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LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY
CHINA

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Meek School of Journalism and New Media
The University of Mississippi

by

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ABSTRACT

For a long time, topics on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender(LGBT) are regarded as taboo in China. On June 26, 2015, the United States passed the same-sex marriage law promoted an intense discussion in Chinese society. Lots of LGBT people started to fight for their rights and many netizens also expressed a desire for the legalization of same-sex marriage in China. However, is China really ready for legalizing the law? This paper gives an answer to this question from an historical view.

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I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: INTRODUCTION

The United States Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2015 that states¹ cannot discriminate and ban same-sex marriage, a milestone in the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender(LGBT) rights. It legalized same-sex marriage throughout the nation², which makes the United States the 21st nation around the world to approve the right of same-sex couples to marry. Other countries are the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Canada, South Africa, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Iceland, Argentina, Denmark, France, Brazil, Uruguay, New Zealand, Britain, Luxembourg, Scotland, Finland, and Ireland.³

As soon as the United States passed the same-sex marriage law, an intense discussion developed in the Chinese society. It encourages lots of the LGBT people in China to fight for their rights. At the same time, many netizens express a desire for the legalization of same-sex marriage in China. Yinhe Li, sociologist and the first female sexologist in China, devotes herself to research on homosexual behaviors and said legalizing same-sex marriage will only be the first step.⁴

Although, most people have a positive attitude on LGBT rights, no more than one year later, on April. 5, 2016, the Mississippi governor signed an anti-gay law which allows

¹ The 13 states that restricted or banned same-sex marriage before the rule: Arkansas, Georgia, Ohio, Texas, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska, South Dakota, Mississippi, Louisiana, Missouri, North Dakota and Tennessee.

² Karimi, F., & Pearson, M.(2015, February 13). The 13 states that still ban same-sex marriage – CNN. Com. Retrieved September 28, 2015, from <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/13/us/states-same-sex-marriage-ban/>

³ International/ Freedom to Marry. (n. d.). Retrieved September 28, 2015, from <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/landscape/entry/c/international>

⁴ 李银河：无论美国中国同性婚姻合法只是第一步. (2015, June 28). Retrieved September 28, 2015, from http://culture.ifeng.com/a/20150628/44059466_0.shtml

“businesses to refuse services to gay couples based on religious objections, ignoring opposition from businesses who had worried the legislation could cost the state economic opportunities in the future.”⁵ What is more, Mississippi is not the only state to do so, North Carolina also signed a law that eliminates anti-discrimination protections for all LGBT people.⁶ These two laws raise the conflicts in the society and also show how difficult LGBT people have to fight for their rights.

As one of the fastest developing nations in the world, China is known as traditional, not only because it is famous for its restriction on media content, but also for its conservative attitude on such topics as gay and lesbianism. During the last 30 years, scholars devoted themselves to legalizing same-sex marriage in China. But all the proposals have been rejected.

Before the new Chinese criminal law was published in 1997, homosexual behavior was regarded as hooliganism — a crime. The public had a lot of misunderstandings or no awareness on gay issues. Homosexual behavior was regarded as a mental illness, and LGBT people were described as “psychopaths”⁷ who needed to be cured by psychologists. This group is under huge social pressure and has been discriminated against for a long time.

This is still an issue, even though, the public, especially the young generations, tend to have an open attitude about homosexual behavior and support LGBT rights in recent years. Low social awareness and their group psychology make only 20 percent of Chinese people

⁵ M., Berman. (2016, April 5). Mississippi governor signs law allowing businesses to refuse service to gay people. Retrieved April 13, 2016, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/04/05/mississippi-governor-signs-law-allowing-business-to-refuse-service-to-gay-people/>

⁶ Rich, M. (2016). North Carolina Gay Bias Law Draws a Sharp Backlash. Retrieved April 15, 2016, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/us/north-carolina-law-antidiscrimination-pat-mccrory.html>

⁷ 中国同性恋生存状况调查. (2012, September 16) . Retrieved September 28, 2015, from http://lady.163.com/12/0916/21/8BI8FD1300264IIU_3.html

who have voted for such rights in China.⁸ LGBT people in China expect a good future for their lives, but they still have a long way to go.

