Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Kinship in Taiwan: Generational Changes and Continuities

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THESIS
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This research is dedicated to my siblings.
I am grateful to the many people and families in Taiwan who opened their lives and shared their stories with me.

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SUMMARY
In this dissertation, I analyze gender and generational variation in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender family of origin relationships in Taiwan. My analysis is rooted in 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork and 80 family history interviews with three generational cohorts of LGBT people and with their parents and siblings throughout Taiwan. The people and families who contributed their stories to this project are diverse by region of the country and by their levels of involvement in Taiwan’s sex rights movement, including some who are very involved and others who are not at all involved and do not maintain social networks that are based on sexuality. I situate these cross-generational stories in the larger context of social and family change in Taiwan, with a focus on changes and continuities in the distribution of family resources, labor, and power. Key themes of the dissertation include the impact of patrilineality and patrilocality on lesbian and transgender lives at different historical moments; intersections of gender and class in the experience of parenting a lesbian, gay, or transgender child; and rapidly changing norms and expectations for parent-child intimacy and communication, which require new and different strategies for negotiating about sexual and gender non-normativity within families. Across these three thematic areas, I highlight the importance of shifting from a culturalist to a more materialist view of LGBT family issues in East Asia generally and Taiwan specifically, through renewed attention to the structural and material mechanisms that underpin LGBT family practices. I argue that an overemphasis on sexual identity and sexual disclosure has obscured cumulative material disadvantages as well as social and historical dimensions of LGBT family of origin relationships, particularly as these shape the lives of heterosexual, normatively gendered kin. The standpoints of people and families in this research point beyond sexual identity and disclosure to a broader set of issues that matter for LGBT parent-child, sibling, and other family of origin relationships in Taiwan and globally.
1. INTRODUCTION: STORIES OF DAILY LIFE

1.1 Meeting the Lu Family

On my way to do an interview in late October 2012, I got off at the wrong train stop in between Kaohsiung and a small town in Pingtung, the southernmost county of Taiwan. I was in fact only one stop away from the correct station, but I got off prematurely because I had not seen any buildings for miles and was sure I must be headed the wrong way. In a flurry of text messages dotted with cute emoticons and stickers, my informant Coral Lu¹ assured me that I was on the right track and that she was on her way to pick me up. She added that I might not recognize her because she would have a masculine appearance (nánxìng de yàngzi—in contrast, when I met Coral at a transgender support group meeting in Taipei, she was wearing a stylish dress, heels, and full makeup). Coral is male-assigned and alternates her daily gender presentation, sometimes donning a masculine appearance, but usually opting for the feminine appearance with which she feels especially happy and at ease.² At the time of this interview, Coral was in her early forties, unmarried, and worked in the family business on the first floor of the home she shared with her parents.³

As it turned out, I had no trouble recognizing Coral, not only because hers was the only car to pull into the seemingly deserted train station, but also because she looked no different than any person might when changing clothes, her quiet elegance as perceptible in jeans as in a dress. Coral drove me to her family home, and we conducted our interview in

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¹ All first and family names appearing in this dissertation are pseudonyms. I have also merged the details of some family stories to increase confidentiality for my informants.
² I have chosen the words “happy” and “at ease” because this is consistent with how Coral explained her gender to me. She did not describe femininity as more authentic, but rather as more pleasing to her than masculinity. Others read Coral alternately as a feminine man and as a woman. Family friends sometimes mistake her for her younger sister Fanyu.
³ Cohabitation with parents remains the most common living arrangement for unmarried children as well as married sons in Taiwan.
the semi-privacy of her bedroom, punctuated by the arrival of her grade school niece and nephew, who darted boisterously in and out of the room. At one point, her nephew climbed up on the arm of a chair and pointed out his own house to me from Coral’s window. I did not know how many members of the Lu family I would meet that day. In the end, I met her brother, her sister Fanyu (whom I also interviewed), her sister’s daughter and son, her mom, and several family friends. I canceled my plans for a return trip to Kaohsiung and spent the day with this family as they visited at home, walked together in a nearby park, posed for photos by a pond, teased Fanyu’s seven-year-old daughter about her funny haircut (she had recently earned herself the nickname “little rooster” by cutting off a chunk of hair on the back of her head) and ate dinner in the food court of the local Carrefour. Our conversations about Coral’s gender mingled with other day-to-day topics such as shopping for clothes and everyone’s plans for an upcoming holiday.

This sort of day was typical of my fieldwork with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families in Taiwan. A visit to interview one family member often spiraled into a whole-family affair due to shared and closely proximate living arrangements. While some of my informants felt strongly about hiding the interview from their family members, others welcomed family members to chime in or urged them to be interviewed too. Contrary to widely held stereotypes about the relative conservatism of people in southern versus northern and rural versus urban Taiwan, I found ample variation among families across region. Coral’s rural, southern, lower middle class family is far more

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4 A French multinational hypermarket and the second largest retailer in the world after Walmart, Carrefour carries a variety of low-cost goods and services.

5 See pp. 6-8 for a discussion about the purpose, politics, and limitations of using the acronym LGBT in this dissertation.

6 I found such stereotypes to be prevalent particularly among people from the northern part of Taiwan. I believe these stereotypes are connected to a class-based construction of lesbian and gay cosmopolitanism against the foil of gender and family practices labeled as more traditional (chuántōng) or “local” (běntū) and often associated with the south/Taiwanese speaking locales.
comfortable with Coral’s transgenderism than many of the urban, northern, upper class families of LGBT people in this research. While some of these presumably more “cosmopolitan” families worried about public perceptions and blocked upward mobility due to gender or sexual impropriety, Coral’s family did not see her as posing a threat to the small business they ran out of their home. Coral’s older brother had already married and had two children, so this eased the pressure on Coral (the second son of the family) to continue the family line by producing male descendants.7

Several years prior, Coral’s mother had sought advice from a fortune teller (suànmíng de) who informed her that Coral would always be this type of person (zhèyàng de rén). This sense of determinism somewhat relieved Coral’s mother of the pressure to alter her son’s life path. In fact, Fanyu told me that their mother often picks up women’s clothing and accessories for Coral to wear, “but,” she added with a chuckle, “Coral doesn’t like the things my mother buys because she says they are too mature-looking.” The issue she chose to highlight was not her mother’s confirmation of Coral’s feminine gender through the act of buying clothes, but instead the very common phenomenon of mother-child disagreement about which clothes are fashionable.

This is not to say that gender is a non-issue for the Lu family or for Coral herself. In fact, Coral felt that her siblings sometimes downplayed gender too much—they didn’t acknowledge the very significant challenges this created in her life relative to theirs. For many families, silence was a way of coping with alternative genders and sexualities, but these silences meant different things to people of different ages, gender and sexual locations, and

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7 Coral does not have a fixed sexual orientation. She previously dated women but found it difficult to occupy the family roles of a potential husband, father, and son-in-law. I return to these important issues of (trans)gendered family roles in chapter four, Patrilineality.
family roles. In other families, gender and sexuality were the center of intense scrutiny and even daily conflicts.

For the Lu family, as for each of the families in this research, gender and sexual possibilities are shaped by a range of intersecting issues, from social class, to birth order, to guidance received from spiritual advisors or other trusted sources, to everyday ways of relating to kin. It was the daily and even mundane characteristics of family life that peeled back the curtains of these varied responses and experiences. My interviews with Coral, Fanyu, and other LGBT people and their family members provided important data for this analysis. But it is the interactions at unpredictable moments—piled into a van, driving to Carrefour; sharing a snack from a street corner vendor; walking in the park with an elderly parent and children’s happy interruptions—that brought to life the stories I will try to honor here, of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender family ties in contemporary Taiwan.

1.2 Study Design

Between August 2011 and January 2013, I conducted ethnography and family history interviews with a cross-generational comparative framework, guided by two sets of research questions.

1) How are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Taiwan organizing their family lives at this historical moment? What material and discursive conditions are shaping the kinds of relationships people wish to form and are able to form with their parents, siblings, and other kin?

2) How have the family lives and relationships of LGBT people in Taiwan changed vis-à-vis the accelerated economic, political, cultural, and social transformations of
the last half century (post WWII—present)? What do these changes in LGBT family life reveal about broader changes, continuities, and inequalities in contemporary Taiwanese families?

The research is cross-generational in two aspects. As my introduction of the Lu family demonstrates, I include a within-family cross-generational component, conducting fieldwork and interviews with heterosexual parents as well as LGBT adult children and their siblings. Through spending time in family homes, I also observed interactions among a wider circle of kin. Juxtaposing the narratives of multiple family members adds a special richness to this project, which could not be achieved by interviewing LGBT people or parents only (the more common approaches in studies of LGBT family life). This method makes it possible to explore how negotiations about gender and sexuality are differently experienced and understood by various members of the family, in a context of shifting relational and power dynamics.

Additionally, I look across generational cohorts of LGBT people to learn how family ties have changed from one generation to the next. This approach distinguishes my research from other recent studies of LGBT life in East Asia, which primarily focus on lesbians and gays who are still in their twenties. By observing similarities and differences across cohorts, I can identify both age effects (such as shifting family concerns from early to mid and later adulthood) and generational effects, which illuminate a wider set of cultural and social changes in how people create and sustain family bonds.

In total, I conducted 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork and 80 family history interviews with three generational cohorts of LGBT people and their kin. A more detailed description of my data collection and analytic strategy is provided in chapter two, Methods and Epistemology.
1.3 **On Language and Translation**

Issues of language and translation carry political as well as epistemological implications, and warrant careful attention here given my use of the English-language terms “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender” to describe my research population. At the outset of the research, I defined this population as “people who have or have had a same-sex intimate relationship” (in Mandarin Chinese, *gēn tóngxing jiāowǎngguò*—see Appendix A for characters corresponding with pinyin romanization in text) where “same-sex” may be assigned sex or lived sex for people who have transitioned from one sex category to another. I then struggled with ways to refer to this population in my writing. As I tossed around and tossed out various words and phrases, spoke to people who are a part of this population and who vary widely in how they describe themselves and their relationships, and considered the terminology in existing published work, I ultimately ceased my quest for the (non-existent) nearly perfect translation, and instead began to think seriously about the audience I hoped to reach. An important aim of this project is to expand the English-language LGBT family literature beyond a primarily white, Western empirical and theoretical foundation. Put another way, by including Taiwanese people and their families in this literature, we broaden the possibilities for understanding and creating theory about same-sex intimacy and family issues. I believe using the acronym “LGBT”—with a thoughtful explanation in-text of how this translation falls short—signals to scholars who work in this area that this research is in conversation with their own.

At the same time, it is important to note that people in this research use many different words to describe themselves and their family members, including, but not limited to: *tóngzhì* (“comrade,” appropriated as an umbrella term for sexually and gender
nonconforming people in Chinese-speaking societies by cultural critic Chen Yihua in 1992),
kuà xìngbié (transgender), bù nán bù nǚ (neither man nor woman, androgynous), shuāng xìng liàn (bisexual), gay (adapted from English, but imbued with a different set of cultural meanings), lāzǐ (lesbian), T (a female-assigned person whose gender is consistent with cultural definitions of masculinity, and who prefers female [usually feminine] partners), gǒng (“husband,” similar to T; used primarily by older generation and working class people), pó (“wife,” a female-assigned person whose gender is consistent with cultural definitions of femininity, and who prefers female [usually masculine] partners; used by people of all ages and class backgrounds), bù fēn (a lesbian who does not differentiate herself as T or pó), xǐhuan nánshēng (liking boys), xǐhuan nǚshēng (liking girls), yì xìng liàn (heterosexual—including people who are in same-sex relationships but are heterosexually identified), and as having no sexual orientation (for example, one woman was in a seven-year relationship with her female classmate and said she had no sexual orientation because she had only ever dated one person). Many other people referred to their same-sex desires and relationships as wǒ de shíqíng (my thing—e.g., “This friend knows about my thing”), and parents frequently spoke of their children’s homosexuality in this manner.

People also described their own and others’ heterosexual practices in a variety of ways, such as xǐhuan nánshēng (liking boys), xǐhuan nǚshēng (liking girls), and zhèngcháng de (ordinary). When I asked heterosexual parents about their xìngxiàng (sexual orientation—a term that I quickly learned held little resonance outside academic and activist circles), they often asked for clarification and then said things such as, méiyǒu tèbié (nothing special).

