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Queer Anthropology and the Mapping of "Human"

By

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In Cultural Anthropology

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Abstract

This research examines the many actors and ideological movements at the intersection of sexuality, agency, and power that influence lalas to create their identities. Critiquing notions of sex, gender, and sexuality via Chinese lala experience not only reveals fissures and discontinuities in the "reality" of these categories, but also de-essentializes Western notions of the normal queer. Rather than being an extension of the queer movement in the West, the tongzhi movement in China is unique and although Western imaginings construct its own queerness as the first and only in the world, these struggles have always been forthcoming in other parts of the world. As non-normative movements can greatly inform each other, there is no value in pushing the Western queer movement as the key to sexual liberation in other societies in the world; rather, it proves effective to continue critique on the matter and extent of humanity. If in queer theory our inquiry revolves around subjects claiming agency in the world, then it is a queer anthropology that allows us to examine of our repeated dependency, our continued struggle to map and be mapped in that which is “human.”

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Introduction

At the heart of cultural anthropology is a set of ethnographic methods that elicit insider perspectives and when synthesized with queer theory, this tradition of ethnography offers a more well-rounded, critical, and reflexive study of human culture, to move closer to what it means to map the "human." Queer anthropology as a disciplinary lens has included people in very particular ways: it has given scholars, social movements, and individuals the means to analyze and critique notions of sex, sexuality, and gender, as well as closely linked notions of kinship and affect, that have been normalized in society. Queer anthropology has allowed people to conceptualize their own social, emotional, and corporal experiences, going beyond these categories to examine the dynamics of power, namely the power to label and thus, bring into existence certain kinds of life.

However, as with all philosophical movements, queerness must be situated in a particular time and place – that is, in Western academia at the turn of the century, at a time when neoliberal notions of personhood arising in the West began to spread globally. Along with queer scholarship's short history comes long enduring misrepresentation of the Eastern "other." Although queer theory now has the ability to address the issues of those formerly overlooked and underappreciated in society, it has maintained the West's fascination with imagining alterity according to its own definitions and expectations about the world.

All of queer scholarship's strengths, weaknesses, and future promise can be

highlighted by the experience of the tongzhi movement in mainland China, specifically that of the tongzhi who identify as lalas. Opening with a discussion of sexuality in China allows these Western studies to be situated in a relevant context. Besides breaking down the ahistorical, apolitical tropes of alterity studies, situating the Asian Queer experience via ethnography from China offers queer theory new conceptions of that which is brought into the definitions of "human." Lala definitions encourage expansion and reflexivity on the part of queer researchers.

Lala literally means "to hold hands" and this image all over Chinese cities has become associated as a key marker of practice for these self-identified women or gender transitioning subjects with desire for women. They may identify as feminine, masculine, gender neutral, transgender, a combination of these, or none at all and they experience a wide array of intimate, romantic, and sexual practices. Recent research on lala experience in China often involves a particular urban, young, university graduate, white collar woman, but many lalas are from rural areas and living away from hometowns for the first time. Something across all classes and nationalities in China that remains shared is a role in the project of neoliberal China and with that new economic independence. This independence allows lalas spaces and intimate areas where they have more freedom to create new meanings of what it means to be a woman, a couple, and a particular subject in society. With these spaces also comes the ability to find networks of dependency maintained by friends, lovers, and arranged

family.

These experiences highlight the effect that the globalization of Western queer and gender politics have on identity creation for lalas and the ways that Chinese culture negotiates itself amid a shifting global identity. Further, this research examines the ways that native Chinese activism resists Western notions of queer or non-normative relationships and kinship so that tongzhi can express their experience on their own terms. Areas of inquiry for the purpose of this research are clustered around concepts of time, space, and self-creation, with this making of the self being negotiated through language, appearances, social networking, public display, and most of all action.

There are many actors and ideological movements that influence lalas to make their own identities and life meanings. The intersections between sexuality, agency, and power, which often stems from economic independence, are of particular importance to the lala subject coming of age and coming out as a queer subject. A lala does so amid ideas caught up in the play of discourse between the public and the state as China moves relentlessly towards neoliberal desire and the “properness” of cosmopolitanism. Finally, as women’s sexual identities in China are often considered to be less threatening to the social order, they find themselves with a free space for experience in non-normative gender interactions, at the same time that their voices are erased in public discussion. Examination of notions of sex, gender, and sexuality via lala experience not only reveals fissures and discontinuities in the "reality"

of these categories, but also de-essentializes Western notions of the normal queer.

The layout of Western queer theory from the musings of Foucault on identity politics and power to debates on the limitations of gender and cultural dependency can then continue the discussion. This presents, not an analytical framework for the Chinese tongzhi movement, but a standpoint for the purposes of comparison so that queer theory can discover what can be augmented, changed, and made more inclusive within itself. Situating Western queer theory allows us to see the places when and where it overlaps with other movements, how it is challenged and how it emerges in co-existence with other constantly changing movements. With the dynamic changes of this developing critical theory laid out, we can forgo using ideological frames on consistently changing issues because we are not looking for the answer to the question of gender power relations, but a set of solutions to problems. Moving Western frameworks across to other movements and expecting them to match proves to be dissatisfactory in a way that prompts queerness to notice its own gaps.

Finally, the juxtaposition of these two points places Western queer theory and thus queer anthropology into a matrix of multiple analytic frameworks that ease toward expanding the definition of "human" for the future as opposed to being a definitive solution to all problems everywhere. Queer anthropology must address new notions of identity and personhood by mapping the great diversity in non-normative communities locally and abroad with sensitivity. Queer anthropology can reach to themes of online interconnectedness,

transnational identity, and the neoliberal project of self-creation to deepen its analysis of society. Accessibility to the Internet, social media, and other new technology, has brought the world closer together than ever before. Along with this closeness comes greater need and desire for constant mediation of local, regional, and global identity both on the level of the individual and of the collective.

Queer anthropology has the prospect to grow along with the future, in effect continuously becoming more queer, more accommodating, and more skeptical of notions of normalcy, the labelling of these and the power to normalize on all scales. As ethnographic data continues to be revealed, this process continues. If in queer theory our inquiry centers on subjects claiming agency in the world, then it is a queer anthropology that continues critique on the matter and extent of humanity. Queer anthropology then becomes a field that continues examination of our repeated dependency, our continued struggle to map and be mapped in that which is "human."

Sexual Context in China

As China moved into the new millennium's global economy and aimed to achieve world citizenship through Western association, Chinese society saw more tolerance for the sexualities of women and queer subjects, both of which also come out as post-socialist subjects. The reasons for this are not to be misconstrued as a clear cut adoption of Western

ideas bringing China into being as a freer, more modern state. Rofel considers the working of neoliberal ideology in China, noting that it is not simply a series of individual enterprises, but also linking into notions of state-hood and nation building. (Rofel 2007: 15-17) Chinese subjects are caught up in the project of becoming desiring Chinese – both denied and accepted at the same time by a nation coming out of a semi-colonial experience and wrestling with how to adopt neoliberal capitalist ideology on its own terms. These puzzles affect the way that Chinese subjects create themselves and others.

Neoliberalism is an ongoing experimental project that began in the global south involving nations remaking themselves in order to participate in the post-Cold War world order. That China became a subject of neoliberalism after a history of rigid adherence to communism proves the inevitability of this universal pressure. However, when China negotiated its coming into the post-socialist world, it did not follow a well-established plan, but slowly worked so that policies moved around the state, rather than against it. In these post-socialist experiments, economic reform seemed uniform, but these were a set of tests that initiated the project of creating a "desiring China." (Rofel 2007: 7-8) Though the West would say that Chinese people are all of a sudden having desires, Rofel argues that certain desires and ways of becoming a subject, which are endorsed by the West, are now considered to be the heart of subjectivity. Discourses within China and abroad serve as social forces to create these desires as essential to progress and survival – these are the marker of humanity,

not simply a privilege. The Chinese people become aware of themselves as local and global identities, and fight to claim such dual citizenship through shifting ideology about personhood, mapping out who is considered a properly desiring person. (Rofel 2007: 21)

This global reorientation mirrors the changes already occurring in post-Mao China. The weakening of direct state control on citizens of the country, has greatly affected the mobility of the Chinese people. Lessening state control has led to the opening of the job market, rural reforms, special economic zones on coastal cities and other conditions that free up the movement of people and ideas in ways that the state cannot completely control. (Kam 2013, Rofel 2007) With new autonomy also came anonymity from close-knit hometowns, something that is crucial for those with alternative lifestyles. Migration to other parts of China is a part of this neoliberal process: women are manipulated as a newly free Chinese subject, while experiencing the gross subjugation and inequality that women face on a global scale. They are the face of the nation, a desiring subject, but inexpensive and easily manipulated labor that eventually will have to adhere to the pressures of heterosexual marriage and childbirth. The internet is a key accelerator for tongzhi movements because it allows people to gain knowledge about homosexuality, queer identity, and general community happenings. (Kam 2013: 27)

Sex in China is no longer seen as a “collective” practice. The widespread introduction of contraception has freed sex from the ideological trappings that it is for

reproduction only. (Kam 2013: 25) In fact, there has been a spreading idea via increased individual rights that sexual pleasure is as important as reproduction. Sex has moved outside of the limits of monogamy too, with extramarital affairs being more accepted as an inevitable part of marriage. Another movement toward sexual reform includes the creation of sex education into university topics as well as invitations to the general public to engage in these formal discussions on sexuality. This sex education and increase in protection affects the level of overall sexual autonomy in society.

