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## Attitudes Towards Homosexuality in China

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FACTORS INFLUENCING SELF-IDENTIFICATION AS HOMOSEXUAL AND  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY IN CHINA

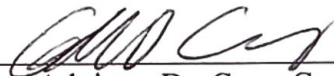
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By: Mallory Elaine Lee


A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies  
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Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
The University of Mississippi

University, Mississippi  
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To those who come after us, you can do it. You watched us struggle and fight for each word, and probably didn't see even half of what we went through, but I believe in you. Find your thesising group and get to it; it'll be done before you believe it. Thanks.

## ABSTRACT

Since Mao Zedong's rise to power in China, homosexuality is has been a relatively under-studied topic. In order to identify factors that influence both self-identification of homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuality, both qualitative and quantitative analysis was utilized. While the data analysis found that the variables were not significant in relation to one another, it is obvious that various factors may influence both a person's willingness to come out as homosexual and the attitudes of Chinese people towards homosexual. While these conclusions are not definitive, this thesis opens the door for further research into attitudes towards homosexuality and self-identification of homosexuality in China.

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## Introduction/Research Questions

Over the past 30 years, China has been a complicated case of uneven industrialization and modernization; after the Open Up and Reform Policy in 1979 under Deng Xiaoping, China has dealt with ideological, economic, and social reform, trying to undo some of the damage done by policies implemented under Mao Zedong. While entire books have and continue to be written on the changing economic and ideological aspects in Chinese society, the main focus of this thesis is a social issue that has also been important in the United States and many other countries around the world in the past fifteen to twenty years: homosexuality.

Though homosexuality in China has historically been a non-issue, the prevalence of misconceptions about HIV/AIDS, issues surrounding the One Child Policy, and attitudes stemming from Mao's policies and laws on “hooligan behaviors,” homosexuality has become a more important issue in Chinese culture. The hooligan laws defined by the Baike section Baidu, the Chinese equivalent of Wikipedia and Google, cover behaviors that harm social administration, which include a broad range of government discouraged ideas and actions along the lines of homosexuality and political dissention.<sup>1</sup> While few continue to deny the existence of homosexuality in China, gauging the actual situation is made more difficult by attitudes stemming from the factors stated above, along with traditional, Confucian values; many people, influenced by prejudice and misinformation under the hooligan laws, are still unaware of the difference between HIV and AIDS or have trouble viewing homosexuality as natural. The number of homosexuals living in China is difficult to measure because of the stigma attached to the “gay” identity. Although more people are coming out and living in China as openly homosexual, including a contingent of foreigners who help those Chinese

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<sup>1</sup>Baidu.com. <http://baike.baidu.com/view/462739.htm>. 14 Apr 2013.

individuals who are out themselves educate other Chinese citizens on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, there are most likely many more people who refuse to out themselves and continue to pass as heterosexual. The problems surrounding living life as a closeted homosexual individual are rarely discussed; quiet endurance is expected, much as during any hardship in an individual's life.

Media portrayals of homosexuality are also a large factor in how people formulate their opinions; in China, because the state controls the media, the media tends to follow the government line of "do not approve, do not disapprove, do not promote" towards homosexuality making it more difficult for homosexual people to fight for their rights, especially considering that there are currently no anti-discrimination laws regarding homosexual people. Another factor in the media is the One Child Policy; while women who experience difficulty when trying to have a child can be causes of frustration and tension in the family, those in homosexual relationships cannot procreate naturally, eliminating the expectation of procreation. Homosexual couples can conform to the standards of the One Child Policy simply by coming out and living an openly homosexual lifestyle. This may cause other tensions, especially with the pressure to have at least one child to carry on the family name, but this issue is much more complicated than it would seem at first glance.

How can homosexuals fit into a society where biological reproduction is viewed as an essential part of life? How have views on homosexuality changed in light of the fact that they cannot biologically reproduce and, as a consequence of the One Child Policy, has their very inability to reproduce garnered them a more tolerated position in Chinese society? Are there differences in attitudes towards male and female homosexuals in China? If so, are there historical reasons for this gendered view? Is the language surrounding HIV/AIDS and

sexuality inhibiting the acceptance of homosexuality in China? All of these questions feed into how attitudes towards homosexuality in China are formed, of both heterosexual and homosexual people in China; these are a few of the questions individuals may contemplate when discussing whether homosexuality is natural or not, and whether or not to maintain a friendship with someone who has come out as homosexual. The main purpose of this thesis is to answer the above questions by gauging what societal factors influence individuals who self-identify as homosexual to come out, including age, sex, education, income and whether the person lives in an urban or rural area. Using the Chinese Health and Family Life Survey, I hope to be able to provide an answer to these questions and gauge the change in social and government attitudes towards homosexuality by testing theoretical hypotheses and analyzing national level data found in this survey.



## Background

With a population estimated around 30 million, or less than 5% of the Chinese population, the Chinese homosexual community is large and growing. During the past 150 years, policies and attitudes towards homosexuality have changed with the rise and fall of governments and the influence of Westernization beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century. Although Hinsch states that before Western influence became prominent in China, homosexuality was regarded as a normal part of life, others disagree, believing that other factors may have kept classical Chinese dissidents from vocalizing opinions against the emperor.<sup>2</sup> Various emperors have been reported to have had both male and female concubines<sup>3</sup>; this insinuates that, although there was no official policy, homosexuality was generally tolerated, at least in the case of emperors. There is hardly any mention of homosexuality in Chinese history in regards to the general public; the emphasis on the continuing of the family line may have influenced those who felt homosexual urges from openly pursuing homosexual relations. After the Republican period, with the rise of Mao Zedong, homosexuality fell under the "Hooligan Laws" which were also used to suppress any opposition to those in power, including political and intellectual dissenters. In 1997, this broad law was repealed, removing homosexuality from the list of illegal behaviors. 2001 saw the removal of homosexuality from the national list of mental disorders, which is another step towards recognition of homosexuality as natural and acceptable in the eyes of regular Chinese people, as well as the Chinese government.

Gender and sexuality in China have historically not fallen into the binary male/female categories that Western religion and science emphasized so strongly; Daoism emphasizes that

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<sup>2</sup> Hinsch, Brett. *Passions of the Cut Sleeve*: 56. University of California Press, 1990. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Hinsch, 35-36.

yin and yang are two parts of a whole, but rather than fit into two distinct categories, a continuum of traits exists, which is why people have both masculine and feminine qualities. Strong Western influence in the middle of the eighteenth century, especially in medicine, and later Mao's emphasis on the family created a unique situation where historically accepted, or ignored, homosexual behaviors became taboo and distasteful. According to McLaren, the late nineteenth to early twentieth century scholars of sexual behavior and thought viewed strict heterosexuality as a representation of the advancement of Western culture, especially when discussing sexuality in ancient Greek and Eastern cultures.<sup>4</sup> During this period after the Opium War (1840) with the West colonizing much of East Asia including China, Chinese scholars who wanted to be seen as modern also emphasized this view.<sup>5</sup> The beginning of the twenty-first century marks a new era in Chinese discourse on homosexuality; the point of this part of the thesis is to clarify the basis of my research question and provide more insight into why Chinese attitudes are once again shifting.

Unexpectedly, the most recently published book on homosexuality in China seem to focus on lesbianism; the most recent book on male homosexuality was published in the early 1990s and has some misleading information or information which has since been proved false. It did however contain some useful historical information, specifically due to the change of views towards sexuality itself since the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The focus of most recent scholarly articles pertains to male homosexuality, as the Chinese government has focused more on policy and attitudes related to male homosexuality over the past twenty years, but the change in the conception of sexuality in

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<sup>4</sup> McLaren, Angus. *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries, 1870-1930*. p 29. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997. Print.

<sup>5</sup> Jin, Wu. "From 'Long Yang' And 'Dui Shi' To Tongzhi: Homosexuality In China." *Journal Of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy* 7.1/2 (2003): 117. *LGBT Life with Full Text*. Web. 20 Apr. 2013.