In my interviews and fieldwork, I never introduced a term such as “gay” or “tóngzhì” unless the person I was speaking to used it first, in self-reference or in reference to others. Thus, my use of LGBT in English-language writing and speaking, and my use of
tóngzhì in Chinese-language writing and speaking, is intended to be a reference point for a diverse population, rather than a representation of actual individual identities. When writing about specific people, I use their preferred language for talking about their own genders, sexual practices, and intimate relationships.

Importantly, all the terms I have just described are in Mandarin Chinese. Taiwan is a multilingual society, and while Chinese is presently the official language of Taiwan, Taiwanese is widely spoken and preferred by many people in the older generations. My fieldnotes and interviews are primarily in Chinese, with occasional portions in Taiwanese, for which I needed interpretation into either Chinese or English. I did not collect any data in Hakka or indigenous languages, although these are also spoken in Taiwan. Thus, the issue of translating sexualities in the context of Taiwan is even more complex than the discussion I have just provided. Ongoing work, conversations, and debates about these issues are crucial. These debates must include the voices of people from multiple social locations, not only in terms of native tongue, ethnicity, and geographic location, but also in terms of social class, education, and the purpose of translation—e.g., scholarly and literary translations, translations by social movement organizers, and interpretations or code-switching in everyday life and relationships.

1.4 **Why Taiwan?**

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8 I am conversant in Mandarin due to spending part of my growing up years in Mainland China. In a majority of interviews, I had an interpreter present who spoke Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English fluently. I conducted a small number of interviews and all of the fieldwork without an interpreter. For these interviews, I hired a trilingual transcriptionist to check up on my language comprehension. In the field, I found that friends and acquaintances would often jump in to interpret for me when someone spoke in Taiwanese. All interpretations of interviews and fieldwork in this dissertation have been double-checked in some form (either in the moment, or during transcription) by a native Chinese and Taiwanese speaker. I describe this process in greater detail in chapter two, Methods and Epistemology.
Research on Taiwan is intrinsically important; that is, deepening knowledge about the Lu family and other Taiwanese families with LGBT members is a valuable endeavor, if only to better understand how these families navigate Taiwan’s economic, political, cultural, and social landscape. At the same time, Taiwan-based research provides a number of unique contributions to LGBT family studies. I will identify several of these contributions through a discussion of Taiwan’s specificity and my own standpoint relative to my chosen research topic.

First, the accelerated pace and scope of change in Taiwanese society throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries make it possible to compare LGBT family practices under markedly different social and cultural conditions and forms of governance. In the 40-year period from the 1940’s to the 1980’s, Taiwan completed its transition from a primarily rural, agrarian society to a primarily urban, advanced capitalist society, with a tenfold increase in per capita income in constant dollars (Thornton and Lin, 1994). A succession of major political transitions also occurred during this time period: the transfer of colonial power from Japan to Nationalist China, as part of the Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender drafted by the US, the UK, and the Nationalist Chinese government at the end of World War II; the imposition of Martial Law by the Nationalist Chinese government in 1949, instigating the period known as “White Terror” (báisè kōngbù—a reference to the white-uniformed Kuomintang soldiers who served as the arm of the State in violently suppressing political dissidents); and the lifting of Martial Law by President Chiang Ching-kuo in 1987, ending what was then the longest period of Martial Law in world history, and ushering in an era of rapid democratization and liberalization. Vibrant cultures of dissent, including Taiwan’s feminist and sex rights movements, evolved under the repression of Martial Law and came to bloom in the post-Martial Law period (for a detailed chronology of feminist movements in twentieth century Taiwan, see Chang, 2009; for sex rights
movements, see Damm, 2005; Erni and Spires, 2005; Huang, 2011; for a discussion about the complex relationship among forms of feminist and sex rights activism, see Sang, 2003, pp.225-254). These movements have challenged laws, policies, and practices that buttress the patriarchal and patrilineal family system as part of their on-going projects of cultural and social change.

Across this panorama of changes, Taiwanese LGBTs are confronted with what sociologist Kyung-Sup Chang describes as “diverse components of multiple civilizations” existing simultaneously in the culture (2010, p.6). Diverse institutions, ideologies, and value systems have entered the culture in a condensed space and time, and influence and change each other (I elaborate on Chang’s theory and its relevance to LGBT populations in chapter three, Social and Sexual Contexts). A cross-generational comparison is particularly generative for discovering how these diverse components inform kinship and family systems, in ways that often transform LGBT parent-child, sibling, and other family of origin relationships. For this reason, LGBT family research in Taiwan speaks directly to some of family sociology’s most long standing questions about the dialectical relationships among family change and other types of changes in the society.

Another characteristic making Taiwan important to study is the path-breaking achievements of its LGBT rights movement, and the increasing visibility of families within that movement. Taiwan is the first and, to date, the only East Asian society to pass federal laws banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in education (banned since 2004) and at work (banned since 2007; as of May 2014, the United States holds neither such law at the federal level). Taiwan has developed a reputation regionally and internationally for being a “gay-friendly” destination (as one of many recent examples, see Leach, 2012)—a somewhat controversial designation, as I discuss below—and for holding the largest LGBT
pride march in Asia.\(^9\) Importantly for this research, Taiwan is also home to Asia’s first organization for parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender children.\(^10\) While representing a small minority of parents of LGBT children in Taiwan, the members of this organization have worked hard to carve out a space for cultural visibility, education, and support for such families. For example, parent members have volunteered to meet privately with other parents, speak in schools and other public places, and appear in the media to share their stories. The founder of the group, known widely and affectionately as Guo Mama,\(^11\) sometimes calls it “Asia’s first PFLAG” (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). However, the organization differs from the US-based PFLAG in a number of important ways. Understanding these differences is crucial for those who wish to support families in diverse cultural and social locations. Taiwan provides a valuable site for growing our knowledge about LGBT parent-child and other family of origin relationships, and for developing more robust support systems that are capable of serving a wider variety of families. This historical moment also provides an opportunity to examine how LGBT families of origin are represented in public discourse and in the larger LGBT movement, and how their increased visibility changes the social scripts surrounding alternative genders and sexualities in Taiwan.

At the same time, the continued ambivalence around family for many Taiwanese lesbians and gays raises important questions for researchers. Even as international press

\(^9\) The first LGBT pride march took place in Taipei in 2001. The most recent march in 2013 drew a crowd of 50,000 representing 20 different countries. Kaohsiung and Taichung have also begun their own annual marches. See [http://twpride.org](http://twpride.org) (English language entry at [http://twpride.org/twp/?q=language/en-a](http://twpride.org/twp/?q=language/en-a)) for additional details about Taiwan pride, including the themes of each march.

\(^10\) The organization Loving Parents of LGBT Taiwan ([Tōngzhī Fūmǔ Āixīn Xiéhuì](http://www.facebook.com/Parents.LGBT), [http://www.facebook.com/Parents.LGBT](http://www.facebook.com/Parents.LGBT)) was officially registered in 2011 by the mother of a transgender child.

\(^11\) Throughout this paper I use “[surname] Mama” for mothers and “[surname] Baba” for fathers. Māmā and Bābā (father) are the most commonly used forms of address for parents within Taiwan’s lesbian and gay movement.
persist in constructing Taiwan as distinctively gay-friendly, some Taiwanese activists and researchers caution that visibility of marginal sexual subjects in Taiwan is more trendy than indicative of substantive changes in the actual conditions of people’s lives (see, for example, Chen and Wang, 2010; Chu, 2005). Cultural gains, such as increased LGBT visibility in the mass media and on the Internet, have not always coincided with changes in schools, workplaces, homes, healthcare systems, and other institutions that people interact with on a daily basis (see Chao, 2002 for a compelling analysis of persistent institutional discrimination). Family pressures remain the source of deepest anxiety expressed by many lesbians and gays (Sang, 2003, see especially pp.231-235), fluttering persistently to the surface of academic studies, journalistic accounts, and daily interactions. For example, many Taiwanese LGBT activists, some of whom work full time for LGBT organizations, have not revealed their LGBT status to their families of origin, and feel more cautious about bringing this up at home than they do about making public appearances at protests, press conferences, and other events. The juxtaposition of quite radical activism with severe family constraints invites researchers to take a closer look at how individuals and families balance these multifarious roles and relationships, compounded by the conditions of rapid cultural and social change described above.

Liang-ya Liou (2005) suggests that the cultural character of Taiwan’s sexual revolution is partly due to the simultaneous emergence of lesbian and gay studies and queer theory in Taiwan’s elite universities. Whereas in the West, lesbian and gay identity movements predated queer movements and served as a basis of queer critique, in Taiwan the emergence of lesbian/gay and queer theory and politics occurred at nearly the same historical moment. As a result, Taiwan provides an example of a queer movement that is not constructed upon and against lesbian and gay identity politics, creating a unique climate for LGBT populations and for their family of origin relationships.
The climate for Taiwanese LGBTs and their families is also informed by the backlash from conservative groups, which have mobilized against an increasingly visible LGBT movement (Chen and Wang, 2010; Ho, 2008, 2010). Often these groups claim to be speaking on behalf of parents, whom they position as natural defenders of heterosexuality out of a concern for “the happiness of the next generation” (wèi xià yīdài xìngfú). The deployment of family imagery to oppose LGBT-inclusive education and public policies is partially borrowed from Western anti-gay movements, but ultimately must differ from comparable conservative strategies in the United States, given the very different meanings and functions of family in Taiwanese society (including, among other differences, the centrality of the family in the patrilineally-based social security system, and family responsibilities for ancestral care as well as elder care). It is important to understand how symbols of family and parenthood factor into public debates about LGBT issues in Taiwan, in ways similar to and different from debates in other parts of the world, and how actual families and parents interpret and respond to these symbols.

Taken together, these conditions of rapid social and family change, Taiwan’s precedent-setting LGBT movement, the increasing visibility of families of origin within that movement, and the simultaneous persistence of severe family pressures and constraints, offer multiple entry points into the study of LGBT family life, not previously examined in the literature. However, when asked “why Taiwan?” by colleagues and acquaintances, I often find that the reply I have just provided is not fully satisfying to them. After some probing, I have recognized that people posing this question are often asking for my personal story or connection to Taiwan as a field site. In the following two pages I will share this more personal angle, which also contributed meaningfully to the unfolding of this research.

12 See, for example, this flyer for a march on November 30, 2013, in opposition to a family diversity bill, organized by the Happiness of the Next Generation Alliance: https://taiwanfamily.com/?page_id=188 (Retrieved April 14, 2014)
1.4.1 My Personal Journey to Taiwan

Growing up in the United States, my passport country, and northeast China, where my family lived for many years, I knew little about Taiwan except that it was a politically sensitive topic. When someone sent our family (then living in Changchun) a US-made quilt with a color-coded map of the world, my mother used a felt marker to quietly color Taiwan the same shade as China, so as to avoid controversy over the matter when friends and neighbors came into our home. My parents did not offer their own opinions on “the Taiwan question,” and as a young person I didn’t think much about it, beyond a flickering interest in the felt marker and other silent signs that Taiwan mattered in ways we couldn’t talk about.

My “discovery” of Taiwan as a place of deeper interest did not occur until I moved to the United States for college. The person I was dating at the time wanted to buy a binder to flatten their chest and create a more male-contoured silhouette.\textsuperscript{13} I began searching online for chest binders and soon discovered that Taiwan had the best selection of binders on the market.\textsuperscript{14} Needless to say this piqued my curiosity. I had not really explored queer cultures in Asia, despite being queer myself, because it was my family home and thus a more heteronormative space for me (importantly, this was not because of the greater conservatism of China relative to the US, but because of the beliefs held by my own family and the greater conservatism of the larger Western expat community of which we were a part). As a result, I had kept the queer part of me segregated from my home and family life, not just internally but geographically, separated by an ocean. As I explored queer Taiwan in cyberspace, I felt the growing excitement of connecting my two worlds.