The lala experience is one of women with "same-sex" desire gaining agency through a system that values only married subjects as coming into adulthood. The Confucian model of filial piety continues sexual scripts, holding that it is the duty of a woman to continue the patrilineage of the family. Amid the pressures of the One Child policy, this responsibility may be exacerbated by the fact that she herself is an only child and being female, not valued as the carrier of the family's name, inheritance, or status. (Engebretsen 2014: 18-21, Kam 2013) As China continues to manage life to avoid exceeding its resource base, male children remain seen as valuable life, while daughters are lost to infanticide and statistical misrepresentation. Though this is not necessarily the goal of the state, the present cultural norms surrounding what constitutes valuable life leads to exclusory practices.

Despite state influences and due to the massiveness of the country, it remains that tongzhi identities do not encounter direct and all-imposing state care, but intimate and

constant surveillance by family via a language of love and care. (Kam 2013: 91) In Kam's research, she found that not only arranged, but compulsory marriage is a key social custom in China that is endorsed by people on a social level as it is encouraged by the state through economic incentives. Marriage is state sponsored, but where it once was enforced by law, it has now moved to daily scrutiny by immediate family and social networks. Marriage is still the only way that women can gain power – there is a lack of power equality in marriage, but married women have more power over their single counterparts by way of heightened status. (Kam 2013: 6-7)

The coming out process is dual for a Chinese woman: she must come out not only as a queer subject, but also as an autonomous adult in a culture that heavily stigmatizes unmarried and divorced woman. Chinese women are harassed and marginalized to such a degree that the only way to legitimize their lifestyle and claim power is to ultimately marry, as marriage is the sole recognized motion towards maturity into adulthood. (Kam 2013: 9) Further, female celibacy is stigmatized, fed by conceptions of the female body as a store of energy (qi) that has to be used, or else is wasted, conceptions of temporality for the female body do not apply to male bodies. The female body is portrayed as needing to produce as part of Chinese social ecology. Women 25 to 29 years old experience the most organized, strongest efforts towards matchmaking by not only family, but also friends and even co-workers. (Kam 2013: 61)

The Chinese subject is taunted by outside movements calling for a Western path to freedom, as they are called upon to be properly Chinese by multiple sites of pressure, but Western concepts of queer temporality are not easily applied here. There are possibilities of moving through a livable life for lalas, but only if they contend with deep set, culturally embedded understandings of spiritual energy balance, social obligation, conceptualizations of a woman's worth being tied to her womb and her virginity, but only for a set amount of time. Time spent waiting is more acceptable, and perhaps even celebrated by the already individualistic culture of the United States, for example, but lalas cannot wait in the same way.

Finally, tongzhi identities exist everywhere; that they are rapidly aware of each other has been key for debate. One of the factors that created the conditions for the emergence of tongzhi communities was the sharing of the Chinese language, which began moving to the adoption of more neutral terms for formerly condemned sexual practices. Taiwan and Hong Kong are communities that influence tongzhi politics in mainland China most and language accessibility affects cultural flow between these three areas. Films and theory are often imported from Taiwan for example. These influences touch Chinese tongzhi communities through the Internet namely by mobilization and through queer movement training camps and information exchange. Palpable examples of cultural tension appear in language as well: at the same time that Beijing ku'er is a sinicization of "queer," it is a push away from the

standardized Chinese realm of sexual politics. The existence of mainland Chinese lala experience requires meditating "elsewhere" while playing with local notions of what it means to be a Chinese "adult," which is denied two-fold in femininity and non-heterosexuality.

Lala Distance and Timing

As an extension of this dual identity restriction, lalas are very aware of spatial distance and develop strategies to avoid surveillance. Leaving their hometowns and immediate social networks allows lalas to achieve some amount of anonymity. Lalas have more mobility within urban settings and even more outside of the country. Online identities on Chinese social media are still young, but these spaces provide plenty of opportunity for tongzhi subjects to find information, support, and new relationships. People online engage in the processes of community building, cultural formation, and transformation, as when lala subjects arrange cooperative marriages with gay men after being greatly informed by the cyber public. (Engebretsten 2014, Kam 2013)

Lalas learn shared language online, which not only bridges gaps between regional dialects, but also offers newcomers the ability to express their identity with easily understood terms. At first lalas used sanitized terms like tongxinglian (the Chinese equivalent of homosexual), or "lesbian" in English, but of course these results do not readily lead to groups that would not use this language to describe themselves. After obtaining this language, they

speak of having the ability to better associate with this set of ideas and practices, as when Moon talks about not knowing basic terms or the practical technicalities of how to have sex and feeling an explosion of self-empowerment being equipped with this knowledge. Further, she describes a sense of self-normalization, being able to use shared meaning to explain her relationship and above all, herself to others. (Kam 2013: 53-55) The experience of many lalas finding each other online for the first time is articulated by Qing, who expresses a sudden awareness of being normal and the comfort in seeing her identity as being one that is quite common. She reflects on the experience of meeting younger friends, finding hope in the fact that they can imagine a future and be imagined outside of the rigid heterosexual blueprint which she has always taken for granted. (Kam 2013: 55)

Sexuality in Chinese society is often interpreted as a practice carried out by certain people – those who are cisgender men and women in monogamous, heteronormative marital bonds. After the widespread connection of tongzhi, lala subjects, people started to share ideas and those things became an identity when people have their own personal revelations that there are others like them. Salons are a source of reference for these newcomers. However, lalas share the fantasy of a wider range of places to meet, where their identity can remain anonymous to the public, but safely known to those who care about them.

This remains mostly fantasy because in transitioning to "real life," lalas face blackmailing. This has led to the formation of nomadic tribes of lalas following a thin stream

of parties, weddings, and other quickly planned events. Lala bar owners tend to not be as well off as gay tongzhi bar owners. Besides this lack of cash flow inhibiting their economic capacity, there continues to be many social risks attached to being a visible tongzhi, let alone a lala. (Kam 2013: 29-31) The perils of becoming too close or falling in love with others are great and most dare not to ask for each other's real names on forums for fear of being identified.

Lalas develop coping strategies to manage coming out distance, some of which could be tried at different stages of their single, dating, and married life. They may choose to keep their sexuality dually secret, in which case both their partner(s) and family are kept unaware of their true desires. They may expand their marriage outside of monogamy, either by making a fully open or semi-open agreement with their husband for extra-marital affairs, with either both or one spouse having an outside lover. Finally, they may fake heterosexuality in marriage with a gay man, which is the most experimental of all options. (Engebresten 2014, Kam 2013: 83) Lalas note that distance is necessary for making their relationships, both marital and extramarital work, especially if the latter is nurtured in secret. Since divorce is as difficult, if not more stressful than remaining unmarried, the secrecy leaves lalas in existential turmoil. Ying says that she and others understand that, "no matter what kind of love relationship it is in this world; it still needs emotional support," a concern which takes away a sense of belonging in both relationships as lalas are plagued by guilt. (Kam 2013: 79)

Lalas are very hopeful about the future and their sense of that temporal distance keeps them working towards creating an identity that is accepted by Chinese culture. Temporal and spatial awareness are conceptualized by "darkness" versus "light" and "virtual" versus "real." They understand their stigmatized past as one carried out in darkness, being very sad and full of longing, as demonstrated in the les+ magazine's hopeful quote: After the darkness fades away, I'll be holding your hand, walking under the sunlight with pride, boldly and happily living our lives! (les+, Issue one, 2005) In contrast to this dark past is the bright future of tongzhi, which includes a better way of life and standard of living. They are also in a period of moving from the safety and supposed limitations of their virtual worlds into those harsher spaces that they find in real life, but hope to soften. As they move from these virtual spaces to "real" spaces, they question how they should present themselves to achieve this gentler reaction. (Kam 2013: 97) Progressive notions of future sexuality being open and free is a collective belief in the possibility of new life, a tension that erupts in parts of postmodern Western critique. This still is a beautiful reminder of the resilience of people to imagine and plan for the future despite present oppression.