⁸ Ibid 4

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this paper is to provide a cultural background on homosexual issues in China, at the same time to examine the historical development of how LGBT behavior was viewed by the Chinese government and the public step by step. This paper will also explain the obstacles and development of homosexual situations in terms of culture, media accounts, and public opinion on this topic.

The documentary provides a contemporary view on LGBT situations in China. It tells stories through LGBT people themselves, which also gives an in-depth information and personal experience on this issue.

Besides the aims above, this paper also seeks to answer several research questions through an examination of the historical accounts, media reports, and research articles that deal with the current situation and development tendency of homosexuals in China.

1. What is the history of how traditional Chinese culture defines homosexual behavior?
2. Why it is difficult for LGBT people to come out in China?
3. How does the mainstream media portray LGBT behaviors in China and shape public opinions?
4. What is the current situation of LGBT group in China?
5. What is the public opinion on this issue?
6. What is the biggest obstacle for legalizing homosexual rights in China?
7. What is the future of homosexual people in China?

III. METHODOLOGY

A literature review will be conducted to identify articles, books, media reports, research studies, documentaries, blogs, and websites that are relevant to providing historical perspectives and understanding of the LGBT situation in China. This historical research can help to provide deeper information of the study.

The documentary was mainly conducted by face-to-face interviews. Interviewees included lesbians, gays, parents to LGBT people, straight people, college students and graduate students in different universities, and several LGBT organizations in China. Various participants help to show a comprehensive idea on this issue.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Under what kind of situation did you realize you like people with same gender?
2. How old were you?
3. From the first time you noticed you are gay till you accepted you are gay, what was the process of self-identification?
4. During the whole process, who is the person that helps you most?
5. Under Chinese social environment, what do you think are the most important factors that influence you whether to come out or not?
6. Under what type of situation did you come out to your parent(s)?
7. How did your parent(s) react to it?
8. Any changes of yourself before and after you come out?

9. Based on the current social environment, have you ever thought about emigrating to a country with high social awareness to LGBT people?
10. As a member of LGBT people, what do you think is the best attitude the society should have to this group of people?
11. Have you ever thought about getting married?
12. Do you think China will finally legalize same-sex marriage?
13. What is the purpose of this organization?
14. Has the organization met any type of intervention from the government?
15. What is your attitude to LGBT people?
16. How do you think the mainstream media portrays LGBT people in China?

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

In ancient Chinese society, women always had lower social statues than men, and a man could have several wives. However, with the collapse of Qing Dynasty, the new government attempted to stop the practice. The first Marriage Law was published in 1950, it said:

“Article 2: A marriage system based on the free choice of partners, on monogamy and on equality between man and woman shall be applied.

Article 5: Marriage must be based upon the complete willingness of both man and woman. Neither party may use compulsion on the other party and no third party may interfere.”⁹

This law gave women equal rights with men. It was a milestone, but it defined a legal marriage as between a man and a woman. There was no word describing same-sex marriage.

The 10-year Cultural Revolution (1966~1976) had significance for the Chinese culture and economy. After the Cultural Revolution, Chinese society called for a new series of laws.¹⁰ Huiyu Su, the professor from East China University of Political Science and Law, was involved in making the first criminal law. He recalled the part of the law that regulated hooliganism:

“Article 160: affrays, provoke and insult women or other hooliganism¹¹ and disrupt public order, if the circumstances are flagrant, shall be sentenced to imprisonment of not more than seven years, criminal detention or public surveillance. The ringleaders of

⁹ Marriage Law of the People’s Republic of China. (n. d.). Retrieved October 28, 2015, from <http://newyork.china-consulate.org/eng/lqz/laws/t42222.htm>

¹⁰ Ai, F. (2013, June 15). 鸡奸罪，一段被以往的历史. Retrieved November 1, 2015, from http://www.danlan.org/disparticle_43748.htm

¹¹ Other hooliganism can be defined as general fighting, too close relationship between man and woman (not couple) and homosexual behavior.

rogue group, fixed-term imprisonment of not less than seven years”.¹²

In this law, homosexual behavior was not clearly defined, but was classified as hooliganism. Since 1983, one could be sentenced to death for hooliganism, and LGBT behavior was publicized in a negative way.¹³ After the new criminal law was published in 1997, homosexual behavior was described as a mental illness instead of a crime. But the public usually uses “psychopaths”¹⁴ as a pejorative for homosexuality.

