from others. Homosexuality continues to carry stigma and these activists recorded doctors treating them with shock therapy.

The narratives came from individuals aged 21 to 36 from a Shanghai pride e-mail blast. Snowball sampling for other participants occurred. Research with Chinese gay men over the age of 35 would greatly add to the analysis of sexual-identity development in strong collectivist cultures.

A small group of participants mentioned HIV. Research is needed into Chinese gay men and HIV, condom use, and issues surrounding marriages of convenience. Most HIV research in China is with male sex workers from Hong Kong or MSM, not specifically the homosexual populations.

Social disparities and inequalities in Chinese social structures have strong bearings on the collectivist culture of China. Many participants described feeling a lack

of support from the Chinese government to show acceptance of homosexual issues in China. This is an area for further study.

## Positive Social Change

Groups around the country are currently urging the Chinese nation to accept homosexuality. The government allowed the first positive message for posting from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, posted in 2015 for the Chinese New Year. Yet, the dissemination of legal rulings indicating homosexuality is not an illness have failed to spread to many areas of China. Larger cities see slightly more acceptance, but an invisible undertone limits acceptance of homosexuality. Research is needed to bring educational, cultural, and political clarity to the subject of homosexual identity to people who can then influence a greater acceptance of homosexuality identity.

Individuals will discover others in the world who experience the same struggles as they do. This can bring positive awareness and self-esteem to challenges faced in the family. Families can know having a homosexual in the family is a challenge for the homosexual person as well. Children have a need to please their parents and be a successful child. Participants discussed moving away from the family to have more anonymity from parents or people in some social circles. People can use this information to address policy and change views in the Chinese culture. Expanding research and ideas in Chinese universities is an important step. Expanding outward to others areas of China, academic can show that their research can help spread a positive message that homosexuality is not an illness. Researchers can challenge stereotypes and images to bring about positive change in the Chinese collectivist culture.

## Conclusion

A qualitative approach was used to examine mainland Chinese gay men's homosexual-identity development. Some participants were able to express this outwardly. Some were not ready to share these feelings with others. The participants were 21 to 36-year-old men who currently live or had lived in Shanghai in the last 3 years. Participants discussed various levels of connections to the homosexual community in Shanghai. Some individuals were active with LGBT groups and visited bars. Others kept separate circles inside and outside the LGBT community.

Levels of individual homosexual acceptance varied with age. Younger participants felt greater acceptance to be open, even in the workplace. Participants had various struggles with their homosexual identity, mostly external. These interactions are instructive in developing different aspects of homosexual-identity development. Participants still found positive acceptance with their homosexual identity and want to share their experiences to bring better lives to other homosexuals in China.

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# Appendix A: Interview Questions in English

Can you tell me about your experience of "coming out" and disclosing to others in your life that you are gay?
How old were you when you first shared this with someone in your life?
Are there people in your life who you have not shared this with (e.g., friends, family, co-workers) or with whom you would not be comfortable sharing this part of yourself? If so, can you share with me why you feel this way?

I'd like to ask you about your identity as a gay person and how that may have developed over time – can you recall when in your life you started to realize this about yourself?
Was it difficult for you when you first began to realize this about your own sexual identity? Have you experienced any specific struggles or resistance *within yourself* about acknowledging this truth about your sexual feelings/orientation? Has knowing about your identity affected your relationships with others in any way?
Were there others in your life you could talk to about what you were discovering about yourself? Have you struggled at all with self-acceptance related to your sexual identity/orientation? If so, are there certain circumstances where (or certain people with whom) you experience that struggle more acutely?

I'd like to talk with you now about your perceptions of what it is like being gay for someone who is Chinese, living in China. Have you experienced any negative judgments/prejudice directed towards gays in China?
Are there certain groups of people/sectors of the society who you believe are *less* open and accepting of gays and gay culture in China? Are there certain sectors of the society who you feel are *more* open and accepting of gays and gay culture in China?
Do you think exposure to Western culture has served in any way to change people's attitudes toward gays in China? If yes, can you share, how/why you think this might be the case?
Are there visible Western gay cultural markers, identifiers, or information visible and accessible in China for Chinese males to access?
How do you participate at all in the Western gay community that lives here in China? How, if at all has that experience been different for you than being part of the non-Western gay community in China?