Stigma, "Suzhi," and Tongzhi Politics of Visibility

Although there is still policing of and closing of tongzhi events across the country, homosexuality has been decriminalized (1997) and de-medicalized (2001) in China. This

ideological shift has allowed more positive representations of non-normative sexuality to come to the surface. (Kam 2013: 24) As anticipated by tongzhi communities, political consideration continues to play into future representations of sex and sexuality in China. Tongzhi are wary of satisfying the consumers of these images: those in the West, the global community in general, those in the Asian-Pacific region, and the Chinese themselves. Time and place throughout Chinese history has affected the demystifying and destigmatizing of homosexuality. (Kam 2013: 45)

Controversial topics like rape, homosexuality, sexually transmitted diseases/infections, and sex reassignment were originally omitted from scientific texts in China to avoid ideological wars. This constant omission kept writers and contributors from being attacked on moral and political charges, which at the time could eject researchers from scholarship and into prison. (Kam 2013: 41) In an attempt to remain technical and sympathetic, but remain in line with state and public expectations, writers often offered unstable opinions on homosexuality. In Ruan Fangfu's "Homosexuality: An Unsolved Puzzle," (1985) for example, he fluctuates between the two contradictory stances of urging fairer treatment of homosexuals, while calling for prevention of homosexuality in youth. Medical professionals were and still are a key component of social control. HIV/AIDS prevention was linked to a sex health campaign geared towards gay men. Not only did gay men have to deal real and imagined dangers of STDs, they endured stigma and the effects of being marked as a

gay man. Further removed were lalas who were completely ignored and lacking in resources. (Kam 2013: 47)

Besides medical professionals, homosexuality was being supported by rising legal forces. Visibly and openly gay lawyers came to the forefront of the gay rights movement, which become understood as an issue of human rights and inseparable from legal empowerment. (Kam 2013: 49-50) The key social moment however came via Gao, when he asserted that: people [have] the right to choose their own sexuality. (quoted from Li 2006, 83.) Again change came unequally for women – female sexuality in China was met with reluctance and lalas lacked legal representation, owning to the rarity of lala attorneys and inability to gather the resources to carry out lengthy legal cases.

This steadily changes as more Chinese women enter the workforce. As lalas are restricted by the same parameters of cultural and economic capital as other individuals under neoliberal capitalist society, material success brings about more social and familial recognition. (Kam 2013: 78) Chinese lala activism and identity negotiation involves three things: 1) the development of lala communities, 2) shifting public discourse from the government mandate that tongzhi people be scrutinized and regulated to a tongzhi created discourse that reflects their needs and desires, and 3) negotiating gender and sexuality that manages family harmony, fulfills filial piety, and encourages women to be accepted as active and legitimate sex subjects. Adherence to notions of *suzhi* (that which is of good or high

quality) sets parameters on how lala and other tongzhi subjects in China are allowed to come into being. Public discourse about tongzhi often involves language about tolerance on the part of outsiders and silence on the part of tongzhi themselves. Research shows how lala women cope with pressures from family and marriage and how they achieve “correctness,” which is expressed in the form of the cooperative marriage. (Engebresten 2014)

Self-respect and self-discipline are portrayed as the marker of healthy tongzhi subjectivity; a respectable image does not involve outright sexual display. As tongzhi are brought into the new cultural citizen project, they must work with new notions of being of "cultural citizenship," "post-socialist subjectivity," and "decent homosexuality." (Rofel 2007) Tongzhi culture draws on this dominant discourse, leading tongzhi to speak of themselves and each other in terms of a hierarchy. Based on these requirements, tongzhi communities note “respectable” tongzhi versus those who are immature or unworthy of being considered tongzhi, often following the same concepts of adulthood and maturity that is imposed on them by the state, experts, and family in favor of saving face. As one example of visibility politics in the tongzhi community, lalas still in school are ignored and disadvantaged because of their age and education status. They are encouraged to first perform the socially assigned roles of a student by doing well in school and graduating in high honors before demanding sexual recognition. (Kam 2013: 99) Tongzhi who mingle with Western lovers and those engaged in sex tourism are notably stigmatized. (Rofel 2007)

In regards to Western imaginings of homophobia in China, suzhi forms counterhegemonic resistance to the Western framework of lesbian and gay activism. As tongzhi put great effort into constructing a history of Chinese homosexuality and tongzhi politics that is different from those of the West and surrounding Asian countries, this has allowed tongzhi to push a more socially acceptable image of homosexuals in Chinese terms. (Kam 2013: 93-94) In response to outside images of a “backward” homophobic China, Chinese society, including tongzhi themselves, has adopted a discourse of “Chinese tolerance.” The dominant discourse pushes an “essentialist, illusory notion of Chinese tolerance” that leads to the silent repression of Chinese tongzhi/lala identities, but also allows the relief of “normalization,” a way of entering Chinese society. Tongzhi discussion surrounds being correct in public (law-abiding, economically productive, etc.) and a “model” of homosexuality. This homonormative imagination of healthy representations is supposed to bring about positive familial recognition and ultimate general acceptance. As with all things, this has its pros and cons, but it remains culturally relevant. (Kam 2013, Engebresten 2014)

This silence has been portrayed as a violent form of symbolic erasure, although it may be read as cultural tolerance and in many ways Chinese queer subjects are silenced under the "poetic of reticence." (Liu and Ding 2005) Tolerance is a discourse of de-politicization and personalization of political issues that devolves into a discourse of personal failure on the part of the individual to conform to the collective's norms. This

invokes feelings of shame, as these choices are forbidden in the household – the family's silent tolerance is backed by considerable guilt. Chinese queer subjects self-shame and keep silent and invisible. Tolerance is granted to them when the surface order and harmony of the family is maintained, something that causes great anxiety for tongzhi for whom heterosexual marriage is painful. However, as Engebresten (2009) describes it as an attitude and manifestation of "don't ask, don't tell," this points the conversation back to West. People in the West are content to believe that individuals can do what they want, as long as they do not ask for public recognition or in a sense “flaunt” their sexuality in their face. This outward sexuality is dangerous in China. These are the conditions far too complex to be solved by a Wester outsider.

Repression of homosexual subjects in Chinese family and society is manifested through a combination of traditional to neutral attitudes, ignorance, and prejudice, which compared to the “ruthless persecution and extreme hostility” faced by homosexuals in the U.S., for example, seems much more benevolent and this is reflected in the way tongzhi react to Chinese homophobia. Tongzhi often value non-confrontational and escapist tactics in interactions of this kind. Lalas explain that they are relieved they have this society as their opponent, as they “don’t fear for their life.” (Kam 2013: 92) Lalas say of their parents and close relationships that it would be “fearful if they didn’t care” about their wellbeing. (Kam 2013: 80) There are instances of parents posting their unmarried children’s profiles and

personal information in public areas to attract matches. They are seen as genuinely worried parents with the implications of an out child being a source of great anxiety for them.

Experiments in Kinship

This leads lalas to often talk about the need to maintain a smile on the surface, while enduring their pain in silence, as when Dudu says in les+, "A fake marriage is a promise between ourselves and our families. On the surface we keep a smile, but the sacrifices we make are more than anyone can imagine." ("Why don't we come out?" les+, Volume 9, May 2007, p. 33) The social climate in China surrounding debates about family, intimacy, and visibility, as well as the global neoliberal economy dictating ideas of self-creation, independency, and desire, has led to renegotiation of kinship through lala definitions and experiences.