In April 2001, homosexuality no longer was defined as a mental illness. This was 19 years after the United States announced homosexuality is not a disease, and seven years after the World Health Organization eliminated homosexuality as one of 10 mental and behavioral disorders in the International Classification of Diseases.¹⁵

From 2003 to 2013, more discussions concerning LGBT persons developed among young generations in China. Owing to the Internet, more space was provided to LGBT issues. LGBT organizations, such as Beijing LGBT Center¹⁶ and Rainbow Space,¹⁷ emerged in a few big cities.

Today, there still are no laws making same-sex relationships legal in China. The proposal to legalize same-sex marriage was submitted on the National People’s Congress of the PRC and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference again on February 26,

¹² Ibid 10

¹³ Ibid 10

¹⁴ Ibid 7

¹⁵ Ibid 7

¹⁶ Beijing LGBT Center official website: <http://www.bjlgbtcenter.org.cn/s--218.html>

¹⁷ 国内有哪些公益的LGBT组织? Retrieved September 28, 2015, from <http://www.zhihu.com/question/20578932>

2015.¹⁸ Yinhe Li, the first person to appeal for the legislation of same-sex marriage in China, had proposed same-sex marriage bills in 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2008.¹⁹ However, the Chinese government response was: no approval, no disapproval and no promotion.²⁰

Richard Burger who authored “Behind the Red Door: Sex in China” wrote that:

“It was only in 1997 that homosexuality was decriminalized in China and a little more than a decade ago since it was removed from the list of mental illnesses. The dark years of complete stigmatization of homosexuality under Mao, the practice of which was punishable by prison time, had finally lifted, and China’s cosmopolitan cities like Beijing and Shanghai now boast robust LGBT communities, complete with support groups, bars and an array of gay meeting places. In 2009, a male couple held a symbolic wedding in public not far from Tiananmen Square, and China Daily splashed the photo of the two men in a passionate embrace across its pages. Other symbolic gay and lesbian weddings have been held across the country and have been covered positively by the Chinese media. Spectators have gathered to watch the “wedding”. Applauding and wishing the couples well. It makes one wonder, is China ready for gay marriage?”

“The short answer is no.”²¹

China praises filial piety, particularly, the importance of carrying on a family’s name. Thus, pressure was intensified by the one child policy. It advocated each couple have one child. This policy made almost all children born in the 1980s and 1990s to have no siblings. Because of this, the majority of gays and bisexual men hide their sexual orientation.²² According to the first China LGBT Community Survey, only 3 percent of gay men are “com-

¹⁸ Li, Y. (2015, March 2). 同志父亲致信千名人大代表呼吁同性婚姻合法化. Retrieved November 1, 2015, from http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_473d53360102vi7q.html

¹⁹ Branigan, T. (2009, February 24). Beijing’s “happy couples” launch campaign for same-sex marriages. Retrieved November 1, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/feb/25/gay-rights-china-beijing>

²⁰ Ibid 19

²¹ Harris, D. (2013, July 5). Homosexuality in China. Retrieved November 15, 2015, from <http://www.chinalaw-blog.com/2013/07/homosexuality-in-china.html>

²² Powell, B. (2014, September 17). Gay Conversion Therapy Lives On in China. Retrieved November 17, 2015, from <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/09/26/chinese-quack-selling-gay-aversion-therapy-sued-victim-270997.html>

pletely out”.²³

With disagreement from families and society, homosexual people in China have to pursue two types of marriage: a contract marriage between a gay and a lesbian, or a marriage in which a gay pretends to be heterosexual. Clearly, the “perfect” solution for gay people in China is to enter into a contract marriage with an LGBT person. Yihu Hu said, there is a special type of family in China. The husband and wife never live together. Both are LGBT persons and have their own sex partner.²⁴