\textsuperscript{13} This former partner prefers to use the gender pronoun “they” instead of “he” or “she.”
\textsuperscript{14} Here is an example of the kind of sites I found: \url{http://www.t-kingdom.com/}. I later visited brick and mortar stores entirely devoted to T (butch, transmasculine) clothing lines in Kaohsiung, Taichung, and Taipei.
This exploration led me to the website of the Center for the Study of Sexualities at National Central University in Jhongli, Taiwan. Through their conference programs, online materials, and links to academic articles and books, I fell into a new world of East Asian queer studies. Just as the discovery of queer Taiwan had connected my home and family life with my emerging sexuality, this new world connected ways of knowing which I had previously compartmentalized. I had learned about LGBT studies and queer theory through books and articles written and published in the United States, but I had rarely encountered theories that felt relevant to my childhood experiences and family home in northeast China, or to the area of East Asian studies which drew my interest as an undergraduate student. The possibilities for bridging these fields excited me both personally and intellectually. I continued to learn about East Asian queer studies in general, and Taiwan in particular, through the Center for the Study of Sexualities and other on and offline sources. I also began reading about Taiwanese cultural and political history, gradually replacing the silence I’d known around “the Taiwan question” with the diverse perspectives of Taiwanese scholars, writers, activists, and other cultural critics. Some years later, I wrote about wanting to conduct research in Taiwan in my first “annual report” for the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago—and four years after that, I traveled in person to the same Center for the Study of Sexualities that had first introduced me to East Asian queer studies, spending time there as a Visiting Scholar during my fieldwork period. In some ways this felt like a special “full circle” journey, while in other ways I recognized my field period as the first steps on a path that will continue to grip my mind and heart for many years to come.

1.5  Dissertation Structure

This dissertation interweaves a diverse set of family narratives with theories of family inequality and family change. The larger story I aspire to tell is one of shifting family norms
and practices, which sometimes subvert and sometimes recreate the conditions of gendered power and inequality that shape LGBT family of origin relationships. To tell this story, I focus on three prominent themes in my fieldwork and interviews: the continued salience of patrilineally-based gender disparities in shaping LGBT family life, the implications of these disparities for mothers and fathers of LGBT children, and the meanings of and variation in “coming out” as an emerging social discourse and family practice.

1.5.1 Chapter 2: Methods and Epistemology

I begin by providing information about the processes of data collection and analysis, including issues of access, locating diverse families, knowledge gained from the “negative spaces” in fieldwork (e.g., things left unsaid, people who don’t participate), the evolution of the interview schedule, my approach to synthesizing a large quantity of ethnographic and interview data, and aspects of my own standpoint that meaningfully shaped each of these processes. I also briefly describe some of the characteristics of the families in this research. I have included demographics of the 80 interviewees in Tables I and II, Appendix B.

1.5.2 Chapter 3: Social and Sexual Contexts

I then introduce the analytic scaffolding of the dissertation, including frameworks of “compressed modernity” developed by Kyung-Sup Chang (1999) and “relational-materialistic citizenship” proposed by Antonia Yen-ning Chao (2002). I combine these frames to highlight the ways in which generational changes are differently experienced across axes of gender, sexuality, class, and family role. This chapter also positions my work in relation to larger debates at the intersections of modernity, culture, and sexuality.

1.5.3 Chapter 4: Patrilineality

Using the feminist materialist approach introduced above, I analyze how my informants experience, make sense of, and sometimes refashion the patrilineal kinship system
that structures their lives and relationships. In particular, I respond to the widely reported belief that gay men face more family pressure (jiātíng yàli) than do lesbians in Taiwan because men have a duty to continue the paternal line (chuán zōng jiēdài). The prevalence of such statements in my interviews and fieldnotes raised several questions for me: What family pressures do lesbian and bisexual women face, and why are these pressures less visible than those faced by gay men? How are contemporary transgender subjects positioned in relation to the imperative to chuán zōng jiēdài? What do lesbian and transgender perspectives collectively reveal about the gendered meanings of “family pressure” and negotiations of patrilineality within contemporary Taiwanese families?

In addressing these questions, I push beyond existing conceptualizations of “continuing the paternal line” as a gay men’s issue, by showing how lesbian and bisexual women embody patrilineality through reproductive labor and cumulative material disadvantages. I argue that while patrilineal reproduction may be a greater cultural imperative for gay men, its impact on lesbian and bisexual women’s lives has been even more far-reaching. Additionally, I show how patrilineality is embodied and negotiated by people for whom assigned sex, lived gender, and gendered family roles do not neatly align. Together these lesbian and transgender perspectives provide new angles of vision on patrilineal kinship which foreground its persistent material basis as well as avenues for its transformation.

1.5.4 **Chapter 5: Parenting**

In a second thematic chapter, I continue my focus on gendered family labor, this time through an analysis of parenting discourses and practices among Taiwanese parents of LGBT children. I identify significant differences in the life stories of mothers and fathers, which reveal on-going inequalities in the material and emotional labor mothers perform relative to fathers, mothers’ disproportionate accountability for child outcomes, and beliefs about women’s natural nurturance which yield higher expectations for maternal support of LGBT
children at the same time that women are expected to rear their children to be properly gendered and heterosexual citizens. I find that new discourses of maternal love emphasize mothers’ sacrifices for their children, and naturalize and reinscribe women’s service to the family, while discourses of paternal love emphasize fathers’ high expectations and potential disappointment in their children, thus reinforcing paternal authority through affective channels.

This chapter expands the scholarship on parents of LGBT children by situating parental narratives in relation to larger systems of gendered power and inequality. The analysis also dovetails closely with the previous chapter by revealing changes and continuities in the patrilineal distribution of family labor and power, and with the following chapter by showing how parenting discourses and practices are changing in ways that create a new cultural intelligibility for “coming out.”

1.5.5 **Chapter 6: Coming Out**

The last of three central thematic chapters tackles one of the most prevalent—and unexpected—findings of my research: the emergence of a “coming out” (chūguì) discourse among LGBT young people and their parents (unexpected because prior research has emphasized the cultural incompatibility of “coming out” for East Asian queers, and because I did not include any direct questions about coming out in my interviews). In this chapter, I argue that “coming out” is a generationally specific concept and practice, embedded in and illuminating the broader context of family change in Taiwan. The out/closeted dichotomy is inappropriate for mid and later life lesbians and gays in my research, who are neither “out” nor “closeted” in ways similar to their younger counterparts. At the same time, an emerging “coming out” discourse has rapidly garnered currency among younger LGBTs and their
parents. This chapter answers the question *why now*—why has a “coming out” discourse emerged in Taiwan at this historical moment?

Scholarly and popular models of “coming out” have tethered this practice to a particular form of sexual identity politics. But my data clearly show that sexual politics and identity integration are not the chief determinants of who does or doesn’t “come out” to their families in contemporary Taiwan. Instead, my findings point to variations in family life, including changing norms and expectations surrounding parent-child intimacy and communication, which require new and different strategies for managing gender and sexuality within families. A major contribution of this chapter is the reframing of “coming out” through the lens of family theory rather than the sexual development model that continues to dominate the scholarship in this area.

1.5.6 **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

The final chapter of the dissertation pulls together its distinctive and intersecting parts in response to a simple question: What do people desire from and for their families? I began this research with many assumptions. For example, an early iteration of my research questions asked what mechanisms allow LGBT and heterosexual family members to remain “close.” I soon realized that most LGBT people in my sample were not suffering from a lack of closeness…in fact, many people were trying to find ways to become *less* close to the natal or marital family members with whom they lived. Young people and women felt especially constrained by parental surveillance and the demands of their family roles. In many cases, people in the same family desired different levels of accountability and access to one another’s lives. These family desires diverged along axes of generation, sex, gender, class, and family position. By emphasizing places of divergence, I recap the major themes of the dissertation, including the variation in family change under conditions of compressed
modernity, and forms of inequality that continue to shape LGBT family life. My findings point to a diversity of family forms not only in terms of LGBT family structures (e.g., family formation beyond the template of same-sex marriage-like relationships), but also in how people relate to their families of origin, with implications for family theory as well as more engaged work with LGBT people and their kin.

1.6 **Significance of the Dissertation**

This dissertation provides a critical missing link in the larger body of theory about LGBT family of origin relationships, through the inclusion of families in an East Asian society. The methodological approach of looking across generational cohorts within families as well as LGBT communities sets this work apart from other studies of this topic, and makes larger contributions and theoretical innovations possible, by highlighting processes of social change and how these changes have varied by sex, gender, class, and family position.

The dissertation advances four conceptual shifts. The first is a shift from conceptualizing LGBT family issues primarily or solely through the lens of sexuality. While important, this lens provides only a partial view of LGBT people in families, and has contributed to the construction of LGBT lives as over-determined by sexual identities. Through this lens, for example, disclosure of LGBT status is primarily framed as a function of sexual identity integration or sexual politics. However, neither of these explanations is consistent with my findings about how and why my Taiwanese informants disclose their LGBT status to their family members. In contrast, this dissertation embeds empirical research on LGBT populations in the broader literature on demographic and family change.

The second is a shift from a culturalist view to a materialist view of LGBT family issues in East Asia generally and Taiwan specifically. Existing themes of filiality and “saving
face” also provide only a partial story of LGBT family of origin relationships, and risk slipping into a reductive cultural essentialism. In contrast, this dissertation highlights the structural and material mechanisms that underpin LGBT family practices. This approach provides new knowledge about LGBT family issues in Taiwan, while also contributing a more sociological frame to the primarily psychological literature on LGBT families of origin. As I will show, a materialist approach brings family-based sex and gender disparities into sharper relief, highlighting the continued subordination of women and gender nonconforming people through cumulative structural and material disadvantages.

This is closely connected to a third shift, which I hope to inspire beyond this dissertation: that is, a renewed focus on family-based sex and gender oppression in research and activism surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer family issues. While these forms of oppression have been centrally addressed in the broader field of sexuality studies, the scholarship on LGBT families of origin has been curiously silent on this subject. Sex and gender inequality are key themes in this dissertation; however it is important, particularly for Western readers, not to view these themes as unique to Taiwan, thus absolving Western societies of family-based sex and gender oppression and other persistent forms of family inequality. Instead, I hope that uncovering these themes in my Taiwan research will convey the importance of also tackling family-based sex and gender oppression in studies of LGBT family of origin relationships elsewhere.

Finally, throughout the dissertation, I call for greater attention to the historical and social dimensions of LGBT family of origin relationships, particularly as these shape the lives of normatively gendered, heterosexual parents, siblings, and other kin. While researchers have contextualized LGBT sexualities in time and place and in relation to systems of power and inequality, the study of LGBT families of origin remains more
narrowly concerned with personal pathways to acceptance following a family member’s sexual disclosure. As a result, we know very little about how historically and culturally specific power relations shape the family discourses and strategies available to heterosexuals with LGBT family members. A deeper understanding of these family dynamics is crucial for moving beyond time and culture-bound models of familial acceptance.

1.6.1 **Significance for the Lu Family?**

In the paragraphs above, I have provided a standard academic description of how and why this dissertation matters for several research areas. But does this research also matter to the Lu family and other families of LGBT people throughout Taiwan? This is a more challenging question and requires a more complex answer. On the one hand, it is unlikely that the Lu family themselves will see an immediate benefit from the publication of this work. On the other hand, expanding the body of knowledge about LGBT family issues does promise to have concrete benefits for actual families. Organizations, educators, and policymakers working on LGBT issues often draw on research to inform their recommendations and choices. Up to now, much of that research has overrepresented LGBT family issues in Western societies, and either mapped these onto non-Western populations, or dismissed the issues as irrelevant on the grounds of cultural differences. I hope this dissertation will contribute to the small but growing body of work that creates new conversations, grounded in the standpoint of Taiwanese lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families. As much as these conversations promise to build new theories, they also offer new tools for addressing the LGBT family issues that matter to people in Taiwan today.

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15 For example, while in Taiwan, I attended numerous talks by psychiatrists and other experts on the topic of homosexuality, organized by and for parents of LGBT children. Nearly all of the academic research cited in these talks had been conducted in North America.
2. METHODS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

2.1 Research Components

I entered Taiwan thinking I was going to do an interview study and some participant observations. Sixteen months later, I left with a strong identity as an ethnographer. In retrospect, I could not imagine undertaking this study in any other way. As someone who had never been to Taiwan before embarking on this research, I faced a giant learning curve, and spent the first half of the field period observing, recording, and interviewing without any sense of how I was going to “see the forest through the trees.” In fact, it was not until around the one-year mark that the contours of the forest began to reveal themselves—and this would not have been possible without daily immersion in LGBT community and family life. If the 80 family history interviews comprise the heart of the analysis, the ethnography is the spirit or the deeper essence of the project. In this chapter, I describe each part, the heart and the spirit, as well as my strategy for moving from data collection to analysis and to the eventual writing up of this dissertation. I also discuss how my personal biography mattered throughout this process, focusing especially on my race, nationality, and language; my femme sexuality; and my family story, which figured centrally in my choice of research topic as well as my fieldwork experiences. I begin the chapter by introducing the diverse individuals and families who shared aspects of their lives as part of this study.