China is equally important when looking at the development of attitudes and policy towards homosexuality. In looking at homosexuality in China, the focus of this thesis is on three articles and two books as a brief literature review: "Homosexuality and the Culture Politics of *Tongzhi* in Chinese Societies" by Chou Wah-Shan; "From 'Long Yang' and 'Dui Shi' to Tongzhi: Homosexuality in China" by Jin Wu; "Defining Difference: The "Scientific" Construction of Sexuality in the People's Republic of China" by Harriet Evans; *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* by Tze-lan D. Sang; and *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History* by Susan L. Mann. Besides these sources, various other articles pertaining to other portions of my thesis will be expounded upon in their own sections. While much overlap occurs within these works, especially concerning the history of homosexuality in China, each emphasizes different aspects of this topic, allowing for a comprehensive review of attitudes towards homosexuality in China, from a governmental perspective, evidenced in laws, to general societal attitudes, seen through experiences of both homosexual and heterosexual individuals in Chinese society through time. The Chou article focuses on the idea that, rather than have a hetero-homo binary which divides people into two and only two categories, Chinese culture is divided much more along class lines, in a hierarchical manner; this means those in socially higher positions could dominate, sexually or otherwise, those in a lower social standing than them, usually a servant in the case of homosexual activity. On the other hand, the Wu article discusses the history of homosexuality in China with regards to how the Western views on homosexuality have influenced attitudes towards homosexuality, especially with the move towards "modernization" of Chinese thought around 1949. Evans discusses the defeminization of women during the Maoist era due to the focus on equality between men and women, along

with the refeminization of women in recent years in reaction to the suppression of years past; she also discusses the emphasis of the gender binary in official literature on sex and sexuality at the time. This type of scholarship is important when talking about homosexuality because homosexuality cannot be discussed without the historical context that comes from discussing historical views on sexuality and gender in general. Sang, as indicated by the title, speaks much more than the others on both the history of and current trends in lesbianism in China; homosocial relationships were much more common for women before 1949, and open female homosexuality is growing in China today, though not as quickly as male homosexuality. The information in the Mann book has slightly different views on history, but in all provides a solid background on homosexuality in China. Although these are not the only books or articles used in this thesis, these along with the Chinese Health and Family Life Survey form the basis for the questions this thesis hopes to answer.

To understand the modern Chinese attitudes towards homosexuality, it is essential to understand past attitudes and the reasons for changes in attitudes through the years. In ancient China, until around the year 1200, while it was not accepted as common and completely normal, homosexual behaviors were not punished; homosexual acts were not seen as a fundamental aspect of a person's being, but only as behaviors.<sup>6</sup> There was no sense of identity surrounding persons who had sex with persons of the same sex; therefore, perceptions were that these people, mostly men, were not affected by their sexual activities. Unlike today, a person was not classified as "homosexual," but could engage in homosexual acts without dire consequence, contingent on the man's position in society; instead they are defined as men who have sex with men on occasion. Women, who spent the majority of their time in their own home before the twentieth century, are featured much less throughout

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<sup>6</sup> Jin, 117.

history of homosexuality in China; same sex relationships of both a homosocial and homoerotic types were heard of but rarely discussed or written down and, during the Republican period between 1912-1949, views towards these behaviors remained fairly indifferent even as European sexologists such as Magnus Hirschfeld, the founder of the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin, toured China and promoted the newest medical views on sexual behavior and advocated for homosexual rights.<sup>7</sup> In spite of the emphasis on men getting married and continuing the family line, this behavior was tolerated, as long as it did not interfere with their familial duties and responsibilities; having a sexual relationship outside of marriage was tolerated as long as his wife continued to have children to take care of as well.<sup>8</sup> Due to the emphasis in Confucian values on the importance of filial piety, Chinese men and women both feel it necessary to first fulfill their duty of continuing the family line before even thinking of their own needs. Tolerance also depended on the social status of the people involved; upper class men could enjoy relations with both women and lower class men, as both of these types of people lay below him on the social stratum and would mean nothing to those to whom status mattered, usually the family of the upper class man. Upper class men who engaged in homosexual activity were not immune to abuse; there are many examples of officials being exposed and ridiculed for engaging in homosexual activity.<sup>9</sup> The emphasis here is on men, because the various histories have very little mention of sexual relations between women; this seems to be because of the *nanzhuwainuzhunei* (男主外女主内) ideal, which emphasizes that men are responsible for what goes on outside of the house, while women are responsible for what goes on inside the house. Women were only

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<sup>7</sup> Sang, Tze-lan D. *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desires in Modern China*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. p 107. 2003. Print.

<sup>8</sup>Jin, 118.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 122.

supposed to be seen as sexual objects by their husbands; history seems to assume that relationships between women could only be platonic. What is striking about this information on homosexuality in China is the glaring difference as to how homosexuality was treated in China when juxtaposed with Western Europe in the same time periods. Without the threat of possible death sentences, which were prevalent in Europe because of the wide reach of the Church, it is obvious that homosexuality was treated much more calmly in China until the Qing Dynasty and the influence of the West.

Beginning in the early 1900s, Western models of psychology and psychiatry began to dominate, as Chinese medicine had few methods of treatment of mental disorders; because of the Western conception of homosexuality and homosexual behaviors as abnormal and aberrant, Chinese intellectuals began to acquire similar views; these views, were brought to China by Chinese people who studied abroad, often in the United States, and brought back the most modern views of psychology in the world.<sup>10</sup> The schools of thought utilized most often included Wundtian psychology, structuralism, functionalism, behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and Gestalt Psychology.<sup>11</sup> Before Mao Zedong, though, persecution for homosexual behaviors was uncommon; after 1949, cut off from changing Western intellectual discourse on homosexuality and mental disorders, and the emphasis on family and marriage, policies regarding abnormal behaviors, including homosexuality, were created. “Hooliganism,” which can refer to sodomy, pre-marital relations, extra-marital relations and various other acts offensive to the state, was criminalized in 1956.<sup>12</sup> Unlike in the West, homosexual activity was treated as a “thought problem,” treated much like various other

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<sup>10</sup> Jin 123.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid 124.

<sup>12</sup> Mann 151.

political dissidents, with re-education and labor reform.<sup>13</sup> This stems from the view of homosexuality being a behavior, rather than an identity. With the Opening Up and Reform in the 1980s, China once again began to adopt Western medical practices, culminating in the deletion of “hooliganism” from the penal code in 1997 and the deletion of homosexuality from the list of mental disorders maintained by the Chinese Psychiatric Association in 2001.<sup>14</sup> These steps have begun to bring Chinese society back to pre-Mao ideas of acceptance as long as it is out of sight, but there is still a long road before homosexuality will be fully accepted in Chinese society as a natural part of life.

Along with the changing medical views, Chinese society saw a population shift as the Household Registration policy has been relaxed and migration from countryside to cities has increased; urbanization rates increased from 17.4% in 1978 to 46.59% in 2009.<sup>15</sup> Although those who move have access to more jobs, the jobs that are available are more often labor intensive and need little education; this increases the likelihood of rural residents leaving school to move to the city for job opportunities. Some of these individuals are parts of Chinese society particularly at risk for HIV/AIDS, most particularly drug users and men who have sex with other men.<sup>16</sup> These types of communities are a concern for the Chinese government, as they continue to engage in dangerous behavior, they are also less likely to have access to healthcare which could treat them and teach them how to prevent the further spread of HIV.

With an occasionally contradictory history, it is unsurprising that the views on

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid 125.

<sup>14</sup> Jin 133.

<sup>15</sup> Zhang, Jijiao. "The Hukou System and Rural-Urban Migration in China." *Canadian Diversity* 8.6 (2011): 8-12. Print.

<sup>16</sup> Wu, Z., S. Sullivan, Y. Wang, M. Rotheramborus, and R. Detels. "Evolution of China's Response to HIV/AIDS." *The Lancet* 369.9562 (2007): 679-90. Print.

homosexuality and homosexual communities have changed rapidly in the past 30 years. Although the Opening Up and Reform Policy in 1979 brought to China newer Western dialogues on HIV/AIDS and homosexuality in general, it was only towards the end of the 1980s that small groups of homosexuals became slowly visible in larger urban areas.<sup>17</sup> From the late 1980s to 1997, rather than face forced labor as punishment if caught in a homosexual act, as would have happened after 1949, they would most often face being ostracized at work as well as losing face, an incredibly difficult punishment to face for any Chinese person, much less a homosexual Chinese person.<sup>18</sup> Although Chinese psychiatry dealt with homosexuality as a disease until 2001, the Chinese government, beginning 1990 with the AIDS threat becoming more apparent, knew it had to begin to deal with the homosexual community in a way that would hopefully help with reducing HIV/AIDS in China. In 1997, the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, along with the WHO, UN, and World Bank held a workshop that promoted the open discussion of those at high risk of HIV infection, including men who have sex with men; by 2001, this same organization would take homosexuality off of the list of mental diseases.<sup>19</sup> The mid-1990s saw more media attention on homosexuality and HIV/AIDS, but much of this attention was negative or unwanted by those who were featured in "coming out" stories. While the Chinese homosexual community is growing daily, especially in big cities where anonymity is provides a crucial layer of insularity from negative opinions, the online community still faces censorship and suppression from the Chinese government. This situation is complicated and multifaceted, calling for close study for even a small piece of understanding, much like the rest of Chinese culture and history.