According to Beichuan Zhang, the first person to conduct large scale research on homosexuality in China and a consultant of the Chinese Association of STD and AIDS Prevention and Control, said among 30 million gay people in China, at least 24 million have been or are about to enter heterosexual marriage, because they are under great social discrimination, and because of the traditional pressures to continue the family.²⁵ There has already been 40 million people involved in a heterosexual marriage with gay and lesbian people without noticing. Clearly, homosexual people in China are still too timid to identify their sexual orientation. This practice contributes to the notoriety of gays in Chinese society.

However, another reason that worsens the situation of LGBT people in China is media. For a long time, the LGBT issue was a forbidden topic in the media of China. Back to the early years of the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, the homosexual phenomenon was regarded as “capitalistic behavior”²⁶ and was not acceptable to the socialistic ideology of China. During that time, media were propaganda tools of the Communist Party. Mainstream

²³ Ibid 22

²⁴ 中国同性恋“形婚”因受独生子女政策限制. (2013, September 24). Retrieved November 17, 2015 from http://phtv.ifeng.com/program/shijiekanzhongguo/detail_2013_09/24/29840893_0.shtml

²⁵ Ibid 7

²⁶ Ibid 7

media avoided publication of LGBT issues in order to avoid attracting the attention of the government.

In the 1990s, many books on LGBT issues were imported and translated into Chinese. The Chinese government realized the impossibility of ignoring the issues in the media. When the LGBT issues first appeared in Chinese media, they continued portraying the word “gay” as synonymous with “AIDS”.²⁷ After the article was published, it marginalized this group in society, which made people think only LGBT persons could have it.

Indeed, the highest number of the HIV carrier is gay people. One of the reasons is that to compare with straight people, LGBT people have higher awareness to have the HIV test every year. Another reason is owing to the society. Same-sex partners usually hide their relationship. They do not have equal social rights and cannot be protected by law, which makes their relationship more frangible. Gays frequently change their partners. This increases the possibility of being infected by HIV.

By the end of 2013, 780,000 HIV cases existed, and 154,000 persons died of AIDS.²⁸ The rate of diagnosis of the disease in China is 54 percent, which means that 46 percent of the patients have not been found with HIV.²⁹ This intensifies the fear that already exists regarding the issues of gay.

Besides that, when the media reports on LGBT people, they identify them with a prefix “lesbian”, “gay”, or “transgender” all the time. Media put a label on LGBT people and insert an unwitting bias to show that the group differs from “normal people”. Because of these misleading articles, only 8 percent of parents who live in some middle-sized cities can

²⁷ Ibid 7

²⁸ 中国是艾滋病感染人数比较严重的国家之一. (2014, December 1). Retrieved September 28, 2015, from <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2014/12-01/6832868.shtml>

²⁹ Ibid 28

accept that their child is a LGBT person.³⁰

With the development of new technologies, it makes all kinds of media more accessible to people's daily life than before. The widespread of the Internet also makes LGBT information available to almost everyone. The public can get useful information on this topic, but at the same time, some people claim the Internet provides bad role models for users to imitate.

According to the latest rules published by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the People's Republic of China on December 31, 2015, said TV shows or movies depict or contain any type of abnormal sexual relationships or behaviors are forbidden to show publicly.³¹ This rule also classified these abnormal behaviors clearly as fornication, homosexual behavior, parasexuality, sexual assault, and etc.³² Therefore, all of the reasons show that China is still not ready to talk about issues on LGBT in public, and also, it is too soon for China to legitimize same-sex marriage.

³⁰ China's Big Closet, by Powell, Bill. Newsweek Global. 9/26/2014, Vol. 163 Issue 12, p18-20. 3p.2 Color Photographs.