2.2 Finding Families

My initial plan to do an interview study was partly shaped by my uncertainty about the possibility of doing ethnography, and whether I would actually find a sizable population of families who were willing to talk to me, let alone spend time with me outside the bounded
space and time of the interview. I knew that I wanted to avoid the common methodological pitfall of over-representing activists and students at elite universities in Taipei. But, once again, I didn’t quite know how this was going to happen, since my entry points across the country were primarily through LGBT organizations. When I got off the plane in Kaohsiung, met by my wonderful research assistant A.C. (name abbreviated for her privacy), I had exchanged emails with a half dozen queer organizers and a few faculty at the Center for the Study of Sexualities where I would be a Visiting Scholar, arranged my living quarters at the guesthouse on the campus of National Central University, and taken out a sizable student loan in case my larger fellowship didn’t come through (it did, two months later). Beyond this, I could not predict how anything would unfold…and what did unfold far exceeded my aspirations at that moment of arrival.

It is largely because of A.C.’s help that the interviews diversified from the beginning. While my organizational contacts quickly drew me into a network of LGBT people throughout the country, A.C. began introducing me around to a different sort of network—women she had met here and there who had same-sex relationships but otherwise lived their lives in totally heterosexual circles. Eventually I began to figure out ways to find these individuals through the other networks I was forming. The classic “snowball” method would not work, since the people I wanted to meet were not involved in LGBT community life. However, a modified method of snowballing through ex-partners/lovers proved to be much more fruitful, as many people came into contact with LGBT networks solely through their sexual and romantic partnerships. And while my informants tended to be friends with people like themselves—a common problem of the snowball method—many had slept with or dated people who were very different from themselves. It was not uncommon, for example, for activists to socialize with other politically active friends, but to be partnered with someone who was neither an activist nor openly gay or lesbian in any part of their life. People whose
same-sex relationships had begun in high school (and this was a majority of the people in my sample) could point to former girlfriends and boyfriends who had continued on down widely divergent paths; some had gotten heterosexually married while continuing to have same-sex romances, others now felt themselves to be heterosexual, while still others remained unmarried and involved in long-term same-sex relationships without necessarily getting involved in LGBT social circles. In short, I found sexual networks to be significantly more varied than friendship networks. At some point along the way I began referring to this, tongue-in-cheek, as “the lesbian snowball method,” after a Taipei activist said approvingly, “snowballing through ex’s…that is such a lesbian way to do research!”

From this point, I used many different strategies to continue expanding my sample. I joined different types of organizations and frequented social venues that drew crowds of different ages, genders, and class backgrounds. I kept a demographic spreadsheet of people I was meeting and interviewing and asked for help in filling the gaps that gradually emerged. The very process of finding people to interview became a part of my data. For example, it was nearly a year before I interviewed the mother and sister of a pó lesbian, after becoming acquainted with dozens of parents and siblings of T lesbians and gay men.16 The order in which this occurred was neither accidental nor insignificant. As a result of my difficulty in finding family members of pó to interview, and the fact that I did not encounter parents of pó at organized events and meetings, I began a conversation with my T and pó informants about how their same-sex relationships are differently perceived and managed by their families of origin, beyond a simplistic reading of pó invisibility and T hyper-visibility. While not discussed in the dissertation, this analysis formed the basis of a separate article, with the data collection process as an important component of my findings.

16 As described in the previous chapter, pó and T are identity-relational categories, conveying both gender (pó femininity and T masculinity) and sexuality (e.g., all of my T informants provided T as their sexual orientation, or xìngxiàng).
In another example, a majority of my interviews with older gay men took place in the last quarter of the field period, only after I got to know many of these men over a long period of time and sustained involvement in the LGBT Elders Working Group, as detailed in the subsection on Volunteer Work. This was the population with whom I had the least in common personally, and some gay and lesbian activists playfully suggested to me that I find a handsome young man to be my research assistant in order to attract older gay men into the study. Although I never had the opportunity to take this advice by working with a gay research assistant, I recognized that my lack of personal attractiveness to these gay men, coupled with the vast differences in our life experiences, necessitated the building of real friendships before asking for an interview. In contrast, more lesbians were willing to enter the study simply because I was a lesbian too. Thus the process of finding people to interview highlighted the role of my personal biography, and, potentially, the biography of my research assistant in shaping the course of the study, a topic I return to later in this chapter.

Another strategy I used to expand the sample—which was possible only because of the generous support I received from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, and because of Taiwan’s superb high speed rail system—was to immediately travel anywhere that an informant was available. If I was in Taipei and someone put me in touch with a potential informant in Taichung, I would go to Taichung that day or week to meet up with the person at their convenience; if my new Taichung informant then told me about a group of lesbians in Hualien, I would travel to Hualien to make contact with that group. I became very used to traveling around and sometimes not knowing where I would find myself by the end of the week. After fearing that I would not find ways to get involved with LGBT people and their families, I instead found myself choosing between multiple activities nearly every weekend.

17 I was interested in working with a gay man, but my requirements for the position (trilingual and available on a part time, flexible schedule) necessarily limited the pool of applicants, and I did not manage to find a gay RA for this particular data collection period.
As a rule of thumb, I said yes first to any sort of family invitation (e.g., an invitation to a family dinner or holiday), then to LGBT family-centered events (such as parents’ meetings) and, third, to LGBT events and social gatherings that did not pertain specifically to families (such as a lesbian safe sex workshop or a queer film festival) but where family issues would sometimes arise.

By the end of the field period, I developed what I came to think of as the “Facebook test”—if someone added me on Facebook, and we had no mutual friends, I knew I had found an entry point into a brand new community (since with the core group of LGBT organizers I shared incredible numbers of Facebook friends in common, sometimes exceeding 100 mutual friends between us—including people I met in different cities and at different times, who were nevertheless shown by Facebook to be a part of the same larger LGBT network). Through this “Facebook test” I was able to identify and reach out to new groups, some of whom proved difficult or impossible to connect with (e.g., a group of LāMā—or lesbian mothers, most of whom were heterosexually married—did not open their closed events to outsiders for reasons of privacy) while others welcomed me warmly to all sorts of activities I could never have found through my own Internet searches.

The individuals who lent their time and life stories to this research are diverse by age (ranging from 19 to 80 years old), gender, sexuality (see Introduction, On Language and Translation for a description of gender and sexual variation in the sample), education, income, region of the country, family role, and family situation. For example, I interviewed people whose entire families know that they are LGB and/or T, and people who have not told a single family member and never plan to. As I have shown, the diversity of the sample is a reflection of the diversity that already exists in LGBT communities throughout Taiwan, and is the result of people helping to make introductions, my determination to seek out more
voices, technologies such as good transportation and online social networks, and the material benefits of having a fellowship that provided me with funds to travel and made it unnecessary for me to teach or do any work other than data collection for the 16 months that I lived in Taiwan.

2.3 **Family History Interviews**

The 80 people whom I formally interviewed also met another set of criteria, guided by my research questions about change over time in LGBT family relationships. While ages ranged widely in my fieldwork—from 19 to 80, as noted above—I wanted to ensure that I conducted in-depth family history interviews with a minimum of 10 LGBT people (including five female-assigned and five male-assigned interviewees) from each of three generational cohorts, detailed below. Here, I use female-assigned and male-assigned as a signifier for sex and gender variation, referring to individuals’ assigned legal gender; actual sex and gender designations among interviewees varied in much more complex ways, including situational genders, which shifted with locale, as well as more fixed gender identities (see Introduction, On Language and Translation for some of these). In summarizing gender in this section, I use the very crude measures of female-assigned and male-assigned while also mentioning the number of trans-identified and T interviewees. T is generally translated into English as butch, but for some, may be better translated as genderqueer or transgender; Ts vary widely in whether and to what extent they identify with the categories nǚ (female) and nán (male).

Initially, I drew the cohort lines on the basis of political transitions that have meaningfully shaped LGBT life in Taiwan. However, through the process of data gathering and analysis, I realized that generational differences in LGBT family of origin relationships had as much to do with other social and family changes as they did with political regimes.
Thus the larger story I tell in this dissertation incorporates political changes without characterizing these changes as overly determinative of LGBT family practices.

A) 45-60 (birth years 1952-1967): People in this cohort grew up and transitioned to adulthood under Martial Law imposed by the Nationalist Chinese government. During the Martial Law period, sexual and gender expression were severely curtailed by the State; for example, cross-dressing was punishable under the prohibition against qí zhuāng yìfú, or wearing inappropriate clothing (Chao, 1999, 2001). This was not due to a focused persecution of queers but rather a more general persecution of the entire Taiwanese population and a suppression of all kinds of non-normative social behaviors and relations. At the same time, heterosexual marriage was nearly universal (Jones, 2010) and resources were allocated primarily within the context of the patrilineal, heterosexual family. Those individuals who did manage to fashion lives outside of marriage suffered disenfranchisement across almost all areas of life, although men generally had more natal family resources to fall back on than did women.

I interviewed 11 people in this cohort: five who were male-assigned and six who were female-assigned, including four Ts. Six of these interviewees (three gay men and three Ts) had never married, while the other five were divorced, separated, or still living with their heterosexual spouses.

B) 30-44 (birth years 1968-1982): People in this cohort transitioned to adulthood during a period of rapid democratization and social reorganization, including a crescendo of sex rights activism which took place in the 1990’s (see Chu, 2005; Erni and Spires, 2005; Liou, 2005 for a partial chronology of Taiwan’s lesbian/gay/queer activism in

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18 Following the convention in demography, Jones defines “universal marriage” as fewer than five percent of women remaining unmarried into their forties.
this period).

I interviewed 18 people in this cohort: nine who were male-assigned and nine who were female-assigned, including one trans man, two trans women, and four Ts. Only two people in this cohort had been heterosexually married, and both of these were transactional or cooperative marriages\(^{19}\)—already showing a shift from the prior cohort, in which a majority of LGBT people had married and did not necessarily view their marriages as meaningfully different from those of their heterosexual counterparts. I provide an analysis of this generational difference in chapters 3, Patrilineality and 5, Coming Out.

C) 18-29 (birth years 1983-1994): People in this cohort are heirs of Taiwan’s sex rights movement, transitioning to adulthood in a period when sexual and gender nonconformity are framed by discourses of human rights and protected minority status, and issues such as LGBT-inclusive public school education and same-sex domestic partner benefits are topics of public debate. It is also a period of backlash, as conservative NGOs have gained a louder social voice in Taiwan (see, for example, Ho, 2008; issues of backlash and new forms of sexual repression are also detailed in Huang, 2011).

I interviewed 17 people in this cohort: seven who were male-assigned and ten who

\(^{19}\) I describe cooperative marriage in detail in chapter four, Patrilineality. People who enter into transactional or cooperative marriages have a clear arrangement with their spouse (often another gay or lesbian person) regarding the purpose of the marriage (e.g., to ease family pressure, to produce children, etc.) without expectations of romantic fulfillment, sexual consummation, or the cessation of their same-sex partnerships. My two cooperatively married informants had children through reproductive technologies with the gay husband acting as a sperm donor. In contrast, lesbian and gay informants in the 45-60 age cohort described having (typically unwanted) sexual relations with their heterosexual spouses as a matter of marital duty. In Taiwan, reproductive technologies are not legally available to unmarried couples, and non-marital childbearing is extremely rare; thus I did not have LGBT parents in any cohort whose children were born outside the context of a heterosexual marriage. I did meet some lesbian moms who had conceived together while living abroad, but these cases were highly unusual and required an exceptional degree of family support and wealth.
were female-assigned, including two trans men, two trans women, and three Ts. None of these interviewees had been heterosexually married. I did encounter heterosexually married lesbian (usually pó)-identified women in their twenties in my fieldwork, but these women are not represented in the interview sample.

In the LGBT sample, the total number of male-assigned interviewees is 21, and the total number of female-assigned interviewees is 25 (N=46). I interviewed six people who identify in some way with the term kuà xìngbié (transgender) and ten Ts, some of whom do not identify themselves as women.