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<sup>17</sup> Jin, 126.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 127.

<sup>19</sup> Wu, Z. p 685.



## **Structure/Methodology**

Each of the following sections will work to answer one of the questions set forth in the introduction, in all trying to prove that all of these factors can and do affect Chinese attitudes towards homosexuality and the willingness of individuals to self-identify as homosexual. While each section will be on a specific topic within this thesis, the parts will come together as a coherent argument focusing on the different aspects that make up attitudes towards homosexuality in China. Part One focuses on views on both male and female homosexuality and how these views are still affecting Chinese attitudes today. Part Two examines education, from Mao Zedong China to the Open Up and reform policy under Deng Xiaoping and the effects the changes in policy have had on views towards homosexuality. Part Three discusses the affect of urban residency versus rural residency on self-identifying as homosexual. Part Four concentrates on current discourse surrounding both sexuality in general and HIV/AIDS, along with the relationship between the language used and how it affects both self-identity and others views on homosexuality. Part Five is the data analysis portion of this thesis, including an analysis of the Chinese Health and Family Life Survey, which is a survey of Chinese people of varying ages on topics including variables related to homosexuality. In order to gauge how Chinese homosexuals come to self-identify as homosexual, the demographics of those individuals will be discussed at length. The Conclusion will serve to resolve the arguments set forth in the introduction and wrap up the entire paper.

## Part One: Gender and Acceptance of Homosexuality

Historically, male homosexuality was visible and, while not accepted, tolerated in China, but only under specific circumstances by specific people. As in other cultures, as long as the man who had the higher station in Chinese life took the role of the penetrating individual during intercourse, there was nothing wrong with his behavior. If the same man was caught being the receiving partner, or taking the “woman's” role in sex, society would shun him.<sup>20</sup> This means that this view of masculine identity was intrinsically linked with the act of penetration; taking the receiving role meant he was also taking the woman's role, which was an unacceptable act of rejecting not only the desire to take the masculine role, but also reject the responsibility to carry on and provide for the family.<sup>21</sup> Men having sex with other men, rather than becoming a part of a homosexual identity, was merely a behavior that, as long as it did not interfere with his ability to perform his duty towards his family, did not define a man as feminine.

From the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, formed in 1644 after the fall of the more open and enlightened Ming Dynasty, more conservative, Manchu influenced ideals prevailed; regarding homosexuality, more strict law began to be enforced in reaction to the perceived social chaos of the Ming Dynasty. The Ming Dynasty, the last of the ethnically Han Chinese dynasty, did not persecute homosexuality, though a person had to fulfill his familial duty before engaging in extra-marital relations; this dynasty is viewed as one of the most enlightened dynasties, during which intellectualism was encouraged. The Qing Dynasty, on the other hand, was ruled by the Manchus, whose morality codes were much stricter than the Ming and focused on family relationships as the foundation of society; this absolutist dynasty

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<sup>20</sup>Jin, 121.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, 124.

had much tighter control on intellectuals and viewed Ming individualism as promoting social chaos.<sup>22</sup> For example, when Emperor Kangxi discovered his son having sex with other men, he had his son's favorites killed and soon implemented laws against prostitution and homosexuality. Although the general attitudes towards homosexuality at this time were negative, particularly important in creating an even more hostile atmosphere was Emperor Kangxi's 1679 penal code concerning homosexual rape, which included a provision, stating that "sodomy with consent" could also be prosecuted.<sup>23</sup> Most of this law pertained to child prostitution or male-on-male violence, but this provision in effect made consensual homosexual sex illegal. Later in the Qing Dynasty, laws were less stringently enforced, and disinterest in the affairs of others became the norm. Although the introduction of Western ideologies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially concerning modern medicine and psychiatry, would influence China in myriad ways, Chinese tolerance towards homosexuality was not affected right away. Some Chinese scholars, such as Pan Guangdan (1899-1967), emphasized sexuality as being on a continuum, seeing homosexuality as a behavior rather than being determined biologically.<sup>24</sup> Beginning in the early 1900s, Western models of psychology and psychiatry began to dominate, as Chinese medicine had few methods of treatment of modern mental disorders; the colonial ties between China and the West, along with the effort towards modernization during this time period, influenced these views. As a result of the Western conceptions of homosexuality and homosexual behaviors as abnormal and aberrant at the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals began to acquire similar views, especially as modernization became more accepted.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hinsch, 142.

<sup>23</sup> Hinsch, 145.

<sup>24</sup> Mann, Susan. *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2011. Print.

<sup>25</sup> Jin 123-4.

During the dynastic years in China, including the Ming and Qing dynasties, female homosexuality was both less visible and more tolerated, at least to an extent; this seems to arise from the fact that female homosocial relationships were an important part of life in polygamous families, and some homosexual relations were even encouraged. Through this time, female homosexuality was normalized, in that it was mostly ignored. Some Tibetan female monks were also thought to have been lesbians, but there are few confirmed accounts.<sup>26</sup> Along with the polygamous households which may have allowed homosexual relations between women and nuns who may or may not have engaged in homosexual activities, there are also accounts of women choosing not to get married; these women would wear their hair in the style of a married woman and may also have engaged in homoerotic behaviors.<sup>27</sup> In all, these types of relationships were tolerated because class lines were not crossed and the fact that men were not involved. For men, social status influenced every action, to the extent that they could possibly be ridiculed or punished for having sexual relations with other men; the social status of women was far enough below men that, at the same time that male homosexual relationships were forbidden, relationships between women were forgotten and therefore tolerated.

After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, but before Mao Zedong came to power, persecution of homosexuality as a crime was uncommon; after 1949, cut off from changing Western intellectual discourse on homosexuality and Mao's emphasis on family and marriage, policies regarding homosexuality were created. "Hooliganism," which can refer to sodomy, pre-marital relations, extra-marital relations and various other acts offensive to the

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<sup>26</sup> Jin 120.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid 121.

state, was criminalized in 1956.<sup>28</sup> Unlike in the West, homosexual activity was treated as a “thought problem,” treated much like various other political dissidents, with re-education and labor reform.<sup>29</sup> This time period was not only repressive towards homosexuality, but sexuality in general; promiscuity and extramarital affairs were punished under the hooliganism laws just as homosexuality was, and punishment depended on the mood of the government.<sup>30</sup> Throughout the time period of 1949 to 1980, homosexuality was punished alongside political dissidence, promiscuity, and various other crimes; only the degree of punishment varied. Or at least this is what the Party would want scholars to believe. In fact, sexual relationships outside of marriage, both heterosexual and homosexual, were fairly common between the 1950s and 1970s.<sup>31</sup> While the scholarship does reveal far more heterosexual premarital and extramarital affairs during this time period that would go unpunished, a few homosexual relationships were observed as well; premarital affairs were tolerated simply because the government could not exert control over such a large population.

With the Opening Up and Reform in the 1980s, China once again began to adopt Western medical practices, culminating in the deletion of “hooliganism” from the penal code in 1997 and the deletion of homosexuality from the list of mental disorders maintained by the Chinese Psychiatric Association in 2001.<sup>32</sup> In the report which decided that homosexuality was not a mental disorder, it was also recommended that those who experienced distress related to their sexual orientation should have access to mental health services because these stresses could affect their lives in profound ways. While this report was imperfect and some

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<sup>28</sup> Mann 151.

<sup>29</sup> Jin 125.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 124.

<sup>31</sup> Sang 166.

<sup>32</sup> Jin 133.

in the Chinese Psychiatric Association still believed that homosexuality should be classified as a disorder, it heralded an important change in the institutional views on homosexuality and changed the direction that official discourse would take. Since 2009, Shanghai has held an annual Shanghai Pride event which does not feature a parade, as many other Pride events do, because of possible pressure from the government, but does incorporate cultural events such as film screenings and art exhibitions.<sup>33</sup> While it has not yet been suppressed by the Chinese government, the fact that it was created and led by two foreigners living in Shanghai may contribute to this. In everyday life, foreigners in China have much more leeway than citizens and are rarely bothered by police; it follows that, as long as these foreigners followed proper procedures to get permission for their events, the government and police would not get involved. Although there is no way to gauge whether this is the exact reason for the continuance of this event, there are no other strong factors that indicate otherwise.