³¹ 广电总局：早恋同性恋转世将不得出现电视剧中. (2016, March 4). Retrieved April 16, 2016, from http://www.js.xinhuanet.com/2016-03/04/c_1118238157.htm

³² Ibid 32

V. THE DOCUMENTARY

The documentary is ordered by the following ideas:

1. Introduction: there is a group people called gay people
2. A personal experience of realizing himself is gay
3. Older generations' idea about the definition of gay/LGBT
4. From LGBT people's perspective, why they think coming out is difficult
5. Public opinions on LGBT people
6. Lots of organizations develop in recent years that help LGBT people make more friends and gain social awareness, with a personal story of two girls
7. Talking about the difficulties:
 - a. Hard to get married
 - b. Government intervenes LGBT organization event
 - c. Mainstream media have uncertain attitude or sometimes bad influence on LGBT community
 - d. HIV problem
8. Expectations to the future

CONTENT OF THE DOCUMENTARY:

(Hui Yang) "We say discrimination is not a good thing, and we say diversity is beautiful. We keep saying that, straight people, homophobia people saying that. We need to tell this thing to the world, there is a group people called gay people."

(Xiaowen Ding) "When I was in middle school, I started to realize that I like boys. I had the feeling that I could only be friends with girls. During that time, I didn't understand. So, I searched online why boys like boys. Then, I saw a lot of people saying that gay are freaks,

have mental diseases, and are not healthy. It was a lot of bad information. I started to wonder if I was really a freak. I faced hardship. Later, I made some gay friends. They told me to be easy. It's a normal thing. Then, I gradually started to accept that I am a gay."

(Narrator) For a long time, topics on LGBT were regarded as taboo in China. During the time of Great Cultural Revolution (1966~1976), homosexual behavior was classified as hooliganism. People were even put into prison. However, homosexual phenomenon has existed this whole time.

(Yuejia Qin) "My mom was born in 1956. The first time I told my mom I'm a lesbian, she asked me why I did an illegal thing like that? According to people who were born in the 1950s, homosexual behavior was illegal. According to people who were born in the 1960s, LGBT people had mental diseases. Actually, these accusations have already been eliminated by law, but their mindset still stays the same."

(Narrator) There are twenty-one nations in the world who legalized same-sex marriage. However, none of these countries is an Asian country. According to data from ifeng, 30 percent of LGBT people are afraid to come out in China. 50 percent of them worry about the pressure from their parents and society. Half are thinking about a marriage of convenience, and 5% of LGBT people have already been forced into a heterosexual marriage.

(Hui Yang) "This whole environment makes it so hard, makes it so hard for people to come out, makes it so hard for whom they are worth coming out."

(Narrator) According to the Second Annual China LGBT Community Survey, there is only 3% of gay people and 6% of lesbian who have totally come out. Most LGBT people prefer to only come out to their close friends. Almost half of them hesitate to come out, and they say the biggest concern is the pressure from their family.

(Ye Yuan) "The bottom line is I can have a fake marriage. However, it will be better if I don't have to. I think the biggest pressure of LGBT people in China is the pressure from family, not from the society. Or put it in another way, the pressure from family is facilitated by society. Chinese society is a Confucian society, and family is the heart of the society. It is not my own decision to choose to get married or not. It's a family's decision. So, you can't decide for yourself. Your parents even can't decide it, because they also have their siblings and their parents. So, it's like a whole family issue, which results in a lot of pressure."

(Xiaowen Ding) "To my family, I stop where it should stop. I can't say it in a clear way to them. I'm afraid if I tell them, we won't get along with each other. You know, that feeling is bad. It will not only put pressure on me, but also on my parents."

(Guozhan Chen) "These young people usually struggle before they come out to their parents. If they can act more brave, like my son, just tell their parents, they may have an answer that is not as bad as what they imagine. In fact, all parents love their children, and hope they have a happy life. However, with less knowledge on what is gay, what is LGBT, I would say 100 percent of parents will feel miserable. No one feels easy about coming out. You should have

the preparation.”

(Narrator) Indeed, it needs coverage for LGBT people to come out to their families. Individual personality is also a considerable element.

(Yuejia Qin) “In Chinese people’s eyes, maybe I’m egocentric. But I want to be myself. I want myself happy. I will do whatever I feel comfortable. I am what I am.”