In addition, I conducted family history interviews with 34 normatively gendered, heterosexual family members of LGBTs: 18 parents (11 mothers and 6 fathers) and 16 siblings (10 sisters and 6 brothers). Many of these parents and siblings were connected to LGBT people in my research, as shown in Table I, Appendix B where I have grouped interviewees by family. I also included interviewees whose LGBT children and siblings were not in the sample, in order to hear from those who had more difficult or even somewhat estranged relationships with their LGBT family member, or who felt uncomfortable broaching this topic with their family member directly. For example, I interviewed an older sister who had never verbally discussed her brother’s gay sexuality with him, but who felt its impact keenly as her parents pressured her to keep watch over her brother and ensure his appropriate behavior. I sought out parents and siblings through similar tactics to those described above, asking for help in reaching specific missing voices. I also found that siblings would occasionally approach me when I lectured about my research at local universities. This may be a function of the relative absence of information for siblings of

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20 This number does not include the large number of LGBT informants who also had LGBT family members, including lesbian mothers and gay fathers of LGBT children, and others with LGBT siblings or cousins. When including extended kin, more than 30% of the LGBT sample reported having known or suspected LGBT relatives.
LGBTs, making siblings more likely to come forward when they hear of research speaking to and about them.

2.3.1 **On Interviewing Multiple Members of the Same Family**

In contrast to the majority of studies of lesbian, gay, and bisexual family life, which rely solely on the narratives of one person within the family (usually the LGB person—I am omitting T here because there have not been enough studies of transgender family life to make this kind of generalization), this study includes people of different sexualities, genders, and family roles in pursuit of a more complete picture of changing family dynamics. The method of interviewing multiple members of the same family is also one that has been identified as important, but largely missing, from Chinese and Taiwanese family studies (Shek, 2006). I used a similar semi-structured interview framework for LGBT and normatively gendered, heterosexual interviewees, covering the same topics with different members of the family in order to clarify points of variance and convergence in family members’ memories, perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. In adopting this method, I follow Elizabeth Tonkin (1995) in looking not for some “true” family history embedded within these multiple tellings, but rather for how and why people remember the past differently, and how divergent and sometimes contradictory memories shape contemporary family formations.

This method revealed dimensions of family life that would not have emerged otherwise, including opportunities to learn through the omissions in people’s stories. These omissions, or “negative spaces” in life histories, are generally hidden from researchers. But in this case, I sometimes learned about the negative spaces through family members’ disclosures, e.g., one person telling me about a significant family trauma, while another family member did an entire three-hour interview without once mentioning the trauma although it had happened to them specifically. In another instance of this phenomenon, I
interviewed a mom, her lesbian daughter, and her straight son, all of whom told me about a family dinner that occurred on the previous Sunday. The mom and her daughter placed enormous emphasis on this event because it had been the first time the lesbian formally introduced her partner to her father. Both women saw it as a turning point in the father’s attitude toward his daughter’s same-sex relationship. However, when telling me about this same dinner, the lesbian woman’s brother completely forgot that her partner had been there at all! Prompted by me, he described the people at the dinner as his mom, dad, grandma, himself, his girlfriend, and his sister…his sister’s partner was entirely invisible in his memory. It was not until several minutes later, after I had asked him all sorts of follow up questions about the dinner and we prepared to move on to the next topic, that he said, “oh, yeah—I think [so-and-so, the name of his sister’s partner] might have been there too.” He then continued on without saying anything further about this or marking it as a meaningful life event. Through these three renditions of the same story, as well as other similarities and differences across interviews, I was able to get a clearer picture of how this family managed the daughter’s sexuality—primarily this was a task handled by the daughter and her mother, with the men of the family playing more peripheral roles.

In the case of this family, both the mother and sister asked the father to be interviewed, but he declined. Family members who declined to be interviewed—or were not asked because they did not acknowledge (or even know about) their LGBT family member—represent meaningful points of view that are missing from this study. I tried to learn about these family members in several ways, such as spending time with them in non-interview settings (if possible, and only with those who did know of their LGBT family member and the topic of my research) and compiling information about them from multiple other people in the family. However, there is no substitute for hearing from a family member directly. This absence creates another form of “negative space,” revealing aspects of family life through
patterns of non-disclosure and the places where negotiations about gender and sexuality do not occur.

2.3.2 **Interview Logistics: Language, Length, Location**

I conducted the interviews myself in Mandarin Chinese, and usually had an interpreter present who spoke Chinese, Taiwanese, and English fluently (see the subsection on Interpreter Standpoints for a discussion of how the interpreter’s presence shaped the data collection process). In cases where I did not have an interpreter present, such as certain interviews that required extensive travel or an overnight stay, I had a trilingual research assistant help with transcription and translation of the interview content. My informants also had the option to be interviewed in Hakka with the help of an interpreter, although nobody chose this option. A subset of eight interviews were conducted in English, at the informant’s request. In every case this request was made by someone who had spent considerable time living or studying abroad, and whose English far surpassed my Chinese in fluency. Many of the interviews involved code-switching as people recalled family interactions and conversations in both Chinese and Taiwanese.

The interviews lasted three hours on average, with the shortest interview lasting just one hour and the longest interviews exceeding five hours. People with access to their own private home or work spaces usually chose to do them there, while others chose public places such as cafés and restaurants. A majority of informants lived with members of their families, and these arrangements had to be taken carefully into account, since very few people had disclosed their own, their child’s, or their sibling’s LGBT status to everyone in the home. Among LGBT people and their siblings, the most common arrangement was for intra-generational kin such as siblings and cousins to know—often, these individuals were connected through Facebook and openly shared many aspects of their lives that way—while
intergenerational kin such as parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles either didn’t know or suspected homosexuality without bringing it up directly. Among parents in the study, the most common arrangement was to keep the knowledge from extended kin, sharing it only among the smaller family unit of parents and their children, or in some cases, mothers and their children, with fathers excluded.

People handled the interview in different ways under these circumstances. Some were interviewed in their bedrooms at home, and simply did not tell their family members about the topic of the interview. When introduced, I would explain that I was studying parent-child and sibling relationships in Taiwan, and how these relationships varied by gender and generation, a description that was technically accurate without “outing” anyone connected to the study. Others were so cautious that I avoided calling their phones and kept communication about the interview to a minimum until we met somewhere far removed from their usual daily routines. Women with carework responsibilities faced the biggest challenges in being interviewed privately. Here, again, the process of data gathering—in this case, differential access to private spaces and free time to be interviewed—is also a finding, the basis of analysis, as it reveals gendered patterns that have meaningfully shaped LGBT family life (an issue I return to in chapter four, Patrilineality).

These variegated degrees of privacy influenced the extent to which I got to know my informants outside the bounded context of the recorded interview. About one-third of the people in the interview sample did the interview only, and, for reasons of privacy, preference, or being busy with other things, we never saw each other again after that event. Because willingness and availability to be in the study were not randomly distributed, it was extremely important to hear from this group, despite their more limited involvement. I got to know another two-thirds of the people in this sample in multiple social contexts over a period of
weeks or months before and after doing the interview with them. In both cases, the ethnographic portion of the research, described next, provided important context not only for connecting me to interviewees, but also for situating their narratives and providing me with the conceptual tools to draw out deeper meanings.

2.4 **Ethnography**

To provide a diverse portrait of Taiwanese families, I traveled to do interviews in cities, towns, and more rural areas throughout the country. As a result, my informants often invited me to stay overnight with them while I was in town. Families also correctly perceived that I did not have prior personal networks in Taiwan with whom to celebrate special days, and so they invited me to join them for Taiwan’s many holidays and festivals, as well as more casual family dinners and get-togethers. On five separate occasions, I spent up to a week living together with one of my informants in their family home, observing everyday interactions among family members. I accompanied family members as they shopped, cooked, cared for children, visited relatives, took grandparents to see the doctor, and carried out other daily activities and chores. These extended visits enabled me to get a feel for the rhythms of family life in ways that are not possible in a more formal interview setting.

I also participated multiple times per week in more formal activities pertaining to gender, sexuality, and family issues. These included such activities as support group meetings for parents of LGBT children, informational sessions on how to “come out” to parents and other relatives, educational lectures about homosexuality organized and attended by parents, workshops put together by various LGBT organizations, political rallies and marches, and social gatherings of LGBT people and their families. The existence of so many different kinds of events, in cities all across Taiwan, is a testament to the determined efforts and
investments of those who are involved in Taiwan’s LGBT movement, and the integration of this movement with other political struggles. For example, LGBT organizations march under their official banners in protests for migrant workers’ rights, land justice, democracy, anti-nuclear power, and many other issues; when interviewed by the press, they do not stress “coalition-building” as one might hear about in the US, but rather say, “we are marching because there are LGBT migrant workers,” or “we are marching because LGBT people are impacted by land rights issues” and so on. While the concept of “coalition-building” preserves an us/them distinction—suggesting that two different groups are coming together—the LGBT movement in Taiwan acknowledges that LGBTs are integrated throughout the society and that LGBT quality of life can only be achieved through addressing all of the dimensions of LGBT existence, rather than focusing narrowly on sexual identity. As a result of the envelopment of LGBT causes in the larger culture of democratic participation in Taiwan, I took part in as many political protests in 16 months of fieldwork, as I had in 10 years of being a part of the LGBT movement in the United States.

When I was not taking part in a march or an activity, or setting up or doing an interview, I was usually spending time with LGBT acquaintances and friends that I formed in the field. I went to T-bars, 21 lesbian dance clubs, gay bookstores and cafés, and other LGBT-themed venues and social gatherings not only to meet informants, but also to create a community for myself during the year and a half that I lived in Taiwan. Being a queer ethnographer who has relocated to an unfamiliar place, in order to study queer subcultures, produces an interesting and complex dynamic, in that the research site is also the site the

21 T-bars are among the first spaces for female same-sex intimacy to emerge in post-war Taiwan. The bars are usually managed by T hosts and pó hostesses who cater to customers as they drink and sing karaoke together. See Chao (2000, 2001) for a more detailed description of these spaces and their social significance. While there are many T-bars still in existence, among some younger middle class lesbians they are now viewed as part of Taiwan’s queer history rather than an ongoing part of its sexual geography.
ethnographer depends on for personal and social support. The immersion experience is thus heightened by the fact that a personal or social encounter can very quickly feel like a research encounter, and there are few spaces where the mode of ethnographer is fully “off.” Similarly, a research encounter can bring up deeply personal feelings—a point I return to in a later discussion about how my own family story came up in the research field.

2.4.1 Volunteer Work

At the intersection of my participation in the community as an ethnographer, on the one hand, and a femme or pó lesbian, on the other, was my volunteer work, undertaken both as an investment in the community and as a way of learning more about it. Field observations were especially important for learning about the family lives of LGBT people in mid and later life, a population that is less visible due to higher rates of heterosexual marriage. As part of my efforts to engage with this population, I served as a volunteer member of the LGBT Elders Working Group (Lǎonián Tónghì Xiǎozǔ, hereafter Working Group), a subcommittee of the Taiwan Tónghì Hotline Association (Tāiwān Tónghì Zhīxún Rèxiàn Xiéhuì, hereafter Hotline), the oldest and largest LGBT rights organization in Taiwan. The Working Group addresses such issues as end-of-life planning and care; visitation of LGBT elders who are hospitalized or homebound; hosting workshops on topics of relevance to mid and later life lesbians and gays; social activities that bring younger and older LGBTs together to promote mutual understanding across generational cohorts; and the collection and preservation of LGBT oral histories. The group has published a book of gay men’s oral histories (Taiwan Tónghì Hotline Association, 2010) and members are currently working on a similar book of lesbian oral histories. Transcripts of these oral history interviews were distributed and discussed at length during our bimonthly committee meetings, which generally ran from 7 to 11pm, and sometimes ran as late as midnight due to the quantity of material to be covered.
Twice a year, the Working Group organizes a daylong sightseeing trip for LGBT seniors, usually to a series of scenic and/or historic places, culminating in several hours of games and activities that are designed to encourage cross-generational exchanges. This trip, dubbed the Rainbow Bus (Cǎihóng Shùnián Bāshì), consistently draws one full tour bus of gay men and a second tour bus that is made up of gay men and lesbians. I took part in three consecutive Rainbow Bus trips during the field period, and by the third trip the older men had begun to recognize me and approach me in a warm and friendly way. I felt disappointed to leave at the very moment these relationships had been formed, taking no less than the full 16 months of my residence in Taiwan. I do believe this was the minimum amount of time needed to build these relationships, and future research with lesbian and gay elders in Taiwan will require a similar sustained investment.