While homosexuality is no longer a mental disorder in China and openly male homosexuality is more and more visible in Chinese society, lesbianism is still relatively invisible. There are new scholarly articles coming out each year, but most focus on male homosexuality and the lives of gay Chinese men, rather than the homosexual community as a whole, including women. Sang touches on this topic, saying that she believes that the invisibility of female homosexuality is disputed, but may be influenced by the fact that male homosexuality in China incorporates many of the behaviors recognizable in the West "(e.g., cruising in public parks and toilets)" and helps to define the male homosexual community; the female homosexual community may be undetected because of either the lack of emphasis

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<sup>33</sup> Hogg, Chris. "Shanghai to Show Pride with Gay Festival." *BBC News*. BBC, 06 June 2009. Web. 15 Jan. 2013. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8083672.stm>>.

on women, or the over-emphasis of male homosexuality in Chinese society.<sup>34</sup> This defining of a new community, at least for the males, shows a movement away from viewing homosexuality simply as a behavior as before the Maoist era, and a move towards viewing homosexuality as a valid community and culture. Female homosexual relationships have been historically less visible in China, mostly due to the fact that women occupy the private spaces in Chinese society; therefore their friendships and sexual relationships are, even now, expected to be of a more private nature than male friendships and relationships. There are clear delineations between attitudes towards men and women throughout history, and it is to be expected in a society that still emphasizes tradition and traditional roles that this delineation will also be applied to attitudes towards male and female homosexuality. This is particularly interesting because Chinese conceptions of gender and sexuality are changing as China is affected by globalization of media and academia, and with this change, the conception of homosexuality may change as well; already a male homosexual community has been established, and female homosexuals may become more visible in the coming years.

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<sup>34</sup> Sang 170.

## **Part Two: Education and Acceptance of Homosexuality**

After the establishment of China as a country under Mao Zedong in 1949, education has been among one of the least consistent parts of Chinese society. Emphasis on education waxed and waned as political leaders' feelings on education changed throughout the years; inconsistency on what the government wanted to promote caused irregular and uneven education across the nation and across the time period after Mao came to power. Education about sex, sexuality, and HIV/AIDS has been rough and irregular at best, and nonexistent at worst. Since the Opening Up and Reform policy, sex education has become more of a priority, and though it is helpful, this is not enough; HIV/AIDS rates are still quite high due to uneven sex education and propagation of incorrect information, along with the stigma that goes along with contracting the disease, and although attitudes towards homosexuality have slowly changed in recent years along with academic information on homosexuality becoming more widely available, in my experiences, many Chinese people still believe that homosexuality is abnormal. The largest influence on changing these attitudes could be sex education.

As Mao's influence waned due to declining health and, eventually his death, education in general, along with sex education, would change greatly after the end of the Cultural Revolution. While homosexuality would not be mentioned in any official literature during this time due to its criminal status under the hooligan laws, the gradual introduction and reform of sex education may have contributed to the changes in mental health policies towards homosexuality. History and cultural taboos which inform opinions and influence knowledge gathering attempts have had a large influence on how acquisition of information about sex and sexuality by individuals and sex education in China has developed, with the



most important factors in recent history being mass media and the expansion of internet usage throughout the country.

Family is an extremely important part of childhood education; parents control which schools their children get in to, the environment that their child will study in, and how information not taught in school comes into the hands of their children. As in other countries, children may go to their parents for information on things they see in movies or walking down the street, such as smoking or two men kissing, though the latter situation is much more uncommon in public in China than elsewhere. As children become teenagers and adults, information is less readily available in the home because of cultural taboos against talking about sex and sexuality with parents.<sup>35</sup> These cultural norms extend to authority figures outside of the home, including teachers, making sex education a difficult topic to learn about through means other than media, including the internet. Although reproduction is often covered in a brief lesson, homosexuality is among subjects that students know the least about; this may cause those who feel that they do not fit into the defined sex roles to seek out information on the internet.<sup>36</sup> Parents themselves have trouble discussing sex-related information with their children, regardless of sexuality, because the topic is seen as intensely private or taboo in a society that has been turned conservative by the propaganda propagated under Mao Zedong; from 1966 to 1976, the Cultural Revolution caused a ten year revolution focusing on developing the agricultural sector, often taking high school and college aged youths from school to learn and work in rural areas, leaving a whole generation without proper state-mandated education.

The Cultural Revolution's influence on Chinese society was both broad and deep, as it

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<sup>35</sup> Lou, Chao-hua, Quan Zhao, Er-Sheng Gao, and Iqbal H. Shah. "Can the Internet Be Used Effectively to Provide Sex Education to Young People in China?" *Journal of Adolescent Health* 39 (2006): 720-728.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 720.

was an attempt to enforce communism by forcefully removing capitalist elements and moving away from traditional values that were holding China back from fulfilling the communist ideal. During this ten year period, education was placed in a position subordinate to achieving communist ideals, including the stoppage of university education in order to eliminate the bourgeoisie's influence in China. This move away from traditional values affected all parts of life, including sexuality; as stated in the background, China has viewed sexual activity as something to be kept private, but it was the business of the people participating, not the government. The creation of China under Mao saw rhetoric that encouraged large families and policies which gave incentives for having children. This policy backfired when the government realized that the birth rate was accelerating too quickly and, in 1953, the Chinese government began promoting better birth control because it viewed the unplanned nature of births as a restriction to the freedom of Chinese women who were supposed to be equal under Communist ideals.<sup>37</sup> The birth rate slowed during the Great Famine resulting from the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s; but during the Cultural Revolution, the birth rate went higher and higher, mostly attributed to the ineffective family planning policies the Chinese government began to promote in the early 1960s. Towards the end of the Cultural Revolution, which would end in 1976, the Chinese government began to turn its focus on family and population growth problems mostly in urban areas, resulting in the Family Planning Policy, also known as the One Child Policy. While this policy promoted widespread use of contraceptives in order to curb the birth rate, sexual education outside the realm of contraceptives was mostly ignored.<sup>38</sup>

From the focus on contraceptives and family, it is obvious that the Chinese

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<sup>37</sup> Wang, Cuntong. "History of the Chinese Family Planning program: 1970-2010." *Contraception* 85 (2012): 563-569. *Science Direct*. Web. 7 Mar 2013.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 564.

government gave little thought to homosexuality. By focusing on women's rights and importance in society as mothers of the next generation, attention turned away from men, who as the majority if not all of homosexual offenders were the focus of the hooligan laws; outside of those who were persecuted under the hooligan laws, homosexuality was ignored by the Chinese government. Little information on homosexuality was available to Chinese people during this time period, with most of the information that was available being negative in tone, influenced by the philosophers and scientists from the early twentieth century in the United States and Europe, including the American Psychiatric Association, which in 1952 listed homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance in its first publication of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*; homosexuality was seen as a crime and an illness by the Chinese government, and not much more. Under the Hooligan Laws (liumangzui), those found to participate in homosexual activities could be prosecuted and sent to prison or labor camps for re-education. Although China abolished the Hooliganism Law in 1997 and removed homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses in 2001, there is still little positive information on homosexuality available in Chinese, though some works from the West are available in the language they were originally written in; this lack of information in Chinese has created a gap that the internet has helped to fill.

The low availability of information on homosexuality and issues homosexual individuals face in libraries or public forums has, in the internet era, caused an internet community to come into existence. In the case of teenagers, for whom sexual education is rare and mostly revolves around contraception because of the family planning policy, the internet is the main source of information of quality about anything related to sex. With the internet available to a growing number of people, thought to be around 50% of the population

by the Chinese Internet Network Information Center, knowledge pertaining to many topics has become more widely available, unless censored by the Chinese government.<sup>39</sup> While censorship of the internet has been and continues to be a major issue in China, especially regarding difficult topics such as homosexuality or the Tiananmen Square massacre, censorship of the traditional media has a large influence on the lives of Chinese citizens. This is because television, radio, and newspaper all promote the views of the Chinese government on controversial issues and may mislead Chinese citizens on the actual facts surrounding these issues. Censorship keeps topics of social taboos out of the light, until the moment when their use is beneficial to the government; although people find ways around internet censorship, getting around media censorship is much more unlikely, especially when the government response would probably be swift and unpleasant.