Lala households are made up of small groups of close lala friends that share rental costs and give each other support. The roles of their family mirror the roles of a traditional heterosexual family and they are related to each other by kinship terms according to sexual and gender identity, as well as their personality and their specialty in the division of domestic labor. The most reliable T (masculine identifying lala) would then become the father and the most capable P (feminine identifying lala) would become the mother. Although these lalas are not necessarily a couple, the rest of the lalas become their daughters, and these children are

often younger and less established. Secondary groups and familiar lala households become nieces to the parents and cousins to the daughters. Together, these lalas give and receive care that cannot otherwise be found from the group's natal parents. (Kam 2013: 35-37, Engebresten) They become a center of emotional support and peace from the outside world. Further, they constitute a group within with everyone's dependency and needs are covered and managed. This is important when older lalas face discrimination for being considered "leftover" women. These relationships provide the family they want rather than that which is forced upon them. Lesbian kinship in urban China, but also in rural areas deserves further research.

In questioning non-normative kinship in South Korea, John Cho (2009) comes to the conclusion that it is a compromise, rather than being a realistic way of addressing the needs of queer subjects. He argues that it is not a politically sound strategy to bring about recognition of these subjects. There are continuous debates as to whether this is a setback or whether cooperative marriage could bring about new possibilities for tongzhi. Lala uses for cooperative marriage emerges in response to a dynamic set of concepts of family. A divorcee with children from a previous marriage is a prime candidate for stigma and economic discrimination. The accessibility to insemination is vastly rarer than the potential to co-parent with a gay friend. Amid strict notions of the purity of the family name, there remains great stigma on adoption. So lala kinship is a very different way of conceptualizing the family.

Women from all over the country are building completely new relationships around discussions on the idea of chosen family. Lalas may remain in control of certain aspects of their life in this way, though they still prefer being unmarried than married with their true sexuality "tolerated."

Questions of human needs being met in a group that cares about them should be the center of this debate. We should critique the notion that people must recognize a kinship arrangement for it to address these needs. These are relationships that come out in secrecy, but are real in that they are a way of coping in the world. They are not endorsed, but they are in need of resources an understanding. This dependency and intimate management of human needs requires further consideration of what human life strives for. Cho denies these unions something by thinking of them as simple compromises, in a dismissive way. That there is some control, that there is a lack of control in the experience of being a human being at all. We must tease apart critiques like this in queer theory.

Situating Western "Queer"

This ethnographic data can push the limitations of queerness – the sociocultural issues are quite unique, so it is in the human core that movements find their sameness. The foundation for Western queerness starts at Foucault, who argues that categories surrounding deviance are created and force subjects to create themselves according to requirements set

forth by society. Power is motivated by regulating life as the key source of societal well-being. Besides this giving legitimacy to the practice of heterosexual marriage and sexuality, it also gave rise to capitalism, being that states were more concerned with maintaining populations as opposed to punishing them. This preludes neoliberal capitalism and the identity crises that ripple in its wake.

Butler maintains that gender is created through repeated action. Butler's notion of performativity argues that gender is a series of performances that make identity seem stable, but it is full of contradictions and it is constantly falling apart in action. Further, masculinity and the re-creation of it on various bodies shows the insecurity of gender, as well as the limitations of binary labeling. Given that these categories are deeply implemented in a series of power struggles, examining and dismantling their creation reveals the problem of identity, personhood, the instability of all illusory "objects" we reach out for, but never really hold. This allows us to consider claims to agency to be further than achievement of "rights" from the state or visibility, but the recognition of one's existence as a human, the recognition that one is a part of that definition of "humanity."

In terms of kinship, various authors will question the validity of its use as a marker of successful queer transition into society. There is a particular way that queer kinship both colludes in the dominate culture while subverting its authenticity as a normal process. Halberstam is moves her inquiry into notions of kinship, proving the extent to which kinship

relies on negotiation. When queer kinship is held up against what seems to be natural heterosexuality, it is easy to see that it has always been constructed. It also reveals the extent to which we are public, despite our best efforts to consolidate a sense of individualism and notions of that which is inside versus outside of the "I" in us, and the interdependency that we never escape as we craft ourselves subjects. (Halberstam 2005)

The very crux of this conglomeration of theory relies on poking at that which has been normalized, so it stands that this critique must point inward on the matters of power and the remaking of identity. Queer theory is to be reflexive and driven by the subjectivity of its researchers in addition to the subjectivity of the people who trust them with precious insight into their world. There are moments of contradiction and tension through the history of these overlapping movements that can be revealed considering the ethnographic data that comes from the Chinese tongzhi movement. If this theoretical framework cannot reach outside of itself to other movements and theory, it will fail to accomplish its basic goals. If we read closely, we can see that the theory calls for its own expansion. Queerness must look at power from all angles, those from alterity included so that queerness can know itself.

The Opening of Postmodern Critique

Foucault's examination of the abnormality of categories surrounding sexuality leads to a critique of power and identity politics. He ponders the creation of sexuality as a new

object, that is always in transition and laden with discursive meaning. Foucault's examination of power from *Discipline and Punish* is continued in his work *The History of Sexuality*, in which he argues that subjects become whatever structures make them out to be. People are formed according to the requirements of the processes around them. (Foucault 1976, 1982) He argues that when notions of sexuality as an object that people can have emerges as a separate sphere of everyday life, it becomes an object upon which meaning is superimposed and it undergoes a discursive analysis. Although the West is caught up in a frenzy of hyper-self-awareness, the notion that sexuality is individual to every person is recently new in Western society.

Moreover, Foucault refutes the "repressive hypothesis," the idea that Western society repressed sexuality and banned open discussion of sex from the 17th century onward in accordance with the rise of capitalism and proper bourgeois society. Instead, he argues that it was actually when experts began to examine sexuality with "scientific methods," when they encouraged people to confess their attitudes toward sex, as well as their actions and practices, that there was an explosion of discussion about sex. In the 18th and 19th centuries, society began to examine sexualities outside of the widely accepted heterosexual marriage bond, namely the sexuality of the mentally ill, the criminal, and the homosexual. Foucault argues that belief that past society was repressed, encourages people to hold on to the idea that future sexuality can be free and uninhibited if past moral systems are dismantled. (Foucault 1976:

1-14) The progressive trap continues to distract people from power conflict throughout history and across societies.

Foucault argues that discussion on sexuality at this time was widespread and plenty, but it was codified and restricted to certain places, actors, and times, drawing particular discursive steam in the pursuit of status. At this moment too, governments became aware that they must maintain a steady population, not merely a group people under the identity of the nation. The state becomes concerned with things like marriage, contraception, and childbirth, and it effectively creates its own discourse of sexuality, which later becomes a key part of maintaining power. (Foucault 1976: 15-36) Talk of the married moved to and relied on discussions of the deviant "pervert," which categorized new species of sexual beings, like the "homosexual," for example. This labelling gives a sense of power, to both the object of the label and those who do the labelling; it excludes as it includes, which lays the foundation for discrimination as well as future social movement. Finally, the bourgeoisie absolutely participated in sex discussion and non-normative sexuality, but they managed it in fragmented ways, regulating their sexuality so that they could maintain their status. (Foucault 1976: 37-49)

What Foucault considers particular to the West is the pursuit of the "truth" about sex, through *scientia sexualis* or examination of sex through laboratory and statistical data, which he compares to the Eastern *ars erotica*. He argues that *scientia sexualis* is used to call for

"public hygiene" and discrimination against various groups, as sex is considered the basis of all human psychology and society in the West. He compares this scientific method to the experiential *ars erotica* found in Ancient and Eastern societies, asserting that the East perceives sex as an art form. (Foucault 1976: 53-73) However, this must be teased apart when we examine the Chinese notions of sex and procreation as a societal pressure, complete with its own medical examination and pathologicalization. Chinese medicine is older than the West itself. This myth about the East being free from sanitizing language and practice surrounding the human body will prove to be one of many brought about in imagining the East. The idea that the Eastern notion of sex is "freer" will prove detrimental to the modern queer movement in China, when Chinese society takes up this idea and finds itself as more tolerant of non-normative sexuality in comparison to the hostile West. Imaginings of elsewhere as ideal (or severe) masks power struggles and conflict well.

Foucault goes on to question why the West is preoccupied with the "truth" of sex, and examines the ways that power deploys sexuality. The three-point power first controls sex by laying out laws, namely marriage and sodomy laws. Power then demands obedience to these through domination, submission and subjugations. However, the third piece masks the former: power disguises its true intention behind a discourse of beneficence. Power being "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate," this is not just domination exerted on society by the state; power is everywhere and it comes from

everywhere. (Foucault 1976: 92-102) This can be seen in Chinese discourse too and is not unique to the West, as laws being laid out "for the good of a nation" is a common tick of nation building. States build discourses of paternal beneficence to justify right to rule.