Have you experienced any conflict between your sexual identity and your identity as a Chinese person? Are there any particular circumstances in which (or people with whom) you feel the conflict between those two worlds (i.e., being Chinese and being gay) more acutely?

If it's okay I'd like to ask you a question about your sexual activity.
How do you engage in sexual relations exclusively with other Chinese? With non-Chinese? With both? If you have a preference, why do you feel this way?

Appendix B: Interview Questions in Chinese

1. 你能告诉我你的”出柜”经验吗，就是向你生活中的其他人表明你是同性恋？
b. 你第一次告诉生活中的某个人这一点时，是多大年龄？
c. 生活中有没有人（比如，朋友、家人、同事），你还没有告诉他（她）这一点或者跟他（她）表明自己的这一部分，会让你不舒服？如果有，你能告诉我，为什么你有这样的感觉吗？

2. 我想问问你关于你的同性恋者身份的问题，以及它是如何随着时间发展变化的——你能回忆起，在生活中你是从多大年龄开始意识到自己这一点的？
a. 对你而言，刚一开始意识到你自己性的身份，是否很艰难？*在内心中*，对于承认自己的性感觉/倾向这个事实，你有没有感到挣扎或者抗拒？
b. 你有没有发现过，知道自己的这一点是否在某些方面（或者以某种方式）影响了你与别人的关系？
c. 生活中有没有其他人，你可以与他谈论你对自己的这个发现？
d. 对于自己性身份/性取向相关的自我接纳，你是否现在有时还在挣扎？如果是，是否有某种环境让你感到在那里这种挣扎更强烈，或者是否有某些人你跟他在一起时这种挣扎更强烈？

对于中国人或生活在中国的人是同性恋的一些情况，现在我想请你谈谈你的看法。
你感觉在中国对于同性恋的负面判断（偏见）是否依然存在？在中国，有没有某些人群或社会领域对同性恋者和同性恋文化，相对更加不放开，接受度更低？又有没有哪些社会领域在这方面相对更开放，接受度更高呢？
你是否认为，接触西方文化以某种方式在中国促进了人们对于同性恋者态度的改变？如果是，你能否谈谈，你认为这种改变是如何或为何发生的？

你是否体验过你的性身份与你作为一个中国人的身份之间的冲突？
有没有某种环境使你在其中感受到这两个世界（作为中国人和作为同性恋者）之间的冲突更加尖锐？或者有没有谁使你和他或她在一起时感到这种冲突更尖锐？

如果可以的话，我想问一些关于你的性行为的问题。
你是否只与其他中国人发生性关系，或者只与外国人发生性关系，还是与两者都有？
在中国你究竟有没有加入过居住在中国这里的西方同性恋社群？如果的确加入过，那么你在其中的体验与加入在中国的非西方的同性恋社群有什么不同？

Appendix C: Demographic Data Form

Demographics
人口统计资料
Age:
年龄？

1a. Currently employed? Y/N
目前采用的？

How do you identify ethnically?
你是怎么定义人种？

How long have you lived in (city)?
你在（这个城市）住多久了？

Where did you grow up?
你是在哪里长大的？

What religion/spiritual practices do you identify with?
什么宗教/精神时间是和你是一致的？

How do you identify regarding your sexual orientation? (e.g., gay, heterosexual, bisexual, questioning…)
你是怎么定义你的性取向的？（如：同性恋，异性恋，双性恋等……）

Have you come out? (told people you are gay)
你出柜了吗？（告诉别人你是同志）

Currently, are you either in a long-term relationship with the same person that has lasted more than a year?□Asian or Western male?
目前，你是和同一个人有超过一年的长期的情侣关系吗？亚洲男性还是西方男性？