For the Chinese government, the media is yet another tool which can be used to control citizens through the spread of misinformation or a truth that is skewed so as to promote the ideals of the Communist government. For example, an AIDS positive man, Fan Gao, was forced to come out and became a symbol of what not to do; he was "pushed out" of his home county and made into a representation, a model of what kind of person not to emulate.<sup>40</sup> He was used by the Chinese government, with a video of his story distributed to schools around the country, revealing him as an HIV positive individual; while this sort of exposure of a person so that he is useful to the government is not directly visible when viewing these videos produced by the government, this man felt that this process was

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<sup>39</sup> China Internet Network Information Center. "30th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China." 28 Sept 2012. <[http://www1.cnnic.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201209/t20120928\\_36586.htm](http://www1.cnnic.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201209/t20120928_36586.htm)>

<sup>40</sup> He, X., and L. Rofel. "'I Am AIDS': Living with HIV/AIDS in China." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 18.2 (2010): 511-36. *Project MUSE*. Web. 25 Jan 2013.

invasive and changed his life for the worse.<sup>41</sup> The tight control exhibited by the Chinese government in this instance is much more subtle than the Great Firewall and other forms of direct censorship; doctors and health officials all encouraged Fan Gao to come out for his own good, all the while planning to utilize him as a "model" for behaviors a normal person should not participate in. This kind of media control and distortion also extends to documentaries; Qin Mei, a woman running a "halfway home" for HIV+ individuals, was forced to shut down after a documentary crew who stated the documentary would never be broadcast apparently blatantly lied and ruined what was once a safe place for HIV+ individuals to live.<sup>42</sup> With the growth of the internet in China, it is impossible that these types of stories will become less popular; one can only hope that the forums which promote safe environments to talk about HIV, homosexuality, and other issues will be able to handle the difficult task of dividing the distorted ideas of the Chinese government from the scientific facts about these issues.

While it is difficult to gauge the internet usage of Chinese teenagers for the purposes of sex education because of the lack of formal discussion and the need for subterfuge in order to avoid censorship, dating websites are common, including websites that have become forums for discussing homosexuality and homosexual relationships.<sup>43</sup> These websites create a space for open discussion of sex with people who understand how to talk about sex and homosexuality in a society that is otherwise sexually repressed; the value of these websites to young people struggling with their sexuality and coping without proper sex education cannot be measured, especially when they need friends and information most of all.

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<sup>41</sup> He, 518.

<sup>42</sup> He, 521.

<sup>43</sup> Fann, Rodge Q. "Growing Up Gay In China." *Journal Of Gay & Lesbian Issues In Education* 1.2 (2003): 35-42. *LGBT Life with Full Text*. Web. 6 Mar. 2013.

### **Part Three: Urban/Rural Differences in Acceptance of Homosexuality**

In China today, nearly 70% of the people live outside of cities and are classified as rural residents; when evaluating any issue, it is impossible to ignore such a large portion of the Chinese population. The differences in urban versus rural life can help to clearly delineate Chinese people into groups, especially on opinion based issues; some of the factors that influence these diverging opinions are: the reach of media is not as great as in rural areas as in urban centers, education standards are different for rural areas, decent healthcare (including sex education) is available in few places, internet is unavailable in many places, along with migration from villages and towns to cities causing a brain drain.<sup>44</sup> All of these factors may influence how Chinese people living in more rural regions view issues such as homosexuality, HIV/AIDS, and censorship.

Access to education for rural residents is an issue that the Chinese government has tried to handle throughout its time in power. Villages often have to deal with one room classrooms for entire villages and only one teacher for all of the children; in the 1999 film "Not One Less," a 13 year old who is not at all qualified to teach is asked to substitute teach for one month because the regular teacher has to deal with family business, and if she manages to keep all the students in class, she gets a small bonus when the teacher comes back. When one student leaves to try and get a job in a big city, as children sometimes do in China today, she follows him and eventually brings him home.<sup>45</sup> This film illustrates that, although the Chinese government has policies which try to combat high dropout rates in rural areas, because of the examples their parents set by leaving to try and earn money for their families, these children often choose to follow their parents to cities to work because they

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<sup>44</sup> Jin, 127.

<sup>45</sup> *Not One Less*. Dir. Zhang Yimou. Columbia Tristar, 1999. Film.

believe that money and jobs are more available than in their own villages or counties and that they can help their household only by working, because education is not a viable route. For urban residents, education is much more standardized, but also much more competitive; for example, in my own experience discussing education with teachers while in Harbin, my teacher stated her nine year old son had access to good education, but money and connections matter most when determining what pre-schools and primary schools a child would have access to. Rather than having trouble staying in school because of lack of access to education, urban residents must compete for the very best pre-schools, so as to get in to the best primary schools, so as to eventually possibly get into the best universities.

The Chinese College Entrance Exam (gaokao) is a test that all high school students wishing to enter university must take; the score each person achieves ranks him or her relative to every other student in the province and determines what universities the student can get in to. For example, Beijing University has a certain number of slots for freshmen each year, and these slots are divided up into students from Beijing and those who are from outside of Beijing, with the Beijing residents having more slots; therefore the scores students need to get into this university depend on their residency, with rural residents needing to score extremely high because they are competing with the entire country minus the students from Beijing. This system is buttressed by the residency registration program, which states where the person is from, their parents, spouse and birth date; this record theoretically restricts where a person can live, though this system was broken down after the Opening Up and Reform policies. Higher education opportunities for rural residents have grown in the past fifteen years, but the percentage of rural students to urban residents in universities is still

nowhere near equal to the proportion of rural residents to urban residents in China.<sup>46</sup>

Although each province has universities, there are clear advantages in finding work if a person has graduated from Beijing University, rather than Gansu University of Technology.

The lack of equality between urban and rural lifestyles and quality of life has caused migration to cities by rural residents in hope of bettering their own lives and the lives of their children and, because of this, many children are left in the care of their grandparents who view traditional values as incredibly important. For example, in November of last year, five young boys, whose parents had left them in the care of their blind grandmother, died of carbon monoxide poisoning after starting a fire for warmth in the garbage bin they had taken refuge in for the night; this tragic example brought the attention of many Chinese citizens to the problem of these "forgotten children."<sup>47</sup> These children had dropped out of school, seemingly because of the focus on academically superior children left them with the choices of staying in school and being ignored or going out and trying to find work so that they could provide for themselves. These children would have ended up with no access to education, much less higher levels of education. In these types of situations, there is little doubt that homosexuality and HIV/AIDS would never be brought up, unless someone was exposed and made an example of by the government. In a rural community which would emphasize family values, those who self-identified as homosexual would have no access to literature, media, or internet channels that could provide help and answer the questions of someone conflicted by feelings contradictory to what everyone says a person should feel. This type of identity would be unfamiliar at best, but more probably unknown; without access to internet,

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<sup>46</sup> Qiao, Jinzhong. "On The Rural-Urban Disparity In Access To Higher Education Opportunities In China." *Chinese Education & Society* 43.4 (2010): 22-31. *Professional Development Collection*. Web. 5 Mar. 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Tang, Didi. "China's forgotten children: 5 underclass runaways die while seeking warmth in garbage bin." *Yahoo News*. 22 Nov 2012. *The Associated Press*. Web. 10 Mar. 2013.



which only around 25% of rural residents have, it would be difficult to gather information on a homosexual identity without arousing suspicion.<sup>48</sup> While education is showing slow improvements in rural China, sex education is still limited to family planning, meaning contraceptives and spacing between childbirth (if a second child is allowed), all of which focus on women and childbearing, not issues on sexuality. While the internet gives hundreds of thousands of Chinese access to the world and much of the information out there, those living in rural areas may not have running water, much less internet access.

At the beginning of Communist China, healthcare was provided by the government, and the life expectancy rose from around 35 years in 1949 to around 68 years in 1978.<sup>49</sup> Healthcare in rural China is limited, especially after the costs skyrocketed with the opening up of the economy in 1979. This means that, if rural residents become ill, they are less likely to go to the doctor because of the costs involved, which means once they do go, they are more likely to have more severe illnesses which take more money to treat; it is a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle which the 2009 reforms have begun to attempt to repair. These reforms hope to bring at least ninety percent of the population under government insurance, as well as provide more clinics throughout the country so as to ease the strain on larger city hospitals whose infrastructure cannot handle the number of people coming through their doors each day.<sup>50</sup> While these reforms seek to repair the problems within the system, a better option would be to have better education at the lowest levels in order to decrease the number of people who wait for their illness to become dangerous before going to the hospital. In order to change the mindset of citizens, education in the realm of healthcare, including sex

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<sup>48</sup> Lawton, Tait. "Rural Internet Usage." East-West-Connect.com. [http://www.east-west-connect.com/rural-chinese-internet-usage-2011\\_10\\_27](http://www.east-west-connect.com/rural-chinese-internet-usage-2011_10_27)

<sup>49</sup> Li, L. "The challenges of healthcare reforms in China." *Public Health* 125 (2010) 6-8. *China Centre for Economic Research*. Web. 10 Mar. 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Li, 8.

education, should an aspect of reform as well, especially in rural regions.