In his final chapter, Foucault argues that power is now motivated by how to foster life and this biopower comes in two interconnected forms that allows not simply the rise of capitalism, but also the systematic death of certain groups of people. The first is concerned with disciplining the body and maximizing its usefulness, especially in regards to economic efficiency and control. The other form is a preoccupation with the body's ability to make life. The state serves and ignores needs according to birth rates, levels of health, life expectancy, and discriminatory categories, such as age, class, race, and sexuality. (Foucault 1976: 139) Rather than being a mere necessity, biopower is the source of the rise of capitalism, the factor that moved states from thinking of punishing and condemning as their key purpose, to an interest in regulating and normalizing power over life. China's shift toward capitalist processes leads the state to consider these same questions. What is a subject, but constantly changing? In labelling then we come into existence. We bring certain people into being in critiquing categories – in addressing China as a post-socialist state, we highlight the anxieties around its transition into capitalism. In calling for China to embrace ideas about the individual, about notions of freedom, and not only the ability to consume, but the right to do so, this creates new areas of inquiry and separation.

The idea that sexuality is freer than ever before or only just being discussed by newly discovered sexual subjects has happened in China. Of course Chinese notions of sex, sexuality, notions of purity, and notions of heterosexual binding as the most natural of sexual relations is bound up in moral systems in the East just as it is in the West. Belief systems that encompass Chinese divination, Confucianism, and Taoism feed Chinese ideas about gender and culturally accepted affective behavior, which have endured longer than Western existence, continue to motivate identity creation in contemporary China.

Public discussions of sexuality during the Cultural Revolution, even for heterosexual subjects, were very restricted. During the reform period of China, sexuality moved from a place of silence to an interest in “sexual science,” which was driven by a motivation to understand human sexuality. Private spaces began to be brought into public discussion and this public discourse created boundaries, whether clear or tacit, of what people can be based on social adaptability. As discussed before, discursive sites for sexual scripts and limitations are created through medical, academic, and legal fields in China as it is in the West.

Nevertheless, these questions continue as Butler considers sexuality and humanity, maintaining that certain people are condemned to have otherwise unlivable lives. Those existing in sexually non-normative categories are made to endure differential treatment, violence, and lack of protection from death. Butler extends Foucault’s argument into a critique of feminism, arguing that the category of "woman” is produced and restrained by the

structures of power through which emancipation is sought." (Butler 1990) Gender is created through relations and action and it is locked up in structures that lock women away from power. These constitute what Foucault cited as “processes which through ceaseless struggles and confrontations transform, strengthens, or reverses them… thus forming a chain or system.” (Foucault 1976: 92-93)

Just as Butler engages with Foucault’s examination of the abnormality of categories surrounding sexuality to critique the “woman” of feminism via her notion gender performativity, the queering of other things follows. Ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality being unmovable monolithic categories are both limiting to the imagination, but is also limiting to groups of people outside of systems of meaning making. Being that these people are outsides, this leads to the essentializing of meaning as well. Butler, concerned with these identity politics, argues against the feminist idea that there is a simple subject, an identity that requires representation in politics and language. “Woman” has numerous categories, complicated further when we consider class, race, and sexuality, and other social positioning. Though Butler falls short of this broader discussion on the diversity of subjectivities, she argues that we must critique identity and gender with power. Otherwise “women” are presumed to be universal, and patriarchy is assumed to be uniform, an assumption that masks oppression. What Butler suggests puts cultural relativity into the conversation.

Sex and gender are constructed in the sense that sexed bodies cannot signify without

gender and sex is merely a functioning of gender, created through discourse and cultural imagination. There are three accounts of gender identification which form the basis of her argument. First she looks at Levi-Strauss's notion of incest as "a pervasive cultural fantasy," the taboo of which generates desire. She then looks at Riviere's notion that mimicry and masquerading form the "essence" of gender. Lastly, she considers Freud's idea that "gender identity it is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of prohibited object is internalized as a prohibition." (Butler 1990: 63) "Same-sexed gender identity" depends on a forgotten and unresolved homosexual cathexis. (Butler 1990: 70) All of this maintains that for heterosexuality to remain stable, the notion of homosexuality, rather than being abolished, is necessary to consolidate its existence. That is, it is prohibited, but within the bounds of the culture. Incest taboos are productive in the sense that they generate and regulate approved heterosexuality and subversive homosexuality, neither of which exists prior to the law itself. In this making of law, comes the codification that gives people the means to separate others in systematic ways.

This leads us to problematize notions of personhood as being unreal in static sense. If gender is performative, and it only happens so long as we are acting and we do not exist unless we are acting, what does that mean for the notion of personhood in general? No identity exists behind the acts that "express" gender or any other thing for that matter; they constitute the illusion of a stable identity that is willed into being. "Being" a gender is

affected by culturally influenced acts and there is no solid universal gender identity, which is not to be forgotten when talking about sexuality in other places. If we maintain that gender is open to interpretation and resignification, then our philosophies of what the “East” does and what the “West” does fall apart.

Queer anthropology would do best to remember this when studying outside of its Western roots, that considers the gender performance of other subjects finds that it is much more complicated than this comfortable dichotomy. Butler calls for subversive action and when we note that we have in common issues of imagining ourselves and each other, engaging in this critique we can appreciate our own humanity.

Gender Inquiry and Western Imaginings of Personhood

As Butler maintains that gender is performed with others and that "doing" gender not only brings to light distinct questions about personhood, it also undoes dominant forms of gender inequality. This positions scholarship away from labelling what is and is not livable, but in allowing the definition of “human” to touch as many non-normative lives as possible, to expand our beneficial understanding of humanity. *Undoing Gender* contains more recent reflections on gender and sexuality, including new sex assignment critique and attention to queer kinship. (Butler 2004: 1) Desire, notably the desire to be recognized, is dire because it is the difference between being conferred the status of human or non-human. Recognition is a

site of power. This desire is implicated in collective norms, as we come into social worlds that we never chose ourselves. The helplessness of being throw into these worlds opens up agency, as we are critical and transformative in relation to them. Critique questions "terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different "modes of living." The goal of critical theory is to establish more inclusive conditions for maintaining non-normative ways of life. (Butler 2004: 3-4)

Now, to answer the question of how we expand the imaginings of what constitutes humanity, we can consider the gendered power structures that come into being under hegemonic masculinity. As this patriarchal dominance has no more of a form than the object "femininity" on which it is supposed to act, it illuminates the ways that cultural practices and cultural thinking will these categorizes into being. Hegemonic masculinity, which consists of multiple hierarchies like race and class, is a series of social projects that construct gender inequality. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 830) The privilege of this particular kind of masculinity was exposed by a matrix of ideas, including those of gay liberation, feminist theories of patriarchy, and critical sex theory. These critiques exposed hegemonic masculinity as "the pattern of practice… that allowed men's dominance over women to continue," the formation of the most honored way of being a man. Further, these sets of masculinity legitimize the global subordination of women to men. Hegemonic masculinity comes into existence at different times throughout history and is subject to change according to historical events.

(Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832) Progressive views on sexual history remain hopeful that there is the possibility that a more human, less oppressive means of "being a man" will become hegemonic, or better yet, that all gender hierarchies will be abolished. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 833) This hope partially drives methods of concealing the oppression of women, but also the project that is masculinity and gender and personhood in general.