2.5 Moving from Data Collection to Analysis

Toward the end of the field period, I presented about my research at three community forums attended by several of my own informants as well as social workers, teachers, parents of lesbian and gay children, and others with a personal or professional investment in Taiwan’s LGBT communities. These forums provided an important bridge for moving from data to analysis, as I continued to learn more from my informants at the same time that I shared my preliminary findings with them. In one example of this, I had just presented my argument that mid and later life LGBTs are neither “out” nor “closeted,” and I mentioned that such individuals are unlikely to be asked invasive questions about their sexuality by their family members, which necessitate them protecting secrets in the same manner as their younger counterparts (a more developed version of this argument appears in chapter six, Coming Out). A lesbian activist in her twenties called out from the back of the room, “But what if they ask?”—referring here to family members asking directly about one’s sexual
orientation. “They won’t ask,” I said in unison with a silver-haired gay man in the front row. She pressed: “But what if they do ask?” To which he responded: “They won’t ask” in a tone suggesting that this should settle the matter. As the two of them continued to volley this question back and forth, both growing more and more perplexed, I saw the very same “generation gap” I was describing in my talk materialize before my eyes. This conversation became a part of my fieldnotes, and thus the talk served not only as a site to share my analysis, but also as a site of further data collection, and deeper thinking on my part as long time activists and other LGBT community members interacted with my ideas. I found this extremely useful and recommend this method to other ethnographers who are in the process of moving from data collection to analysis.

In January 2013, I packed up my belongings in the Taipei apartment I was then sharing with two Ts and a pó lesbian, and returned to Chicago to continue analyzing the data and complete the dissertation from afar. Not unexpectedly, this was a disorienting process, as I gradually figured out how to sync my inner world with my now very different environment, and how to begin conveying my ideas effectively to US audiences. I began this process by fully transcribing and translating the 80 quite lengthy family history interviews. This was not a mere clerical task, but a significant part of the intellectual work of this dissertation, as translation is always political and a site where cultural misreadings are likely to occur (see the edited volume by Liamputtong, 2008, and Temple and Young, 2004 for a thoughtful discussion of translation issues in qualitative research). In addition to working with an interpreter in the field, and a trilingual transcriptionist for those interviews where an interpreter was not present, and drawing on my own Chinese as a second language, I also triple-checked my interpretation of any extended quotes used in the dissertation with a native speaker. Thus each of these quotes has been through a minimum of three interpretive lenses—my own, my interpreter’s or transcriptionist’s, and a third party native speaker who
checked our agreed-upon translation against the original. In the case of fieldnotes, any quotes written down verbatim were recorded in both Chinese (usually using pinyin romanization as shorthand) and English, which I also checked with a native speaker before inserting the quotes into the dissertation manuscript. I involved multiple perspectives as described in an effort to diminish the loss of meaning through translation. However, it is inevitable that translation from Chinese into English will change the meaning of the story (Smith, Chen, and Liu, 2008). Thus the process is not so much one of looking for the “right” translation, as for the translation that conveys the idea most accurately, while also acknowledging the inherent limitations of the translation process. (I provide the details above in the spirit of transparency about language called for strongly by Hennick, 2008 and others who critique the lack of attention that has been paid to issues of translation in qualitative research. See also the subsection on Interpreter Standpoints.)

Beginning in the field, and continuing in a more focused way after completing all transcriptions, I integrated the interview transcripts with my fieldnotes to form one large dataset. I read the entire dataset line by line to identify themes, patterns, and inconsistencies, which formed the basis of analytic memos. Following the process described by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), I identified core themes in the data, situated these in relation to or against existing theories and my own developing arguments, and then performed more focused coding for examples, counter-examples, and subthemes, juxtaposing these with informants’ demographic characteristics such as generational cohort, gender, and family structure. As an additional strategy, I created a separate folder for each person interviewed, where I placed a copy of the interview transcript, my notes about the interview, and every mention of the person that appeared in my fieldnotes. I then linked the folder to all interview transcripts and fieldnotes pertaining to the person’s family members. In this way, I was able
to read across individual lives and family units, and also code for patterns and inconsistencies within and among these smaller groupings.

Finally, many of my informants remained in touch, and I continued to learn about their family lives albeit in a more distant way—no longer taking fieldnotes, but having this awareness in my mind as I wrote up their stories, knowing that a major relationship had since broken up, or an important conversation with a family member had taken place some months after our last meeting together in Taiwan. In this way the process of “leaving the field” became, simultaneously, a process of “digitizing the field” as my connection to the field site moved online. Important political events unfolding in Taiwan as I write this dissertation have also changed the way I think about my data—for example, by compelling me to reassess the importance of the democratic political structure for LGBT families of origin. This is an area I had chosen not to emphasize in my analysis, but the controversy surrounding the Cross Strait Service Trade Agreement, and the urgent questions it raises about democracy, sovereignty, and Taiwan’s contested national identity, have caused me to think harder about what might change for the families in my study if Taiwan were to be absorbed into China’s economic and political structures (and, by extension, to identify more precise impacts of the political status quo). The point here is that even as data collection has officially ended, new information about the field site, the population I studied, and individual informants has continued to exert an influence on my thinking and writing. Thus, while I have described the interviews as the heart and the ethnography as the spirit of the project, the analytic framework comprises a body that remains in motion, growing and changing as new dimensions of the data are revealed.

2.6 **My Personal Biography**
Feminist scholars have shown the importance of acknowledging personal biography and standpoint\(^{22}\) in relation to many dimensions of the research process, from the questions we ask, to our manner of answering those questions, to our analytic toolkits and scholarly imaginations (Harding, 1991, 2004; Sprague, 2005; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002). In this section, I examine multiple intersecting components of my biography as these relate to my specific topic, method, and choices in the research field: my race, nationality, and language; my femme sexuality; and my family story. I then extend feminist standpoint theory to discuss how the social locations of my interpreters also shaped the research process.

2.6.1 **Race, Nationality, and Language**

In an immediate way, my US citizenship made it possible for me to spend 16 consecutive months in Taiwan on a tourist visa (the Taiwan government does not grant research visas), only having to leave the country and return twice (the first time, I flew to my parents’ home in Beijing; the second time I simply went to Hong Kong for the day) without raising questions about what I was doing or possibly compromising my return to my degree-granting institution in the US. Power dynamics embedded in visa policies are often invisible (Banerjee, forthcoming), and yet these meaningfully impact who is able to do transnational research. Writing about this topic in English also made it possible for me to apply to funding sources that require English-language applications, and sometimes also require US citizenship. Funding and publishing hierarchies continue to consolidate resources and rewards in ways that perpetuate the dominance of English-language scholarship and fundamentally shape how knowledge is constructed and disseminated globally (Connell, 2007). These larger systemic issues foreground the more individual and interactional-level factors that I discuss below.

\(^{22}\) Standpoint theory emphasizes that all knowledge is historically and socially situated, and that systems of stratification shape the parameters of knowledge (Harding, 1993).
Because of the growing up years I spent in Mainland China, I already had an ascribed identity as a wàiguórén, or “outside country person”—the word for foreigner in Mandarin Chinese, with strong connotations of difference and otherness—and some sense of how this identity might function in the field. On a very basic and practical level, I knew that as a white American, I would be extremely noticeable everywhere that I went, and that I would have to be cognizant of where my presence was and wasn’t appropriate or easily explained. For example, I opted not to attend certain small gatherings for new parents[23] in more remote areas—gatherings that would have provided excellent data for my research—because I knew that the presence of a white American researcher would be very distracting and disruptive to the comfortable and reassuring environment that the hosts were working hard to create.

On a more epistemological level, I knew that many of my impressions and understandings of the world around me would be off-base at first, and that I would need to be constantly open to being wrong and feeling dumb. Entering the field, and a world where I only spoke in my second language, was like stepping back from being a PhD candidate to being a grade school student who had to express things in a much simpler way. In retrospect, this humbling experience was a very crucial component of becoming an ethnographer. It also forced me to constantly conceptualize my project in more accessible terms, since in Chinese, I did not have any fancy disciplinary jargon with which to dress it up.

At the same time, learning new terms was simultaneously a process of learning about how gender, sexuality, and family are conceptualized in Taiwan, in ways that differ from both of my previous reference points, the United States and Mainland China. Although I prepared my interview protocol in Chinese, I had to constantly tweak it as I came to realize that I was asking the wrong questions. In a simple example of this, I started out asking my

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23 By “new parents,” I mean parents of LGBT children who are making their first ever contact with a larger LGBT network.
interviewees whether they had any religious beliefs (nǐ yǒu mèiyǒu zōngjiào xīnyǎng?)—to which nearly everyone, except a small number of Christians, said no. After living in Taiwan for a few months, I realized that I needed to be asking an entirely different sequence of questions: Do you pray\(^{24}\) (nǐ huì bù huì bàibài)? Do you pray to your ancestors (bài zǔxiān)? How often do you go to the temple (qù miào li bàibài)? For what reasons do you usually go? And so forth. Once I began asking these more specific questions, the information I was getting changed from a simple “no” to a richly detailed account of how people cared for their ancestors and consulted deities about various matters (including matters directly connected to gender and sexuality), which I had conceptualized as “religion” but which my informants experienced as part of the fabric of everyday family life. My lack of background knowledge and my tendency to ask the “wrong” question was, on the one hand, a limitation, especially because some of these discoveries took time, and I missed valuable information along the way. Yet this limitation was also an asset, because learning about my mistakes illuminated new knowledge systems that became integral to my analysis of the data, and revealed some of the areas where US-based models and theories fall short.

Prior to doing this research, I anticipated that some people would be less likely to participate because the dissertation and, eventually, the book would be written up in English, and therefore have less immediate use value to LGBT communities and families in Taiwan. It is certainly possible that some people opted out for this or related reasons. At the same time, several informants told me that they felt safer participating precisely because I planned to write the dissertation in English—as a result, the chances of having their confidentiality violated were very low; e.g., there was no risk of their relatives ever coming across this work. Parents in particular felt that I had a distance from their lives that made my opinions about

\(^{24}\) The term bàibài has been alternately translated as pray, worship, or supplicate a deity with incense.
them irrelevant, and, as a result of this, they felt less inhibited in telling me about some of their stronger feelings.

At the same time that my outsider-ness gave me distance from my informant’s lives, it also positioned me as a guest in Taiwan, in ways that centrally shaped the data gathering process. As I noted earlier in this chapter, my informants recognized that I had no family or other personal contacts in the country, and so they invited me to join them for all kinds of special occasions, such as Chinese New Year, Tomb Sweeping Day, Mother’s Day, birthday celebrations, and outings to scenic areas in Taiwan. They also recognized that my prior experience of Taiwanese family life was limited, and that if I was going to understand properly, I had better get some basic day-to-day experiences. For example, I often had people say to me: “You should come with us [to do this or that] in order to see what it is like in a Taiwanese family.” Thus my lack of previous knowledge served, again, as a limitation and an asset of this research—a limitation in that I may have neglected to notice or ask about particular aspects of family life, or pick up on certain subtleties due to missed social cues; and an asset in that my informants, knowing this, took it upon themselves to educate me about the aspects of their lives that they felt were important to document.

As I observed earlier, these individual and interactional level issues are embedded in academic institutions that systematically privilege certain theories, methods, and interpretations of data. Put simply, while my misunderstandings may feel like individual level mistakes or embarrassments, and while they also constitute important ethnographic learning opportunities, they become much more problematic if they are used to reinforce the prevailing Eurocentric model of LGBT family relations. To achieve the robust objectivity described by Harding (1991, 2004) and other standpoint theorists, it is critical that I not only continuously question this model and its assumptions about gender, sexuality, and family, but
also triangulate my analysis of the data with the knowledge claims of scholars, activists, communities, and families in Taiwan, including—and perhaps especially—the knowledge claims of “organic intellectuals” whose ideas are not yet well integrated with social science theory and research. The presentation of my preliminary analysis in public and community forums in Taiwan represents one such form of triangulation, and it is important that these channels of communication remain open as the analysis matures and the dissertation evolves into a book manuscript.

2.6.2 **Femme Sexuality**

In addition to my race, nationality, and language—and intersecting with these in ways I will detail—my sexuality influenced the direction of this research and the relationships I built with my informants. When I introduced myself to LGBT organizers throughout Taiwan, our first meetings almost invariably included extended discussions about my relationship status, relationship history, and sexual preferences, which served as a crucial basis of building rapport and also trust in my intentions and reasons for doing this research. My femme or pó identity came into play very meaningfully on numerous occasions. As a femme whose sexual orientation is toward transmasculine, butch, and T partners, I was immediately and personally positioned in relation to a larger debate that has waged in both Taiwan and the US, as in many other places, about the politics and meanings of gender differentiation in same-sex relationships. As articulated through these debates, some people continue to view gender differentiation between same-sex partners as less feminist, less queer, less enlightened, and less modern than other forms of same-sex intimacy (see Chao, 2000 for

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25 Gramsci introduced the term “organic intellectual” in his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935) to describe individuals whose intellectual labor serves the interests of a subjugated class and counters hegemonic knowledge claims. Here, I use it in reference to intellectuals who are not situated within the dominant discourses of the academy, but rather producing knowledge about queer populations in Taiwan through direct service to those populations.
accounts of such views among queer academics in Taiwan). Of course, such views are not limited to the Taiwan context. In fact, I have been challenged personally by US colleagues in sociology, who questioned my ability to think critically about gender as someone who is in a butch femme relationship (these colleagues believed that butch femme relationships are based on a binary and therefore are not as critical/radical as genderqueer or same-gender relationships).