The lack of proper health and sex education in rural, often poor regions of China can lead the problems of rural areas to surface in urban areas as more migrants move toward the cities for job opportunities and education opportunities for their children. Because of their lack of education, these people often work menial jobs, sweeping sidewalks, cleaning restrooms, or doing housework for urban residents, along with labor intensive jobs in construction and building infrastructure or working in mines, which may pay better, but are often dangerous and lack health benefits. If hurt on the job, these migrants receive little to no compensation from their employers. The blatant separation of urban residents from rural migrant workers in effect creates communities of those not from the city within the urban setting, limiting the marginal benefits of urbanization. Outside of work, these migrant workers, who may or may not be married, may engage in sexual relations with prostitutes or other men who have sex with men (MSM). MSM account for approximately 7.3% of total HIV infections in 2005.<sup>51</sup> There are many misconceptions about how HIV and other STIs are transmitted; this quite obviously stems from a lack in public health education. Some MSM comment that they would be able to tell if their partner was sick and that they "check for ulcers" before engaging in sexual activities, which is not an effective measure of whether or not a person has sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.<sup>52</sup> Other than public health education, the lack of media attention is also an issue to be tackled; if the media invested time and money in small amounts of government supported propaganda for fighting HIV, promoting safe sex habits, and pushing forward with public health education, people would

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<sup>51</sup> Wong WC, Zhang J, Wu SC, Kong TS, Ling DC, et al. "The HIV related risks among men having sex with men in rural Yunnan, China: a qualitative study." *Sex Transmitted Infections*. 82 (2006): 127–130. Web. 12 Mar. 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

become more invested in the issues. Without attracting the interest of the public, especially in rural regions, any reforms made to health and sex education would barely be worthwhile.

For China's rural residents, the education system is lacking and job opportunities are few; public healthcare is expensive and the internet is hardly available. There are few residents who know what HIV truly is, much less how it is transmitted; homosexuality is unheard of or relegated to extra-marital relationships because of the pressure to fulfill the required continuation of the family. Having children is seen as the ultimate form of filial piety; as long as a child is born, the family will not care about an affair. Only media, government and public support can the problems in public health system and sexual health be addressed. While homosexuality is more common in urban areas, especially large cities, rural residents, because of the factors stated above, are less likely to self-identify as homosexual.

#### **Part 4: HIV/AIDS and Acceptance of Homosexuality**

Words have power, and word choice exhibits the space each of these communities occupy as well as the power they have in terms of shaping the public opinion. Public opinion in turn shapes how each community reacts to and manages relations with the other. In Chinese, unlike in English, there are no separate words for HIV and AIDS. This is problematic, as these are two different concepts. HIV, or Human Immunodeficiency Virus, refers to the virus which compromises the immune system of the person in which it resides; being HIV positive does not mean that a person cannot live a normal life, as modern medicine helps to lengthen the time it takes for HIV to develop into AIDS. AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, describes the whole group of symptoms that comes along with an advanced HIV infection; individuals said to have AIDS have a considerably weakened immune system, because of the low number of T-cells in their bodies making them more and more susceptible to various infections. While a person with HIV can live a fairly normal life, AIDS refers to a more dangerous, almost terminal illness which prevents a person from living out their life as they normally would. Without these distinctions in Chinese, there are misconceptions abound concerning HIV/AIDS and its relationship with homosexuality. For one, it was only in 2005 that sexually transmitted HIV passed fifty percent of all new reported infections.<sup>53</sup> Although public perceptions may still blame homosexuality for at least some of the spread of HIV/AIDS, the fact remains that intravenous drug use accounts for the largest portion of HIV transmission at the end of 2005, but the largest growing transmitter group are those who transmit through sexual activities; this includes sex workers, men who have sex with other men, and drug users who transmit HIV to

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<sup>53</sup> Wu, Z., S. Sullivan, Y. Wang, M. Rotheramborus, and R. Detels. "Evolution of China's Response to HIV/AIDS." *The Lancet* 369.9562 (2007): 679-90. Print.

their partner and/or children.<sup>54</sup> Out of those, men who have sex with other men make up the smallest percentage but also may be the group most likely to underreport their HIV status.

Chinese people on the whole are very private about sexual matters. Discussion about sexuality is very limited and often only between those studying it, though this is slowly changing with the influence of Western media and scholarship. Homosexuality is a topic that, unless it is being talked about in the media, does not come up in regular conversation. Outside of intravenous drug using and prostitution, homosexuality is one of the identities and behaviors connected to HIV/AIDS, and almost always in negative terms. As seen in the earlier part two, Qin Mei, the woman who ran the halfway home for HIV+, including homosexual individuals, was forced to shut down because the documentary crew lied and broadcast content they had earlier stated would not be broadcast; they did this because they believed they had a right to broadcast any video which could be used as a role model for behavior not to do. Though the Chinese government officially has no policy towards homosexuality, the government controlled media only seems to mention homosexuality when a man forges his medical records to that say he is HIV negative so that he can get surgery; the government was expected to condemn the doctors who refused to treat him at the last minute because of his HIV status, but instead remained silent on the issue.<sup>55</sup> The government is said to be trying to work for equal rights for HIV positive citizens, but ignorance and suspicion make this a difficult road to travel. The Chinese government has made strides in the past ten years, by providing free HIV screenings in all provinces, which have in turn have caused the

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<sup>54</sup> Wu 681-683.

<sup>55</sup> "Man Hides HIV Status to Obtain Surgery." *South China Morning Post*. South China Morning Post Publishers Ltd., 21 Nov. 2012. Web. 25 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1087473/man-hides-hiv-status-obtain-surgery>>.

government to provide more services for those who have tested HIV positive, including possible free antiretroviral medication.<sup>56</sup>

Another important aspect of changing the views on HIV/AIDS is re-education of the public; the senior leadership in China, including Wen Jiabao and Hu Jintao, have been seen at various events, proving that HIV cannot be transmitted through casual contact.<sup>57</sup> Even these small gestures have begun to change public opinion. On the other hand, government policies towards men who have sex with men and contract HIV, followed by transmitting it to their wives, are certainly lacking. Rather than provide government support, homosexual men, most of whom are also married because of societal pressure and stigma, must rely on non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups at present, though the government has begun to recognize men who have sex with men as a high risk group, and therefore may instigate policy change in the near future.<sup>58</sup> Through changes in policy towards men who have sex with men, China may be able to slowly drag public opinion on homosexuality into a more positive light.

In order to understand how public opinion is affected by policy, even the words surrounding homosexuality must be examined; the history of these words may show a bias towards negative connotations, and lends this topic to more negative discussion, even amongst the homosexual population. The context in which words are used also matter; the media may use one word to describe homosexuality, while the homosexual community has adopted entirely different terms, with slightly different meanings and histories for the same concept. Just as in any other language, the choice of words is incredibly important; the way the media, the homosexual community, and the medical community uses words all impact

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<sup>56</sup> Wu, 679-90.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid 685.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid 686.

how each part of society views the same topic. By controlling the language surrounding a topic, a group can control connotations of the discourse and also emphasize an agenda.

In terms of “coming out” there are words that have positive connotations, which reflect the person making a choice to tell others, along with words that have negative connotations which engender feelings of exposure and embarrassment. In English, “coming out” has positive connotations, mostly surrounding the fact that the person doing the coming out has control over to whom he comes out and when he comes out; he has the power and choice in this situation. In China, coming out is used not only in the case of individuals revealing their homosexuality, but also in the case of an individual revealing his HIV status. According to Lisa Rofel, there are four main terms used in relation to making people or having people become aware of HIV status: “to come out (zhangchulai), to push out (tuichulai), to tell (gaosu), or to expose (baolou).”<sup>59</sup> As is obvious from the English translations of these terms, each has different connotations; “to come out” gives the individual control over who and when to tell, “to push out” has the connotations that the individual is forced or pressured into telling others of his status and possibly to have suffered for doing so, “to tell” is not explained fully by the author, but seems to have similar connotations as “to come out,” but “to expose” is entirely negative in meaning. In Chinese, this word is also used in the context of being unmasked, having your identity exposed in a way that can only be detrimental to your life.<sup>60</sup> This language, while in this particular article is used to describe individuals whose HIV status had been put out into the open in some way, either by themselves, the media, or the government, is also used in the context of homosexuality. This feeling of exposure is profound and often overwhelming, especially

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<sup>59</sup> He, X., and L. Rofel. ““I Am AIDS”: Living with HIV/AIDS in China.” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 18.2 (2010): 511-36. *Project MUSE*. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.