Masculinity has inconsistent applications, the ambiguity in gender processes being an important mechanism in hegemony, because it is a circulation of models of admired masculinity and masculine conduct – models that do not resemble the lives of everyday, "real" men, but rather, constitute myths created by widespread ideals, fantasies and desires. These models become guidelines of how men interact with women with loose practicality and force everyone else to position themselves in relation to it. That hegemonic masculinity is neither a sharply defined pattern nor separate from other patterns of masculinity is in fact, indicative of well-functioning hegemony: it must blur and overlap with lesser examples to hide its negative aspects. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 838-9) Further, hegemonic masculinity and lesser configurations of masculinity include positive aspects of "male" behavior that may sometimes serve the interests and desires of women. Consent and participation from women helps constitute hegemony. There is nothing conceptually universalizing in the idea of hegemonic masculinity; it arises in social lives and is a means of grasping dynamics within the social process. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 840)

If masculinity is a way people position themselves through discursive practices, then it involves strategy and the adaptation of multiple meanings of masculinity according to their interactional needs. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 841) Hegemonic masculinity uses other identities and practices to fight resistance, while remaining a multilayered and divided subject that is inaccessible to certain bodies. Rubin's (2003) study on female to male transsexual men shows that even bodies constructed as male physically are restricted from adopting whatever gender position they desire. In this sense, masculinity is a project, with practice organized in relation to the overall structure of gender, making it multidimensional. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 843) The dominance of men over women is a historical practice and this domination requires maintenance. This is often carried out with methods like the policing of men and the exclusion of women, which often leads to direct attacks on the body through bullying, assault, and murder. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 844)

This is a constant imagining, a willing of things into fruition as a group and in cultural terms. That gender is a contest to be included in that which is accepted as human is felt all the more when we consider the ways that non-normative masculinity is managed in this system, a method of power exerted through the hybrid masculine bloc. This concept expands the tactics of hegemonic masculinity, especially as it adopts seemingly benign characteristics to appear to be a less oppressive means of being a man. Demetriou looks at internal and external interactions, as well as the historic bloc: the social hierarchy of men, plus the hybridization and

appropriation of subordinated identities and the institutional dominance over women by men. The bloc is a range of masculinities, as Demetriou's case study of gay men in regards to hegemonic masculinity highlights, and this hybrid bloc serves the overall reproduction of the patriarchy. (Demetriou 2001: 337) Internal hegemony, or dominance within the masculine hierarchy, and external hegemony, or dominance of masculine over female is the dual-nature of this dominance. What drives internal hegemony are those instances when subordinated masculinities undermine the strategy for the subordination of women. Gay masculinity, for example, is policed by being labelled as inferior because its object of desire disrupts heterosexuality as the most "appropriate" kind of sexual relation. (Demetriou 2001: 344)

Since hegemony is as much leading allies as it is dominating enemies, the interest of this higher class lies in keeping groups with shared interests apart. The dominant group sets itself up into a position of leadership by forming a historic bloc that unites all allied groups under the group seeking hegemony. Seeking to make them consistent with the domination project, the subordination of some groups inevitably ensues. Hegemony is a dialectical process, fueled by reciprocity and mutual interactions between those leading and those led. Therefore, it does what is necessary according to its needs at a historical moment in time, taking what is useful and constructive to domination. (Demetriou 2001: 344-345)

The key way that negotiation proceeds for contemporary masculinity is through the logic and structures of capitalism. Gay visibility is not controlled by the gay male himself, but

allowed according to his worth on the economic level as his visibility being put up for consumption helps to reproduce capitalism. Therefore, it is not completely in the interest of homosexual liberation that gay men have been assimilated into the mainstream. (Demetriou 2001: 350-351) They become visible so that many men can appropriate bits and pieces of the alternate culture. These hybrid configurations of practice then create new ways to dominate unaccepted sexuality while keeping women an object, rather than a subject, of sexual desire.

The increase in gay visibility in the 1960s was in direct conflict with the rise of the women's movement. Feminist critical theory did not make men lose power, although they were stripped of their legitimating stories. Through capitalism and widespread commodification, the well timed burst of visible gay masculine culture provided new stories, a broader mask for the subordination of women. Gay masculinities moved closer to dominant forms of femininity, which in turn made gender division less evident. The appropriation of gay culture by heterosexual males won the consent of women who believed that society was favoring a softer masculinity. (Demetriou 2001: 352) The blurring of gender difference in performance, renders the patriarchal divide invisible as well. Drag, for example, became the ultimate show of being secure in one's masculinity while avoiding feminist arguments by separating from the previous symbols of masculinity and therefore, from taking responsibility for it. (Demetriou 2001: 353)

Patriarchy in a sense continually disappears. Reactions to China show the extent to which this global hegemonic masculinity has reached its dominance. Different places put

outsiders up to the test of who is freer, but neither is so long as they are blinded to the working of their shared oppression. In all of these cases exists the subordination of the feminine and its exclusion from being recognized as masculine. Even amongst queer subjects, that which is feminine continues to be stripped of power within the queer movement as it is in greater society.

Hybridization is then a very effective strategy to show the hegemonic masculinity as less oppressive and more egalitarian. It seems softer then and less opposed to contemporary femininities. They aim to mask the usurpation of women's rights and constantly produce an unrecognizable face to the same patterns of domination. At the same time, gay men are still able to claim masculinity, and as they claim legitimacy, they leave women in the same place. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 848) Attention must be focused on women to see if these gender dynamics are recreated with and without masculinity. Looking into whether or not methods of incorporation and oppression are present amongst girls and women then, illuminates another variety of power claims.

A critique on the limitations of Shippers' notion of emphasized femininity is the final piece of the discussion in the gender structure surrounding notions of hegemonic femininity. Much of Shippers' uncertainty around the notions of there being a hierarchy of femininity highlights this exact tension. What are gender equality claims, but the desire to be considered an agentic human being? Claims to power enacted on non-normative sexuality is granted to

heterosexual women, a close equivalent to hegemonic masculinity here considered hegemonic femininity. This hierarchical femininity is central to male dominance in gender relations. There are questions about whether femininity can be separated from masculinity, because it is always constructed in relation to masculinity. Feminine masculinity is always denied through titles and categories limited to the body: a woman who dresses “like a man” is butch, a woman who desires a woman is a lesbian, and both are denied masculinity because they are simply deviant women. To recover this feminine other, Schippers outlines Connell's main contributions, discusses conceptual and empirical difficulties with applying the framework to femininity, and offer an alternative framework.

Shippers assumes that femininity gains nothing from colluding in the power of masculinity, that there is not a contest for the structure of “female” by females themselves, and that somehow this conversation is always outside of those subjects rather than one they themselves are constantly having. Schippers draws on Connell’s research which argues that there are no femininities that are hegemonic. She argues that femininity is constructed in the context of overall subordination of women to men, so there is no femininity that completely holds a position over women in the same way as hegemonic masculinity among men. (Connell 1987) Connell argues that there is instead emphasized femininity, defined around compliance with subordination that seeks to accommodate the interests and desires of men. (Schippers 2007: 87) There is something incomplete about this conclusion.

Halberstam argues that we lack the conceptual apparatus for distinguishing femininity from masculinity unless we reduce them to bodies (Halberstam 1998), but we actually have several. These concepts are not completely removed and although it is caught up in macro level processes, we know them because they are wrapped up in the cultural norms of everyday life. Our proper motions towards our assigned gender are praised, and deviant performance is punished repeatedly by those around us. We know masculinity and femininity in its multitude of configurations because we have addressed the values of the group or groups in which we find ourselves. The concepts come from the bottom-up and in this cases, it is an ethnographer who can work with a group to illicit their conceptual apparatus. The issue then is that we seek one cultural apparatus rather than pulling out all of the tools at our disposal to discern these processes. That we cling to the body when assessing gender performance highlights our need to make it "real."

Schippers' narrow dismissing of a power driven femininity ignores the privilege at stake, as when lesbian women are found subordinate to heterosexual women, that they are seen as unfit mothers in claims to kinship. To be a mother in this system, to be a woman with privileges, you must move towards being like that imagined hegemonic femininity. Hegemonic femininity is conflated with whiteness and middle class status; marginalized femininities are marked by race and class. Hegemonic femininity serves hegemonic masculinity and after receiving legitimacy from the top or overturning its totality, is used to attack other femininities.

Critiquing research by Pyke and John on the intersection of race and womanhood, Schippers calls for a conceptual apparatus to explain why men benefit from the relationship between white and Asian or Asian-American femininity. That is, Shippers does not see how the relationship between these women would serve the interests of men.

Well, the apparatus that is particular to this example is buried in cultural conceptions of sexual and racial purity. Maintaining boundaries of racial and sexual purity continues to be at the heart of marriage and family for the United States. Race and morality drove the restriction of immigration of East Asian women and continues to feature to protect a particular kind of marriage. (Heath 2009: 29) This is perhaps a theoretical framework that can explain the role of femininities and masculinities in ensuring relations of domination that benefit men as a group. (Pyke & Johnson 2003; Schippers 2007: 89) Women in constant competition with each other, would not be able to see their potential to cause a revolution. A woman of higher class is also able to claim a certain purity, as is a woman with a normative sexuality. They are complicit in the system, working with what works against them.