As a result of my personal location in this community, I naturally paid very close attention to $T$ and $pó$ family dynamics in my research. This is not to say that I limited my female sample to members of the $T$-$pó$ community. I also interviewed $bù fèn$ (neither $T$ nor $pó$) lesbians and bisexual women, and in my fieldwork I found that women who did not identify as $T$ or $pó$ often sought me out to discuss whether $T$-$pó$ exists in the US. In almost every case the person asking this question believed that it did not (here, again, $bù fèn$ lesbianism is associated with a more cosmopolitan and $T$-$pó$ with a more “local” sexuality), and as a result expected me, as an American, to share an identity outside $T$-$pó$ gender designations. If I had not been femme myself, I could easily have focused on these stories and missed some of the important nuances in $T$ and $pó$ family dynamics. Because my race and nationality already associated me with $bù fèn$ lesbianism in the Taiwan context, claiming a $pó$ identity (and having a $T$ partner) helped to counteract the underrepresentation of $T$ and $pó$ standpoints that might otherwise have naturally occurred in my project.

Compassionate and careful research on butch, femme, $T$ and $pó$ communities is still done primarily by members of these communities. This is not to say that non butch, femme, $T$ or $pó$ researchers cannot do this research well (and certainly some have)—rather that without the personal connection, a great deal of this research has taken on a negative tone based on a lack of understanding of gendered interactions (often characterized as “roleplay”) and
assumptions about how these interactions translate into social and sexual selves, and a reduction of female masculinity to more superficial symbols such as clothing and haircuts. In this climate, I believe my sexual orientation toward butches/Ts is as significant in shaping my standpoint relative to this research as is my orientation toward partners of my same sex.

2.6.3 **My Family Story**

Because of the family focus of my research, it is not only my gender and sexuality, but also my experiences of integrating these with my family relationships, which form the basis of my connection to this topic and to my informants. Toward the end of the field period, I often joked that I had done 80 interviews and been interviewed 80 times. In fact, I had been interviewed far more than 80 times, by LGBT people, parents, siblings, and others who were naturally curious about my own family background. As naïve as it appears to me in retrospect, I had not really prepared myself for the personal and emotional impact of telling this story repeatedly. My “coming out” in my early twenties, combined with my parents’ strong Christian beliefs, caused very deep pain, conflict, and grief that reverberated through my entire extended family. The intense closeness of my relationships with my parents and siblings (perhaps heightened by frequent transnational movement, in which the meaning of “home” became disassociated from any particular country or place of belonging, and instead was entirely attached to the family unit) made the sense of loss especially unbearable. My parents sought out groups such as Exodus International, the Christian “ex-gay” ministry, and met some mothers and fathers who had not seen their gay children in 20 years. Meanwhile, in the US where I had recently moved for college, I encountered a message from the other side of the same coin, that I should give up closeness with my family in order to live openly and freely as a gay woman. Neither I nor my parents could imagine such a future.
Through sheer tenacity and love of the rawest kind, my mother and I made it through years of heartache to build a relationship that today is based on mutual trust, patience, and giving each other the space to be ourselves—what some people might call “compromises,” but what I prefer to think of as building bridges toward each other. My father and I have also built bridges toward each other, but in a quieter way—in the style of many fathers in this research, he has managed most of his thoughts and feelings about this internally. To say that this process has been difficult for all of us (including my siblings, who took care of my parents during the most difficult period) is a huge understatement. Thus, telling the story over and over proved to be emotionally exhausting for me. I experienced a similar vulnerability to the kind I was asking of my informants, in laying bear some of the most painful parts of my life and allowing people to probe for more information.

The act of sharing painful and tender feelings created a new space between me and my LGBT informants—one where my life became the subject of my questions and open to analysis. In parents’ meetings, it positioned me as a daughter in need of advice, and I felt that some parents adopted me as they wished a parent might do for their own lesbian or gay child who was studying abroad. My story also helped to dispel widely held myths and stereotypes of American families as monolithically more “open” (kāifăng) than Taiwanese families. I was able to open a window into the “other” America—the challenges that occur in many LGBT families of origin beyond the scenes of the sitcom Modern Family or pop songs about same love.

As I worked to understand parents in general, I also began to change the strategies I had been using to understand my parents in particular. I began to listen more carefully and openly to my parents, and got rid of many of my assumptions about why they felt and acted as they did (for example, that their disappointment was mainly about loss of face in their
community—even as I critiqued this kind of reductionism in the literature, I had made this assumption about my own family members!). Just as being a lesbian daughter influenced my experience of this ethnography, so being an ethnographer began to influence my actions and experiences as a daughter. In retrospect I do believe undertaking this study was good for my own family relationships, although I did not imagine in the beginning that these things had anything to do with each other. As Reinharz (2010) and others have aptly noted, research is a multidirectional process...we mold our research, and it also molds our lives, often in ways we have not anticipated.

2.6.4 **Interpreter Standpoints**

While reflexivity has arguably become the standard in qualitative research, many of its core principles have been extended to principal investigators only, excluding other members of the research team. Despite the deep significance of language noted in this dissertation and elsewhere, translators and interpreters continue to be framed primarily as “technicians” rather than active shapers of knowledge (Squires, 2009; Temple, 1997; Temple and Young, 2004). I conclude this chapter by extending feminist standpoint theory to my interpreters, acknowledging them as meaningful contributors to the dissertation, and reflecting on how their sexual and gender locations and life histories influenced the research process. (This is, of course, a very partial analysis of interpreter standpoint, merely opening a small window into a topic that may one day form the basis of a longer article.)

Over the course of the field period, I worked with three Taiwanese research assistants, including two Ts and one straight woman interpreter. My T partner expressed concern about the latter because together we would “just look like a couple of straight women” and this might deter people from being in the study or inhibit them during the interview. I rejoined that people wouldn’t necessarily know—maybe they would think Cindy, my straight woman
interpreter, was a pó!—but as it turned out, LGBT people picked up on Cindy’s sexuality immediately. However, those who brought it up were already well acquainted with me from other social contexts and aware of my femme sexuality, so I was able to vouch for Cindy based on the trust already established between us. Heterosexual siblings and parents were less tuned in to these distinctions, but also less likely to be bothered and maybe even put at ease by the prospect of another straight person being present. Of course, sexuality was not always the most salient point of similarity and difference in our interactions. For example, after one interview with a gay man in his late twenties, this man sat back in his chair, looked at me and Cindy, and said, “well! I think that’s the longest time I have ever spent talking to girls. [Pause] You two are both very pretty” (adding this second part in a tone as if to evaluate the rare experience he had just had). Here, it was not the queer sexuality he shared with me, or the Taiwanese nationality he shared with Cindy, but rather our feminine gender that most centrally shaped the experience for him. In this way, different aspects of our biographies—my interpreters’ as well as my own—became more or less visible in different interview contexts.

In working with T research assistants, I found that my assistants’ identities were sometimes activated in other ways, for example, prompting them to ask their own questions or make comments that often deepened the scope of the interview. In one example, a pó interviewee in her fifties got into a long conversation with my T interpreter about how school rules and regulations about sexuality had changed and stayed the same between their generational cohorts. Through their back and forth I gained quite a bit of knowledge that I would not have ascertained on my own. On other occasions, my interpreter and I debriefed after the interviews by chatting about what stood out to us, our (sometimes conflicting) interpretations of certain comments, and similar or dissimilar cases we had observed. This
made the experience of interviewing a far less isolating one, and sometimes pushed my interpretations of the data by providing me with another point of view.

Beyond these interpersonal dynamics, I found gender and sexuality to be salient in the very processes of interpretation and translation. For example, a heterosexual research assistant, with limited prior knowledge of LGBT issues, helped me to transcribe some of the interviews where no interpreter had been present. This person’s social location influenced how she translated words related to gender, sexuality, and LGBT politics. Because I speak Chinese and am familiar with these words, I asked my RA to include the Chinese characters for these terms along with her translations. However, if I had relied wholly on the RA at this point, the narrative would have been shaped by her familiarity with some terms and not others (such as [chest] binder, top surgery, 1-0/top-bottom, or diverse sexual identities that she translated simply as “homosexual”). This is an important reminder that skilled translating is about more than native fluency—it may also require knowledge about subcultural practices and terminologies, which translators and interpreters may or may not have access to on the basis of other aspects of their biography.

I have shared a small set of illustrations, not to provide a comprehensive analysis of how my interpreters’ standpoints shaped my research, but rather to draw attention to the significance of their presence in the study and to the complex dynamics of the interpretation and translation process. Similarly, I have emphasized several aspects of my own standpoint, not to suggest that other aspects—such as my age or social class—are unimportant, but rather to show through example how standpoint has been integral to the research process, creating specific opportunities and limitations in data collection and analysis. Ethnography is an incredibly intimate mode of inquiry, in which the ethnographer herself—and in this case, the ethnographer and her interpreters—are the key tools of fieldwork (Van Maanen, Matting, and
Miller, 1989; Reinharz, 2010). Thus the reflexivity I have introduced into this dissertation is not merely an intellectual exercise, but instead represents a crucial component of the project and a foundation for the theory and analytic chapters to follow.
3. SOCIAL AND SEXUAL CONTEXTS

3.1 Position within LGBT Family Studies

Reviewing the state of family studies at the turn of the twenty-first century, Katherine Allen and David Demo identified the family lives of lesbians and gay men as a “new frontier” in family research (Allen and Demo, 1995). In the two decades that have followed, scholars across disciplines have made important strides toward mapping the terrain of this new frontier, and toward countering the controlling images of lesbian, gay, and queer sexualities as incompatible with family life and family values. Incorporation of LGBT people and their families into the mainstream of family studies is evident in flourishing research on queer intimacies and partner relationships (e.g., Acosta, 2013; Badgett, 2009; Moore, 2008; Moss, 2012; Pfeffer, 2010, forthcoming; Steinbugler, 2012; Ward, 2010), LGBT parenthood (e.g., Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg and Allen, 2013; Hicks, 2011; Lewin, 2009; Mallon, 2004; Mezey, 2008; Moore, 2011; Stacey and Biblarz, 2010; Sullivan, 2004), and a smaller but growing body of research on LGBT families of origin (e.g., Acosta, 2011; Bertone and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2014; Green, 2000; Martin and colleagues, 2009; Ocobock, 2013; Oswald, 2002) (see also Moore and Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013; Biblarz and Savci, 2010; and Patterson, 2000 for detailed reviews of work in these areas). This research appears in flagship family studies and sociology journals, and is increasingly covered by media and incorporated into public policy debates.

However, this rapid growth has been unevenly dispersed, with some topics, such as same-sex marriage and parenthood, receiving the lion’s share of scholarly attention. In their introduction to a special issue of The Journal of GLBT Family Studies focused on family of origin relationships, Chiara Bertone and Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli note “the gaps between the richness of research on GLBT lives, including experiences of intimacy and parenthood, and
the paucity of research on their relations with their families of origin. Still marginal is, in particular, research on the perspectives of the families of origin themselves: parents, but also siblings, grandparents, and other members of extended families” (2014, p.1). The bulk of the research on LGBT families of origin has focused on individual pathways to acceptance of a family member’s lesbian or gay sexuality, with minimal attention to axes of inequality and power, and how these shape the forms and meanings of family interactions and relationships. In addition, families of origin have been a hard to reach population, and many researchers have relied on convenience samples drawn from PFLAG (Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and comparable groups (Bertone and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2014, p.10). This approach obscures the diversity among family members, over-representing liberal and more politically active parents with racial and class privileges in their respective societies.