<sup>60</sup> He, 520.

when it is the government exposing an individual in the HIV positive community which it set out to take care of through distribution of health information and medicines to those infected.<sup>61</sup> While the government is taking strides to care for its citizens, it is also providing a source of frustration and anger for those who have been exposed.

The case of the HIV positive individual in China is a complex one; each person has a different story; few of those stories involve helping the government spread awareness on HIV/AIDS infections and prevention, along with providing an example of a negative model citizen.<sup>62</sup> By showing others what may happen if they engage in sexual relations without paying attention to preventative measures or using dirty needles, these individuals help uphold societal harmony by hopefully preventing others from taking the same path. In Chinese culture, “model citizens” were the standard for both good and bad under Mao Zedong; the good model citizens represented the best of what China had to offer and were used as an exemplar for the rest of the citizens, while the bad models were often publicly punished so that others would be aware of their mistakes and be wary of making the same mistakes themselves. In China today, this same concept exists, though not as overtly as it used to. In order for the HIV/AIDS community as well as the homosexual community to come to trust the government, the Chinese government must prove that it can treat these individuals with respect and find ways other than the humiliation of those who made a mistake to educate the rest of the population.

While most nongovernmental organizations working in China in the area of HIV/AIDS are not specifically targeted towards only homosexuals, many of these NGOs cannot avoid dealing with the homosexual community and the cultural differences between

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<sup>61</sup> He 520.

<sup>62</sup> He 523.



the typically Western NGOs and the Chinese; dealing with a married man who acquired HIV from an extramarital affair with another man is not abnormal. NGOs can help educate those with HIV/AIDS, especially homosexual men and women, who cannot be helped in a public manner by providing phone hotlines and private meetings.<sup>63</sup> These types of organizations will be essential in the coming years for changing the views of both heterosexual and homosexual, as well as HIV positive and HIV negative, individuals in China.

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<sup>63</sup>Kaufman, Joan. "Nonprofits in China: The Role of NGOs in China's AIDS Crisis." *Hausercenter.org*. The Hauser Center for Non-Profit Organizations at Harvard University, 22 June 2009. Web. 15 Jan. 2013. <<http://hausercenter.org/chinanpo/2009/06/the-role-of-ngos-in-china's-aids-crisis/>>.

## Part Five: Data Analysis

### Data and Hypotheses

What factors influence people to “come out,” at least in the survey analyzed below, and self-identify as homosexual? The reasons for choosing not to come out in China cannot be explained as it easily is in the United States, with religion as the main culprit for people disapproving of homosexuality and refusing to accept their own sexual desire. Because of the history surrounding male concubines, it is obvious that even in a Confucian society, as long as the family is taken care of for the future by begetting another generation, homosexuality has not historically been seen as a majorly disruptive part of society, with the exception of a few time periods during which homosexuality was outlawed. Through the Republican period, homosexuality was tolerated, though mostly ignored in Chinese society. After the rise of Mao Zedong, rhetoric changed once again, making homosexuality one of the acts included under the hooligan laws; essentially making homosexuality illegal, alongside extramarital affairs and political dissidence.

Again, after the Cultural Revolution, rhetoric surrounding homosexuality changed, as did the medical position on homosexual behavior, though the views of the medical community would not change greatly until 2001, when homosexuality was removed from the list of mental illnesses. This analytical research looks at the social factors that influence the changing thought processes in the lives of Chinese people, and how they are related to those who self-identify as homosexual.

The database used in this analysis is the *Chinese Health and Family Values Survey* compiled by the University of Chicago from August 1999 to April 2000.<sup>64</sup> ADD DETAIL

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<sup>64</sup> Parish, William, and Edward O. Laumann. *Chinese Health and Family Life Survey (CHFLS): Wave 1, 1999-2000* [Data file]. Web. 12 February 2012.

With large changes in social, political, and economic policies in 1950 and 1979 in particular, it is easy to extrapolate that Chinese society could currently be separated into three main age groups: those born before 1950, those born between 1950 and 1979, and those born after 1979. These groups would be greatly affected by changing societal factors as they grew up. For one, with the hukou system being much stronger before 1979, there would be an expectation that the urban/rural divide would affect older generations more than younger generations. Although there are other factors which have influence in the lives of the respondents, the urban/rural divide is the easiest to gauge, especially with people grouped into age categories as stated above. The main idea taken from the above analysis is that the capacity and desire to self-identify as homosexual is heavily influenced by urbanization, modernization, gender, and education; however there appears to be a tipping point in education, where thereafter individuals seem to become reluctant to self-identify as homosexual. First, the urban/rural variable must be explored:

*Hypothesis 1: Urban residents are more likely to self-identify as homosexual than rural residents.*

Since Chinese citizens located in more rural locales are less likely to have access to education and media which portrays homosexuality as a normal part of life, they are less likely to identify as homosexual. Urban residents, on the other hand, have more access to media and the internet which may portray homosexual people as less taboo; this includes access to foreign media, especially media which portrays homosexuality as normal. With more access to education sources on homosexuality, in non-medicalized terms, urban residents are more likely to have positive or neutral views on homosexuality, leading to more people self-identifying as homosexual as well. Although more education leads to more

acceptance of homosexuality, those with the highest levels of education are also more likely to be government officials, a job that does not allow for blatant homosexuality. Another hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 2: Although higher levels of education lead to more identifying as homosexual, people with the highest levels of education do not self-identify as homosexual.*

Age is obviously a factor which should, and will also be analyzed, both by itself and in relation to with the other variables. The rise of Mao Zedong, followed by the Cultural Revolution, makes it easy to separate Chinese citizens into categories such as: Before Mao, After Mao until the Cultural Revolution, and After the Cultural Revolution. Education and the urban/rural divide are both affected by the change in policies at these times in Chinese history, therefore, understanding what happens to these variables when controlled for age is quite important. This is why the final hypothesis being tested in this paper is:

*Hypothesis 3: Older residents are less likely to self-identify as homosexual than younger residents.*

The next section explains the variables as they appear in the dataset; each will be explained on their own, with tables and graphs explaining how the variables interact in the next section.

### Variables

The independent variables which try to explain the dependent variables lie in the social realm of study, with the urban/rural divide also representing an economic division as well. Below is an explanation of these variables, along with table and graphical representations.

First are those who self-identify as homosexual. Luckily, this particular data set, which focuses most on how persons feels about their sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and their past

sexual experience/abuse, has a question which blatantly asks whether the respondent self-identifies as homosexual. In this survey, 50 out of 3821 people identify as homosexual. As 1.3 percent of the data set, this fits within the estimated range of 1-5% homosexuals in China.<sup>65</sup> The variable which identifies those who self-identify as homosexual (Self-Identified Homosexual) in figure 1 is the basis of all charts, graphs, regressions, crosstabs and other measures done later in the paper; the 50 respondents, or 1.3% of the total, who self-identify as homosexual are the focus of the rest of the data analysis.

Figure 1, below, is a crosstabulation of the three age ranges and self-identification of homosexuality. As predicted, the age group with the fewest self-identified homosexuals is the Pre-Mao Era, meaning these people were born between 1936 and 1949, before Mao's rise to power; their attitudes were most influenced by Mao Zedong's values, which emphasized family as the most important aspect of life. The second group, born between 1950 and 1966, though influenced by Mao at a young age, would come to adulthood in the late-Mao Era, and live through the Cultural Revolution; having slightly more liberal views and having seen much more turmoil during their lives, almost two percent of respondents self-identified as homosexual. The youngest age group, having been born after the Cultural Revolution, between 1967 and 1980, would be the first group of children to have been affected by the One Child Policy, which may explain the slight dip from 1.7 percent of the older generation to 1.3 percent of the younger generation identifying as homosexual; this generation may feel much more pressure to conform to societal pressure to marry and have a child to carry on the family name and were still young when the Opening Up and Reform Policy changed the Chinese government's attitudes towards their economy, but still old enough to be affected by

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<sup>65</sup> Hays, Jeffery. "Homosexuals and Gay Life in China." [Factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=130&catid=11&subcatid=76](http://Factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=130&catid=11&subcatid=76) October 2011. Web. 17 April 2012.

earlier views towards homosexuality in general.