Schippers argues that the problem she has with this argument is that "there is no way to identify the relationships between femininities operating within race and ethnicity," (Schippers 2007: 88) but this ignores gender identity and sexuality. Lesbian relationships do not involve men and therefore lack the legitimacy that heterosexual women obtain from their relationships. If one looks at which practices are valued over others, one can see that there is

a hierarchy of women even within class and race lines. Further, white, heterosexual, middle-class femininity moves toward hegemony as non-white, lesbian, poor femininities are subordinated.

Schippers claims that we have no conceptual room to note different femininities within race and class groups or to see which raced and classed femininities serve the interests of the patriarchy. Schippers then goes on to argue that femininities that are not considered to be normal, ideal, or desirable cannot be thought of as subordinate to an ideal femininity. (Schippers 2007: 89) Returning conversation to Schippers' argument, race and class are often used as lines for sexual behavior, but the added marker of "wifehood" and being a "good mother" is a trope that has always lead to hierarchy of women even within racial categories. Amid the domesticity of white women, the submissive housewife was elevated to a high level of moral superiority and all things involving a complete womanhood went back to household value. All other women, especially those with racial markers, were reduced to "dirty work" in service and industry. (Duffy 2007) They are subordinated in very subtle ways, lacking the privileges that women of a certain set of practices and social markers claim.

As Schippers reaches for an outside cause of "femininity," she forgets the influence that the West has over these very processes. That in her focusing on patriarchy (as a singular rather than worldwide male dominance broken down by separate cultures) and its needs as the issue, she dismisses the power struggle of women across races, but also across sexualities.

Schippers looks at femininity through the lens of gay men, but ignores lesbians, bisexuals, transgender women, gender queer women and any other number of identities moving outside of the cisgender heteronormative paradigm. Ethnocentrism amongst women mirrors and reinforces ethnocentrism in patriarchy and in playing along in the scheme of things, certain ways of living are valued over others. The Western queer woman is free and an individual, while the Chinese woman is still colluding with patriarchy and sexually represses, when both cultures come with their own unique problems and solutions to those problems.

Butler warns queer theory from trying to decide what is livable or unlivable for others, situating critiques of gender in the question of maximizing the possibility of a livable life and minimizing the possibility of an unlivable life. (Butler 2004: 8) She points out that it is important to understand global, transnational contexts and although her discussion remains in the West, she maintains that the "human" category is crafted in time, but never captured. The question of autonomy is the motivator of all of social movements. (Butler 2004: 13) There are norms of recognition by which "human" is created and these norms encode operations of power. Future contests are over the power that works in and through such norms. We are implicated in power and we problematize it further in our pursuit of "rights."

Rights seeking legal recognition makes us sound individual and "same" through a community approach. This attempt to secure our legal rights masks and fails to do justice to our true passion, grief, and rage. According to discourse, we find out what life is allowed to

be grieved for. (Butler 2004: 20) Butler argues further that bodies are never fully ours, they are public, open to violence, and from infancy we create a dependency that we never fully break away from. (Butler 2004: 24) Our bodies are always for something more than and other than ourselves. To articulate this entitlement is not easily done, but it suggests that association is not a simple luxury, but a necessity for freedom. (Butler 2004: 25)

She posits that the injustice against which the "international" lgbt+ fights is the being called "unreal," in having that label institutionalize that we are less human and perhaps inhuman. (Butler 2004: 30) Reflexivity is socially mediated, socially constituted, and we cannot be without drawing upon social norms. Sexual rights assertion is the struggle to be conceived of as persons. (Butler 2004: 32) Which makes it all the more necessary that we move outside of the Western queer movement to examine other movements; we do them an injustice by giving them names and documenting their experiences as if it is just an extension of our movement. Butler reaches to Europe in her discussion, but this is not the international, which contains much more than that which she touches in her work. (Butler 2004: 33) We depend on protection of public and private spaces, on being in the hands of others. To extend this, we depend on the protection of global and local spaces, on being in the hands of the world at large. Where states depend of the recognition of others to have a "livable" existence in the global community, societies, groups, and individuals share a similar dependency.

Cycles of Dependency and Desire

The power of category labelling, tabooed desire, and dependency must be considered as Butler looks into motherhood. Kristeva's notion of maternity as an instinct and desire prior to the creation of paternal law is a language of sabotage. She sees maternity as a once powerful natural role for women that has been taken in a systematic way by culture. (Kristeva 1984) Butler maintains that this line of thinking is a trap for women. As when state regulations on marriage, lesbian and gay adoption stipulation regulates the ideal of what parents should be and it reinforces what a couple should be. In a tacit way, it produces the parameters of personhood, which are fated to condition (and exceed) the lives we can make, until new regulations come to break them. (Butler 1990: 56) However it also drives movements. If it is marriage and the ability to create a family that breaks individuals into society, then it creates a sense of incompleteness as a human being when it is unattainable. Through exclusion, laws invent the notions of personhood they go on to repress.

On one hand, in the imagination of some Western feminists, a woman can take control of her agency by not getting married, by not having children. However, in some ways she can be reified in a system of Judeo-Christian concepts around virginity. A modern woman can both collude in these cultural practices, while making a statement about taking control over her life. As outlined earlier, Chinese woman would be hard-pressed, from societal norms to economic disparity, to try to live out a single life for too long, away from the concepts of

motherhood. In the West, the idea of being an individual can trump the supposed oddness of being unmarried and childless. For the Chinese female who tries to circumvent these cultural process in this way, she is not a woman, she is not an adult subject, but a child. Even as her peers understand and see what she does, they will meddle in her avoidance of "duty," because it is unthinkable to try to gain autonomy in this way. While we try to move away from these structures, they are still very much a part of the way we construct ourselves as human beings. We in a sense need them to be.

Kinship is not organized only in service of reproductive relations, and there are several relationships outside of this even within a heteronormative frame. Kinship is to be understood as a set of practices that negotiates interpersonal bonding, taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves, and so on. These practices address fundamental forms of human dependency: emotional support, childbirth, child rearing, illness, dying, and ultimately death. Further, kinship is never fully autonomous, in the sense that it is not distinct from community and friendship. (Butler 2004: 102-103) Butler's interest in France (PACs) around the idea that these forms of kinship can be legitimate, and receive benefits, is troubled by the idea that same-sex couples are not able to adopt. This raises questions about what the state should provide and looking toward the state, in its command of biopower to facilitate life maintenance. (Butler 2004: 110)

Legitimacy in the gendered systems of power comes at a great cost, but it also grants

social and financial benefits in the United States. A seemingly private institution of social organization – the family unit – becomes a tool of power to keep people that do not adhere to cultural demands out of positions of power. People become disciplined to the point that they police themselves and others in regards to what constitutes a legitimate family. They self-regulate and they even take on the same understandings of family from their culture whether it benefits them personally or not. This social control and public regulation is so crucial that it leads the state to create laws, with little questioning about their legitimacy from the majority that come to call them sanctified, even necessary to maintain moral order.

Nancy Cott (2000: 3) argues that vision of marriage in the U.S. involved separating "productive labor" from the home, along with introducing the new social category of the moral "housewife." Legal gender discrimination arises in part because it is difficult to dispel the notion of the nuclear family in American culture. The nuclear family has been constructed as natural and through seemingly motivated research has biology on its side. It is an enduring social institution, but is constantly debated and analyzed. The family, in addition to being a set of experiences, is an ideological concept and cannot be separated from the public sphere. The family is deeply influenced and impacted by cultural assumptions and gendered relations. (Dalton & Bielby 2000: 36) Additionally, raising children almost always occurs in social groups recognized as “family.” Therefore, caring for children is linked to institutionalized scripts about family.