What is the highest grade you have completed? (Check only one)
你完成的最高年级是什么？
Less than eighth grade
低于八年级
More than eighth grade but did not complete High School
高于八年级但是没有读完高中
High School Diploma
高中文凭
Some College/Tech School/Tech School Graduate
某个学院/技术学校文凭

College Graduate
大专以上学历
Graduate School-not yet completed degree/Master's Degree
本科-没有读完/硕士

In general, what language(s) do you speak? (Check only one)
一般来说，你说什么语言？
Only English
英语
English better than Chinese
英语比中文好
Chinese better than English
中文比英语好
Only Chinese
中文
Both English and Chinese equally
中文和英语
Other language (please specify):
其他语言（请详细说明）

11. Currently, who do you live with most of the time? (Check ALL that apply)
目前，大多数时间你是和谁住在一起？（查看所有适用的）
Alone
自己
Biological parents
亲生父母□□
Friends
朋友
Other relatives
其他亲人
Partner, lover, or spouse
伴侣，爱人或者配偶
Your children
你的子女
Other people not mentioned
其他没有提到的人
(please specify):_____
(请详细说明):

12. How often do you read a gay or lesbian oriented paper, magazine, websites, or other local gay/bisexual papers?

你多久读一次男性同性恋或者是女性同性恋的报纸，杂志，网页或者是其他当地的男性同性恋/女性同性恋报纸？
Never
从不
Once a month or less
一个月一次或更少
Several times a month
一个月几次
About once a week
大约一周一次
Several times a week or daily
一周几次或每天

13.How often do you go to a gay bar?
你多久去一次同志酒吧？
□
Never
从不
Once a month or less
一个月一次或更少
Several times a month
一个月几次
About once a week
大约一周一次
Several times a week or daily
一周几次或每天

14.About how many Western gay men would you call personal friends (as opposed to casual acquaintances)?
大约有多少西方的男性同性恋你会称他们为朋友（相反的一般熟人）
None
没有
1 gay friend
1个
2 gay friends
2个
3 or 4 gay friends
3或4个
5 or more gay friends
5个或更多

15.About how many Chinese or Asian gay men would you call personal friends (as opposed to casual acquaintances)?
大约有多少中国或是亚洲的男性同性恋你会称他们为朋友（相反的一般熟人）
None
没有
1 gay friend
1个
2 gay friends
2个
3 or 4 gay friends
3或4个
5 or more gay friends
5或更多

Appendix D: Recruitment Data English-Chinese

Recruitment
研究项目采访对象招募

Looking for Chinese Gay males to participate in a research study on sexual identity development in Mainland China. The study is for a doctoral dissertation.
The study will look at disclosure, behaviors, and changing attitudes toward homosexuality in Mainland China.
我们正在招募中国男同性恋者参加关于中国大陆的性身份认同发展的研究。这是一个博士论文的研究项目，将要考察中国大陆的同性恋者出柜、行为以及对于同性恋的态度变化。

The study is seeking about 25 participants:
Who are at least Age18
Have had sex with a male in last 12 months.
Speak Chinese or English
Willing to Skype or other social media confidentially.
们需要大约25位满足以下要求的参与者：
年龄在18岁的男性，
在过去的12个月内与其他男性发生过性行为,
说汉语或英语，

The study will be 5 questions discussing ideas about identifying as gay in China and take under 1 hour.
The study is confidential. No one will have access to your answers. The interviews will be audio recorded.

You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire about demographic data and provide an e-mail address incase the researcher or the participant have any questions. There will be a follow up e-mail summarizing your responses to verify.

这项研究将包括5个问题，讨论的是中国的同性恋认同问题，大约需要1小时。
这项研究是保密的。任何人都不会得到您的回答。谈话过程将被录音。
您会被要求完成一份有关人口统计学数据的简短问卷，并提供一个电子邮箱地址，以备研究者或参与者有问题要沟通。

If you are interested or know someone who is interested please e mail:
psycresearchchina@gmail.com
如果你对这项研究感兴趣，或者知道有人对这项研究感兴趣，请您给我们发电子邮件：psycresearchchina@gmail.com