Figure 1

Self-Identified Homosexuals, Separated by Age		
Period During Which Respondent Born	Does individual self-identify as homosexual?	Total (Number and Percentage)
Post-Cultural Revolution (1967-1980)	No	1585 98.7%
	Yes	21 1.3%
After Mao to Pre-Cultural Revolution (1950-1966)	No	1579 98.3%
	Yes	28 1.7%
Pre-Mao Era (1936-1949)	No	607 99.8%
	Yes	1 0.2%

Below, Figure 2 is a crosstabulation of those who self-identify as homosexual, gender, and the urban/rural variable; the male rural residents who self-identify as homosexual number half that of the male urban residents that self-identify as homosexual, while the female rural residents who self-identify as homosexual are not even one-third of the female urban residents who identify as homosexual. Education may be the largest contributing factor in the urban residents being more willing to self-identify as homosexual, as well as better access to media and internet than rural residents. Another aspect that would influence them would be the communities of homosexual individuals available in urban environments. While these figures do not show conclusive evidence of relationships between self-identifying as homosexual and residing in urban vs. rural communities, it does show cause for further investigation.

Figure 2

Urban/Rural Homosexuals, Divided by Gender				
Rural or Urban	Does he/she self-identify as homosexual? (y/n)	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Rural	Yes	9 (64.3%)	5 (35.7%)	14 (100%)
	No	376 (50.5%)	368 (49.5%)	744 (100%)
Urban	Yes	17 (47.2%)	19 (52.8%)	36 (100%)
	No	1461 (49.3%)	1505 (50.7%)	2966 (100%)

Below is Figure 3, which is a profile of homosexual people in China; it separates people by gender, age, education, geographic region, and whether or not they have been told they have herpes in the last 12 months (this variable is used because there is no variable in this data set that asks whether or not a person is HIV positive). The first part of the chart, which separates males and females into heterosexual or homosexual groups, makes it clear that when looking within the groups for comparison, there is almost equal representation between men and women in both the heterosexual and homosexual categories, hovering around 50% for each. On the other hand, in this survey and in Chinese society those who self-identified as homosexual only represent around 1.3-1.4% of the respondents overall; this falls within the range of 1-5% of the population that is predicted by most experts on homosexuality. In the third category, which looks at education, it is apparent that education for both homosexual and heterosexual individuals is about the same, with those who have a junior high education having the most individuals, heterosexual or homosexual, and the most homosexual individuals identify junior high as their highest level of education. According to the geographic regions variable, the highest percentage of homosexual individuals live in the Coastal East, Inlands, and North, with the Inlands having the highest percentage of

homosexual people to heterosexual people, especially since it only holds 9.9% of the total population of the survey. While this chart may not precisely represent the actual population percentages of Chinese homosexuals, it does gauge that within a population of 3821 individuals, there are a small but significant number of individuals who are not afraid to self-identify as homosexual, at least when answering a university survey.

Figure 3

Profile of Homosexual People in China (numbers in cells are percentages)				
	Within-Group Comparisons (columns sum to 100)		Within-Group Comparisons (rows sum to 100)	
	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Heterosexual	Homosexual
<b>Gender:</b>				
Male	49.5%	52.0%	98.6%	1.4%
Female	50.5%	48.0%	98.7%	1.3%
<b>Age:</b>				
20-34	42.0%	42.0%	98.7%	1.3%
35-50	41.9%	56.0%	98.3%	1.7%
50-64	16.1%	2.0%	99.8%	0.2%
<b>Education:</b>				
No school	4.4%	4.0%	98.8%	1.2%
Elementary	15.2%	14.0%	98.8%	1.2%
Junior High	37.4%	44.0%	98.4%	1.6%
Senior High or Professional Training School or Vocational High School	28.9%	26.0%	98.8%	1.2%
Junior College	9.5%	10.0%	98.6%	1.4%
University or Graduate School	4.6%	2.0%	99.4%	0.6%
<b>Geographic Region:</b>				
Coastal South	21.8%	12.0%	99.3%	0.7%
Coastal East	21.4%	26.0%	98.4%	1.6%
Inlands	9.9%	22.0%	97.1%	2.9%
North	15.2%	20.0%	98.3%	1.7%
Northeast	18.0%	12.0%	99.1%	0.9%
Central West	13.8%	8.0%	99.2%	0.8%
<b>Herpes Status:</b>				



Positive	.06%	2.0%	95.8%	4.2%
Negative	99.4%	98.0%	98.7%	1.3%

Below is Figure 4, the logistical regression, with those who self-identify as homosexual as the dependent variable and gender, age, education level, geographic region, and if the respondent had ever been diagnosed with a herpes infection as the independent variables. Model I shows the influence of several variables on the dependent variable, self-identifying as homosexual. The regression analysis shows that, due to idiosyncratic factors, none of these variables are statistically significant when discussing whether or not an individual self-identifies as homosexual. The low R-Square found in this model leads to the assumption that there are many underlying unobservable and idiosyncratic factors affection self-identifying as homosexual. Thus, this model cannot be used to predict whether or not someone will identify as homosexual. It is also possible there are factors not included in this analysis that would affect the probability of a person self-identifying as homosexual in China. If a larger, more recent data set was available, predicting the likelihood of homosexual identification might increase; this sample simply may not be representative enough of the whole population.

Figure 4

Logistic Regressions	Model I
Explanatory Variables	Coefficient (Significance)
Gender	-.133 (.634)
Age	-.022 (.108)
Education	-.111 (.441)
Geographic Region	-.028 (.726)

Ever Had Herpes Infection?	-.325 (.613)
Number of Observations	3760
R-Square	.001

## Conclusion

Homosexuality in China is not a new issue, but the discourse surrounding this issue has changed dramatically over the past 100 years. From the strict Qing Dynasty to Mao's hooligan laws to 1978 and the Opening Up and Reform policy's influence, this past century has been a tumultuous one for homosexuality in China. Many factors influence self-identification of homosexuality in China, but it is ultimately an individual's choice to come out and tell others that he identifies as homosexual in a society that emphasizes the importance of traditional family values and filial piety.

Utilizing gender, education, a person's place of origin, and age when studying a topic as broad as attitudes towards homosexuality was an easy choice and, although the findings of the logistical regression in Part Five were not significant, the very fact that questions on homosexuality are available is a good indication of how Chinese society views this topic. Fifty people answered "yes" when asked whether or not they self-identified as homosexual. This means that, in an anonymous setting where their full identity would be protected, fifty people chose declared themselves as homosexual and by studying them, patterns in their lives can possibly be teased out. Each of these variables contributes valuable information about the individual, especially when taken as a whole, but ultimately cannot predict whether or not an individual self-identifies as homosexual because each person's situation is different. Without a data set that asks questions more in depth about homosexuality and the reasoning behind self-identifying as such, it is difficult to gauge whether or not the factors listed above actually affect those who choose to self-identify as homosexual in the data set available.

Studying attitudes and self-identification of homosexuals in China is important because, as the largest country in the world in population, China has an ever-growing number

of homosexual individuals. The Chinese governmental response to the emergence of homosexuality as both an identity and community along with the improvement of general sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention must be evaluated in order to encourage open discussion of the rights of minority groups who have been persecuted in the past.

For the future, a data set with questions more geared towards gender and sexual identity would be much more helpful, especially when taken alongside demographical data. The literature surrounding this topic also lacks in-depth discussion of both male and female homosexual identities; rather, they are discussed in terms of one's behavior. Literature surround HIV/AIDS also has little separation of the various groups at risk; drug users and prostitutes are discussed at the same time as men who have sex with other men, and MSM are not separated into those who identify as homosexual and those who, because of their circumstances, have sex with other men. This distinction would be important for further research, if there is a difference in men who have sex with men and do not identify as homosexual. With such a broad topic, further research is necessary in order to advance the position of a homosexual identity in China.

China is, in many ways, the country to watch; though economically one of the strongest countries in the world, China is facing large scale social change due to globalization and will continue to face issues regarding minority groups whose identity must be defined in the Chinese context. Although homosexuality is not new to China, the homosexual community is fairly new and should be studied further so as to gauge the government response not only to homosexuality but also to minority rights in general.

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