(Hui Yang) “I’d like to say I’m gay. Because I firmly believe that the way people look at you hugely depends on the way you look at yourself. If you feel ashamed to talk about it, the people you are talking to will get nervous. Then, things will be awkward because you think it’s an unspeakable fact.”

(Yuejia Qin) “As far as you know, people have ten thousand excuses to say no if they don't personally want to come out. Even though, they get tons of support from their surroundings, there is still a vice saying no deep in their hearts. People who want to do it will do it even if they are only by themselves. I think that individual ideology is influenced by the whole environment of the society. As soon as you decide to come out, you will do it. So when I am talking about issues on coming out, people blame me that it is a lot of easier said than done. But, it had tortured me several years before I came out. Indeed, I say it in an easy way, but everybody has his or her own story.”

(Narrator) Even if LGBT people choose to come out, the public has different opinions on this issue.

(Shuai Tang) “Most people in society prefer to label LGBT people as a group. They are a group. For example, if you say I’m a student group, the public thinks it is ok, but if you say they are a LGBT group, people will think it’s not good, and it goes against the mainstream, which is not a right opinion.”

(Gu Yi) “The mainstream of society, of the world, is a man and a woman together. From my point of view, China has a large population, even if there is only a small percentage of LGBT people. While multiplied by 1.6 billion, it will become a huge number. What’s more, LGBT people experience conflicts on the level of laws, ethical problems, and public opinions. On one hand, it is a social problem urged to be solved. On the other hand, I don't want LGBT culture to be spread in society. I don’t want my next generation to be gay or lesbian. Because the whole society will never be as open as the United States in the next 20 or 30 years. The public will never accept it.”

(Ruihuan Li) “The first time I heard the word gay was during my high school or college career. At the beginning, I felt disgusted, and didn't want to make friends with them. Until now, I still can’t accept it myself. I think it is abnormal. They definitely have some mental disability.”

(Yunkai Yang) “I’m not for or against LGBT people. In terms of interpersonal communication, I think their sexual orientation has no conflict with me. I can accept whatever their sex-

ual orientation is, only when it is not me.”

(Narrator) Even though LGBT people in China are under huge pressure, a lot of LGBT organizations developed in recent years. PFLAG aims to connect parents to LGBT people, share their stories and help more LGBT people gain acceptance from family. Les-in-Shanghai and Nvai provide platforms for lesbians to share information and to meet new people. Organizations, like Beijing LGBT Center and Queer Chorus, aim to help raise social awareness and show themselves to the public. Furthermore, Shanghai Pride can be described as the biggest event for LGBT people in China.

(Charlene Liu) “It was 2005, I came here for a job. Then I met friends, gays, straight, lesbians, they decided, ‘hey let’s make a big party and connect everybody in the city.’ So, in 2007 we settled a little network. And in 2009, a couple of friends who are living in Shanghai said ‘let’s make the party called Shanghai Pride.’ Everybody responds very well to it, so we decided to continue it every year. Here we are, Shanghai Pride is in our 7th year, next year will be Pride 8. Shanghai Pride became for creating awareness and also promoting acceptance. Not only among LGBT people, but also reach out to the straight community.”

(Narrator) Shanghai Pride provides a platform for LGBT people to get together. There are also other organizations to help them develop interests.

(Lesson) “Through the chorus, I want them to develop interests, and provide a place that people can get together. A place where people can get to know each other, communicate to each other, and gradually, they can be close friends or even find their lover.”

(Charlene Liu& Yuejia Qin) “The first time I met her was in June, 2013. So, that was Pride 5. It was one of our first events, it was a Pride run, we called it pink run. She rode in. And I thought I hadn’t seen her before, and she was pretty cute. Because that was the first day of Shanghai Pride, I didn’t think a lot.

She’s busy and nervous.

At night, I saw her again, in the opening party. Then we said hello. In the last night, at the closing party, we exchanged numbers, and we talked a little bit, then we’ve been dated for a few days. Then, we are together. I never believe love at first sight, but when I met her, I had very good feelings about her. And I wanna get to know her, she looks like a very interesting person. And back to the feelings, I can feel the chemistry. That was the feeling that I first saw you.