Legal constructions of parenthood are conflated with heteronormativity as the law grants legitimacy to certain social arrangements and practices. That it invokes the model of male and female is not arbitrary: it is harder to identify biological fathers and so it is easier for judges to substitute the biological father for a social one. Men who are married to women who give birth are automatically assumed to be the father. However, women are supposedly able to easily identify their children, so all other women are exuded from claiming to be a natural mother to a child. This had never been applied to a non-biological mother until 1998 when a non-biological mother was granted parental status without a formal adoption proceeding. However, in a case soon after, the court refused to apply this precedent to the non-biological parent in a lesbian couple, because they could not be legal spouses. (Dalton & Bielby 2000: 39)

Dalton and Bielby argue that "social scripts are guides to action." They form assumptions about who enacts the provider role, they dictate the division of labor in household tasks and caretaking, and even suggest who should organize certain family events. These are all key questions in family members' participation and contribution to the household and extended family. Lesbian couples sometimes proactively construct roles. Otherwise they are flexible, even though this is still influenced by dominant understandings of marital and family roles. (Dalton & Bielby 2000: 38-39)

With the foundation of heteronormativity in the legal structure, recent marriage promotion has gone largely unexamined. In a late 1990s movement to safeguard the American

family, people on both extremes of the political spectrum were pushing for marriage. An array of government policies known as marriage promotion sought to reduce the divorce rate and instances of single parenting. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act effectively ended 60 years of welfare benefits to poor families and turned state block grants into sanctioned use funds under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) rubric. Post George W. Bush, there has been an increase in funding for marriage promotion with these grants. The Healthy Marriage Initiative for example has used federal money for fatherhood programs in addition to marriage promotion. Congress passed a federal appropriations act, which sends 500 million annually towards marriage promotion. (Heath 2009: 27-28)

Heath notes that the power dynamics at work deal with heteronormativity and various intersects with hierarchies of gender, race, and class. Institutionalized heterosexuality, instances of which can be seen in marriage promotion, serve as a form of discipline and control, especially over poor women. (Cahill 2005; Coontz and Gilbert 2002; Polikoff 2008; Heath 2009: 28) The relationship between macro and micro levels of power and uneven consequences is evident in the way that government and groundwork marriage promotion attacks certain kinship systems. States secure "boundaries of exclusion," often using language like "fractured families" to describe those it does not endorse and on the ground level workshops blatantly teach gender hierarchy, using typical sexual scripts to rehearse implicit ideology about

heterosexual marriage, especially regarding how women should submit to their husbands. The state has an interest in marriage as a large part of nation building strategies, evidenced by who is included and excluded from the institution, under what conditions it is allowed to end, and the rights, obligations, and benefits granted along with it. (Heath 2009: 29)

Weston's curiosity about non-heterosexual kinship comes with an inquiry into the notion of chosen family versus this supposed "natural family," to prove whether or not "blood is thicker than water." Time and cultural discourse has managed to completely alter the meaning of an idiom boldly proclaiming the value of chosen family as that of not simply a biological relationship: "the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb." Weston finds lesbian and gay identified subjects who chose families that are fluid kinship ties that include friendships and are based on identity and emotional commitment. (Weston 1991) They are not easily recognized as "families" because they are not apparently patterned on U.S. conventions. There is neither a broad nor widely accepted understanding of chosen families as legally recognized kinship units. These kinship ties have little social recognition, as even relationships between lovers wanting to marry lacked legal understanding until recently. (Dalton & Bielby 2000: 37)

Weston's work highlights the politicization of kinship, as "gay" began to describe a very particular kind of family, a specific set of kinship terms. What Weston suggests that gay men and lesbian women have systematically laid claim to their own families, although gay

families build upon notions of family that they grew up with. (Weston 1991: 22) Biology (consanguinity) and marriage (affinity) are seen as real, while anything else is scrutinized deeply. Denaturalizing this is of key importance to taking away the procreation bases of kinship and also seeing that adoption is not the only alternative to kinship claim. Biology is best seen as a symbol, with action and solidarity being what makes even biological family, family. (Weston 1991: 34) The thing that resonates in all of these examples is a detaching from the body and the ability to choose life and make meaning beyond the preconceived notions of biology. We must question the extent to which we create life.

Queer chosen family arrangements and other such experiments in personhood are met with a fair amount of joy by Western researchers, but similar accounts are met with skepticism when they arise in the other places. Kinship involves being dependent upon others and on having a shared experience with those who care for us. As queer anthropologists, chart these more livable ways of being and meets our basic human needs, we show that very little comes from moral judgement.

The judgment of homosexuality not being given the right to marry has consistently been about the practice being outside of institutions and outside of models. Kinship is not reducible to notions of the "family" and negotiation using these terms limits our movement. In clinging to these idea, we ratify the frame. We are blinded to the fact that marriage, family, and kinship should not cut out or mark the exclusive parameters for sexual life. For queer

kinship, the matter is not simply whether we as subjects can marry or raise children. Rather, we want to break away from this and other legitimizing stories that erase various practices and show that so long as these gaps exist, people will continue to be cut from discourse.

To be clear, the argument is not about whether or not queer subjects aspire to similar lives as their queer counterparts across societies, and if any of those is the "right" life. The key is in discovering how people make a life from that which is unlivable and how they make claims to their place within humanity. Rather than cooperative marriage being simply a compromise to dominant norms, it is an "opening up" of new life narratives, family forms, intimate alliances, and spaces of dependency.

Chinese queer temporality leads to the creation of alternative forms of kinship outside of blood relations and conventional marital obligations. Queer kinship proves the extent to which kinship relies on negotiation, especially when exacerbated by the pressure of family creation that is the foundation of personhood in China. Kinship has always been constructed, but it is easier to notice when two diametrically opposed sides hold up their models in comparison. So then, the examination can be placed on how other places carve out a livable life from unlivable surroundings, a feat that is impressive for Chinese subjects interacting with global and local restrictions on self-creation.

Conclusion

The Chinese subject is constantly made into an object by the Western queer movement and portrayed as that which must be brought into Western modernity. Whether they exhibit what the Western queer values ("liberal" discussion of sexuality, public demonstrations, and assertion of rights, as examples) or not is caught up in these politics of representation. The Western queer movement is often spoken of as if it is not Western, but an omnipotent and omnipresent wave of correct queerness. Western movements must constantly be seeking change according to the needs, emotions, and practices of native Chinese, but also other subjects. They must wrestle with those moments when it seems that the ways alterity does liberation is "unsatisfying." In fact, those moments when we expect "more" from movements abroad is a time to consider what affects our own ethnocentrism about sexual emancipation.

The question that needs to be picked at remains: is the Chinese queer subject then human? What a sad irony it would be to write the Chinese queer and all other queer alterity off as incompetent in adapting our outside movement while we defend ourselves against theirs. The Chinese tongzhi and most of all represented here, lala, are not naïve – they know the breadth and extent of their own suffering, triumphs, and development in ways outsiders cannot. In many ways the queer movement in the West has denied others the ability to say for themselves how to negotiate queer identity. In studying them as the product of a distant

society that is incomprehensible and uncontrollable, the West has forgotten the influence that the researcher, the activist, and the whole of Western culture has on these outside processes. When the intention is to make a society more like those of the West, the society's resistance and reluctance to adopt Western norms are constructed as flaws. Paradoxically, the West sees a society's adherence to its own cultural norms to be a fault.

At the same time that we call for wider critique of gender, greater visibility of non-normative life, and the rights for this life to exist, we have to consider the local context of these movements. The lala debate in China displays the diversity in tongzhi communities and the tongzhi movement offers new lines of inquiry that criticize the symbolic order of normative and non-normative sexuality.

Thinking of patriarchy as a massive bloc of alternating masculine scripts that adapts to culturally based conditions points blame away from subjects and directs it to the question of power struggle itself. To frame these as global issues without looking sympathetically into alterity is counterintuitive. Since these power struggles do not apply a single tactic, they will not fall with a single theory. It is in the constant movement and reconfiguration of gender, sexuality, and queer critique that the hegemonic is kept accountable. To deny the adaptions of others is to lose experience and creative solutions. To add to these movements requires reaching a truly global discussion and looking into ethnographic data on the making of self and thus, claims to humanity. We are to engage in a dialogue with rather than a monologue

about the other so that our conclusions reach mutuality in the recognition that we are all human.

Queer theory has to be aware of its attachment to that outside of it which reaffirms its validity. Likewise, it has to consider the points that it retracts away from and where it places judgement or casts a blind eye to practices that are not “free” enough in the Western, neoliberal sense of personhood. When the West notices success in other places, it must not take credit for those discoveries or for having been the predecessor in some way. What will be important in the future for Western queer theory is for it to constantly take stock of its history, and to interrupt the thinking that it is progressing toward something freer as Foucault suggests. Rather, the future of the world, most of all for new claims to gender, sexuality, bodily experience and identification in the world of neoliberal biopower, will be a constant contest for the recognition to live and will constantly consist of oppressors and oppressed yet to be imagined – which queer anthropological theory ought to map out and question.

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