During that time, I told myself, ‘Shanghai Pride, ok, I think it’s time to start a new relationship.’ I think I’m ready, because I’ve been by myself for so long. As soon as I’m ready, I met her.

So, I think it’s about the right time and the right person.”

(Narrator) However, they’ve also experienced some difficulties.

(Yuejia Qin) “Two weeks before we got married, Charlene’s mother called me and told me not to get married. To be honest, Chinese people’s ideology and attitude to LGBT people are continuously changing. We wish everybody had an open and perfect attitude to LGBT people, “you’re gay, but it’s ok,” but the fact is that we have not reached that point. The United States has already passed the same-sex marriage law, but you can see, there are still a lot of dissenting voices; so you can imagine what it’s like in China.”

(Narrator) The United States Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2015 that states cannot discriminate and ban same-sex marriage. However, no more than one year later, on April. 5, 2016, the Mississippi governor signed an anti-gay law which allows “businesses to refuse services to gay couples based on religious objections, ignoring opposition from businesses who had worried the legislation could cost the state economic opportunities in the future.” To make matters worse, Mississippi is not the only state to do so, North Carolina also signed a law that eliminates anti-discrimination protections for all LGBT people.

(Hui Yang) “I don’t ask the society that everybody supports gays, because it’s impossible. But at least, I ask people to respect the group, to respect when it comes to your children, if they are gay, leave them some space. If I do ask something, that’ll be the right to marry.”

(Narrator) Because there is no law to guarantee their rights, how to get married has become a big issue for LGBT people in China.

(Charlene Liu) “There are a lot of cases that is the marriage convenience, which is a gay and a lesbian, and they say let’s get marriage. This issue you don’t see some part in the world, But this is a issue that is important to talk about it.”

(Yuejia Qin) “Currently in China, emigration to another country seems to be the only choice for LGBT people who want to have a baby and who want to live a normal life. Some people question why lots of Chinese people choose to get married in the United States, and some reply negatively. But I have to say, if we can do it in China, we will not need to put in twice the effort.”

(Narrator) This is not the only obstacle they have. A LGBT organization was intervened by a local government when they had a performance.

(Ruoyu Wang) “Once we had a performance in Tianjin, the local government intervened. The local police officer went to the theater and told the manager we couldn’t use the place. We got the news just one day before the show, and we had to find a new theater instead. The police officer probably thought we were LGBT people, because the manager told us they never were asked by a police officer to stop a show, until now.”

(Narrator) But one good thing is, social media, movies, and talk shows become useful ways to help the public know more information about the LGBT community.

(Tong Wang) “I think there have been a lot of LGBT people in China. Even though, China

hasn't passed the same-sex marriage law, it's definitely a future endeavor. In some big cities, like Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou, the majority of the public have an open attitude to this topic now."

(Lesson) "There is no doubt that there is a tendency, especially among 90s, 80s, or 70s people, to have an enlightened attitude towards us. It is due to our insistence and efforts. A cultured society should have diversity. However, I hope the government can do more to our community. LGBT group is an existing group, and it's a fact. The official media haven't done a lot in helping gaining social awareness, since most of the older generations receive information from traditional media."

(Tong Wang) "We have totally different media systems compared to the western world. We need to broadcast the mainstream voice, the party's voice. Currently, the government doesn't advocate or agree with homosexual behavior. We haven't legalized it; so, the mainstream media tends to reduce the reporting on LGBT topics."

(Shuai Tang) "Not too long ago, there was a news segment about how being gay is the main cause to transmitting HIV. Actually, this news will worsen the situation of LGBT people and disseminate information that all gays have HIV. News stories are written by people. If the reporter doesn't have a comprehensive knowledge on this topic, the story will have a wrong point of view, which is prejudice."

(Narrator) For a long time, the word gay has been synonymous with HIV. This misunderstanding gives more troubles to LGBT people's life. According to UNAIDS Gap Report in 2013, there were 780,000 people living with HIV in China. HIV's prevalence among men who have sex with men has been rising in China with a rate of 1% in 2003 up to 7.3% in 2013. However, it is estimated that gays only represent a quarter of the new reported infections.

(Yuejia Qin) "We always have panel discussions on HIV. From our knowledge, we don't think HIV is only related to gay people. Straight people also have the problem. The point of view that we agree with is that, gays have a higher self-protection awareness than straight people, and they prefer to have a regular check every year. That's the reason the data shows gay people rank first place in HIV carriers. If the straight people also do it, we may have a relatively similar percentage."

(Lesson) "To be honest, it is not easy for everyone to live in this society. So, I hope everyone can be brave, try to be themselves, and show themselves to the public. It is not easy to move forward, but if you don't do anything, you will always stay the same, or even be worse."

(Hui Yang) "It's already uneasy enough that you finally met each other in a messy world, it's even more uneasy that you share the same grounds that you are out publicly, and share the fact that your families know each other, and your friends know each other. Your lives start to merge, and you start to cherish this life."

CONCLUSION

LGBT people especially who live in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, have a positive attitude towards their future life. They believe one day China can also pass the same-sex marriage law, and they can enjoy their life the same as heterosexual couples. However, LGBT persons are still treated as a minority group that differ from the normal public or heterosexuality by society. Prejudice from mainstream media, misunderstanding from the public, and low acceptance from their family leave a lot of obstacles for them to break one by one. Legalizing same-sex marriage guarantees the human rights of freedom of choice to choose a way of life and seek love. It also seems to be inevitable to human history. But it is still argued in society, now. It is uncertain how homosexual people will affect the heterosexual culture. But one thing should be noted: it should be prohibited only when it is proved to be a danger to society.³³

³³ Same-sex Marriages: Predictions & their affect on society. Retrieved November 27, 2015, from http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_marx.htm

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EDUCATION

M.A., Journalism, The University of Mississippi, University, MS, U.S.A., May 2016
Thesis: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Culture in Contemporary China

B.A., International Journalism, BNU-HKBU United International College, Guangdong, China, June 2013

Bachelor of Arts in International Journalism

Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, Summer exchange 2012
International Journalism, Social Welfare in Hong Kong

Hamline University, Minneapolis-St.Paul, MN, USA, Summer exchange 2011
Global Leadership in Business

EXPERIENCE

The University of Mississippi, University, MS, U.S.A.
Graduate Assistant (Fall 2014~ Present)

Responsible for teaching students the usage of Adobe Premiere Pro and Adobe Photoshop
Classifying class materials and students' assignments
Doing research on journalism-related topics

Documentary "Casinos in Mississippi: Worth the Gamble?", MS, U.S.A.
Videographer and Assistant Editor (Fall 2014)

Responsible for setting time with interviewees
Gathered background information and statistic data on casinos in Mississippi
In charge of shooting videos and assist editing

Television and News Center of China Guodian Corporation, Nei Mongol Branch, Nei Mongol, China
News Editor (Summer 2013)

Responsible for collecting and organizing news stories
Copyedited news scripts
Experiences in capturing the scene of news and editing recording materials

Campus Newspaper of BNU-HKBU UIC, Guangdong, China
Reporter and Editor (2011~2013)

Successfully equipped with interview techniques
Photographed, reported, edited and designed layouts of the newspaper
Familiar with producing process of paper media

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Global Ambassador Program, University, MS, U.S.A.

Global Ambassador (Fall 2015~ Present)

Helping fostering understanding and more open communication between international students and American students
Responsible for connecting with new coming international students and helping them acclimating to life in Oxford

United Innovation Charity Club, Guangdong, China

Volunteer Teacher (2009~2010)

Taught children of migrant workers on Mathematics and English

Equipped with communication skills in helping counseling children's mental health

QUALIFICATIONS

Wild experiences in paper media, online multimedia stories, audio and video editing and photojournalism

Familiar with MAC operation, the MS Office (Word, PowerPoint and Excel), Adobe Premiere Pro, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Audition, Audacity Portable and Founder

Proficient in Mandarin and English. Basic speaker of Korean

Strong ability in handling interpersonal communication