As with many areas of LGBT family studies, research on LGBT families of origin is limited almost entirely to families in North America and Western Europe. Researchers who do venture outside this region often rely on theories developed in the West to analyze LGBT family issues elsewhere, and as a result, the story told becomes one of cultural differences, focused narrowly on how informants’ lives are similar to or different from those of Western families. Scholarship that addresses LGBT family issues from Asian standpoints is usually categorized as area studies and is not well integrated with the LGBT family literature. For example, monographs by Wah-Shan Chou (2000), Elisabeth Engrebetsten (2013), Lucetta Yip Lo Kam (2013), and Susan Chalmers (2002) deal extensively with tóngzhì and lālā/lesbian26 family issues—including family of origin relationships—in Mainland China and Japan, but these are marketed by the publishers as lesbian/gay/queer studies, cultural

26 As noted in the Introduction, tóngzhì, meaning “comrade,” is an umbrella term for sexually and gender nonconforming people in Chinese-speaking societies. Hong Kongese cultural critic Chen Yihua appropriated the phrase from the last words of Sun Yat-Sen: “The revolution has not yet succeeded; you comrades shall keep struggling.” Lālā is a self-referential term used by same-sex desiring women in Mainland China.
studies, and Asian studies, with no mention of their relevance to research on families. Such work is rarely if ever cited or included in review articles on LGBT family issues, or in larger conversations about how contemporary families are changing. At the same time, literature on family life and family change in East Asia generally and Taiwan specifically lacks a critical investigation of sexuality as either a subject position or an analytic category. The result is a considerable lack of communication between East Asian family scholars, LGBT family scholars, and East Asian lesbian/gay/queer studies. Social scientists miss important opportunities to expand family scholarship when LGBT family research is persistently classified under the rubrics of sexuality and gender, without a simultaneous consideration of its implications of and for family theory. Meanwhile the conflation of heterosexuality with family remains largely unchallenged in research on family issues in Taiwan, East Asia, and globally.

Each of these limitations is addressed explicitly in this dissertation. In one of the most comprehensive studies to date of LGBT family of origin relationships, I bring together diverse voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, parents and siblings of LGBTs, and ethnographic observations of extended kin. The families who participated in this research vary by social class, region of the country, ethno-cultural heritage, and

27 For representative cites, see Chu and Yu (2010), Poston, Yang, and Farris (2014), and Thornton and Lin (1994)—each of these book-length works provides a richly detailed analysis of family change in Taiwan, but only the edited volume by Poston, Yang, and Farris mentions any divergence from heterosexuality, and then only in two paragraphs which contrast generalizations about tolerance of homosexuality in the Song dynasty with “denial and ambiguity” in contemporary China (p. 112).

28 The sample includes “province outsiders” (wàishěngrén) who migrated to Taiwan from Mainland China in the mid-twentieth century and currently make up about 15% of Taiwan’s population, and “province insiders” (běnshěngrén) who have family roots in Taiwan and currently make up about 84% of the population. Both groups are of Han Chinese descent (although běnshěngrén in my research were slightly more likely to have mixed Han and aboriginal or Japanese heritage) but function as distinctive ethnic groups. E.g., informants from wàishěngrén-běnshěngrén marriages described themselves as coming from interethnic families.
involvement in the LGBT movement, including some who are very involved and others who are not involved and have little or no contact with other LGBT people. I made it a priority to include normatively gendered, heterosexual family members who range widely in their beliefs about and responses to non-normative genders and sexualities. Some parents in this study showed concrete and whole-hearted support, while others remained ambivalent, angry, or even heartbroken about having a lesbian, gay, or transgender child. I did not leave out more liberal and politically active parents, but I also did not limit the sample to these more accessible voices.  

I situate my analysis of LGBT families of origin in the larger context of social and family change in Taiwan, paying close attention to how both LGBT and normatively gendered, heterosexual family members are positioned in relation to systems of power and inequality. Through this approach, I show how changes and continuities in family-based stratification systems differently impact each member of the family. In this way the work directly addresses the under-theorization of families of origin brought up by Bertone and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2014).

However, contributions of the research are not limited to the area of LGBT family studies. As Tamara Hareven (2000) and Bahira Sherif Trask (2010) persuasively argue, family interpretation, adaptation, and, sometimes, rejection of societal change is one of the most promising areas of research for family historians and social scientists. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender kinship is profoundly shaped by changing family policies, practices, and ideologies locally and globally. Of course, this relationship is not unidirectional. LGBT people and their kin are also actively shaping these policy initiatives and transforming the family as an institution at every level of society. Bridging

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29 I discuss the process of finding unsupportive parents in chapter five, Parenting.
lesbian/gay/queer studies with the literature on family change promises to illuminate the
dialectical relationships among social movements for sexual autonomy and equality,
transformation of the family as an institution, and other changes that are occurring within and
across societies, throwing light on a sector of Allen and Demo’s “new frontier” in family
research that remains largely uncharted.

3.2 Entering the Debates

In this chapter, I contextualize my analysis of LGBT families of origin both in terms
of Taiwan’s recent history and in terms of the major scholarly debates I respond to with this
work. These include debates about modernity, culture, and sexuality, which explore how
processes of “modernization,” “globalization,” and other local and global forces intersect
with family changes, and how these changes are linked to emerging LGBT identities,
communities, and politics. I begin by tracing the central threads of these debates from classic
modernization theory and its critics, to more recent theories of hybridization and compressed
modernity (Chang, 1999) that provide a foundation for my own thinking about LGBT
families of origin in Taiwan. Next, I describe key aspects of family change in Taiwan, and
how these changes matter for LGBT people and their families. In making these connections, I
emphasize the complexity of seeing culture without reproducing a culturally essentialist
narrative of Taiwanese families and sexualities. I conclude this chapter by connecting the
dots of these various arguments to reiterate my strategy for analyzing LGBT families of
origin in Taiwan, and for advancing the epistemological shifts described in the Introduction:
in sum, a shift toward the integration of LGBT family research with a larger body of family
theory; a sharper focus on the structural and material aspects of LGBT family practices,
including family-based sex and gender oppression which continues to shape family of origin
relationships; and a more contextual analysis of normatively gendered, heterosexual family members in relation to each of these aspects of family life and family change.

3.3 **Modern Families?: Theorizing Family Change in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries**

3.3.1 **Early Theories and Critiques**

William Goode’s (1963) influential monograph, *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, brought questions about modernity and family change to the foreground of family scholarship. Goode held that all world cultures are moving toward industrialization and toward some variant of the conjugal family system, although at varying speeds and from different points. He identified pressures exerted by industrializing and urbanizing forces on the traditional family system, among them geographic and class-differential mobility, access to resources outside the kin network, the valuation of achievement over birth, and an ideology of economic progress and technological development. Goode countered prevailing theorization of the conjugal family as a function of these forces, noting that although they appeared to be correlated, the causal direction was unclear; in certain instances, family change may have predated or even activated industrialization and urbanization. Nor did he view these processes as necessarily linear or transmitted from the West to other societies; to the contrary: “we cannot assume a priori that it was the Western world that created [changes that occurred under Western colonial powers]” (1963, p.368). Despite these caveats, Goode is often read as making precisely these claims (see, for example, Fathi, 1985; Leeder, 2004). One reason for this may be the perception that non-Western family systems “became more like the family forms in the West” or “consciously modeled the West” as part of the global convergence toward the conjugal family system that Goode describes (Thornton, 2004, p.159). This line of theory asks whether there is a “modern” family system with an
empirically observable set of characteristics, and whether this system must always be a
derivative of a Western family model and a product of Western expansionism and (cultural)
imperialism.

In an early critique of the modernization thesis, Hanna Papanek (1978) argued that
modernization is experienced differently by women and men, and characteristics of the
“modern woman” may differ significantly from characteristics of the “modern man”
thorized by Inkeles (1969) and others. Although Papanek anticipated later feminist
criticisms by destabilizing the notion of a universal modernity, her exclusive focus on
variability by gender left the core premise of the modernization thesis intact. Taking
Papanek’s view, we would expect family change to occur concurrently with economic
development or “modernization,” with different consequences for women and men within
families. Later critiques leveled more serious blows to modernization as an analytic concept,
questioning the universality not only of its outcomes, but also of the forms it takes, and how
those forms are adapted and resisted by people living under different structural conditions.
One of the earliest empirical examples of this critique is Judith Stacey’s (1979, 1983)
analysis of the peasant family system and socialist revolution in China. Stacey argues that the
revolution did not unfold in the linear fashion predicted by classic modernization theory, with
a “modern” conjugal family emerging from the ashes of the traditional, patriarchal family
system. Rather, China’s socialist revolution paradoxically improved the status of women in
some arenas while also reinscribing patriarchal family norms to mobilize its male peasant
base. By assigning Chinese peasant families to a purely reactive historical role, the
modernization framework obscures the dynamic relationship between peasant family
structure and consciousness, and the causes, processes, and outcomes of the Chinese
revolution.
Building on these earlier critiques, Rukmalie Jayakody, William Axinn, and Arland Thornton (2008) break down the generalizing concepts of modernization, globalization, and Westernization into more precise ideational and structural mechanisms of family change, showing these to be much more fluid and context-dependent than previously imagined. They argue that theories of modernization, globalization, and Westernization often mask regional differences, significant continuities in family life, and local resistance to globalizing forces. Bahira Sherif Trask (2010) challenges the related assumption that globalization necessarily entails homogenization of cultures at the expense of traditional ways of life. In developing this argument, Trask builds on the work of Rosenau (1997, 2003) and others who theorize global influences as conduits not only of systemic change, but also of local resiliency and creativity, as transnational products and ideas are reconfigured in local markets. That globalizing forces are usually viewed as unidirectional, transmitting Western ideals and practices to non-Western cultures and societies, problematically defines modernity on Western terms (for a more developed critique of this trend in social science research, see Thornton, 2004). Rosenau and Trask invite us to rethink what is “Western” and “modern”—a fundamentally different project from one that seeks to identify the mechanisms and outcomes of modernization.

3.3.2 Perspectives from East Asia

Scholars working within the area of East Asian studies have made vital contributions to these debates about modernity, globalization, and Westernization. Here, as well, some theorists are working to improve existing models, while others find them to be fundamentally flawed. In an example of the former approach, Martin Whyte (2005) tests Goode’s modernization thesis by comparing family change in the People’s Republic of China to family change in its wealthier and more “Westernized” neighbor, Taiwan, using intergenerational co-residence, patrilineal inheritance and kin care, and attitudes about
filiality as key indicators. Contrary to Goode’s predictions, Whyte finds more “modern” (and presumably Western) family characteristics in the PRC than in Taiwan. He concludes that economic development and cultural diffusion do indeed shape the contours of the modern family, but so too does State social engineering, like that enacted by PRC authorities in the 1950’s to accelerate China’s transition to a non-familial mode of social organization. Whyte’s analysis is a recuperation rather than a disavowal of classic modernization theory, refining theories of modernization and Westernization without interrogating the validity of “modern” and “Western” as categories of analysis.

Other family scholars have adopted a more critical stance. Amy Shee (2007) is skeptical of theories that attribute changes in Taiwanese culture and society to pressures exerted by the West. “In fact,” Shee writes, “over the decades of mixture and syndication, we may now hardly distinguish what is Taiwanese, Japanese, Chinese, American or whatever. Taiwan MacDonald’s is selling rice products while Chinese foods are take-away sweet-and-sours in the west” (2007, p.49). Shee does not perceive the cultural hybridity of Taiwanese fast food—or, more central to her thesis, of Taiwanese family law—as a casualty of the engine of Westernization. Instead, she views hybrid legal practices as a distinctively Taiwanese reinterpretation and application of laws that are shaped by global discourses, but always filtered through more localized lenses of culture and history.

Jiaming Sun’s (2005) research on affluent Shanghai residents offers an empirical example of the hybridity Shee and other theorists have described. Respondents in Sun’s study display a globalization of tastes and preferences in the material goods and services they consume, while their core value systems, especially with regard to family and interpersonal relationships, remain intact. These data support Trask’s (2010) argument that global influences are actively mediated through local contexts. By appropriating some global influences (in this case, goods and services) while rejecting others (family norms), Shanghai
residents in Sun’s study display an agentic subjectivity that defies their representation as objects or victims of globalization.

Chuen-juei Josephine Ho similarly emphasizes agency among Taiwanese teen girls who appropriate aspects of transnational (especially Japanese) sexual cultures. In rejoinder to the moral panic surrounding adolescent sexuality in Taiwan, Ho contends that these girls are not “blind followers of whatever the newest fads may be” (2003, p.325), but are instead fashioning sexual selves out of media images and commodities in innovative ways, without becoming victims or dupes of those images and commodities. Ho is critical of the language of objectification and exploitation, which reduces girls’ engagement with transnational entertainment and commodity cultures to a kind of false consciousness. Girls are actively shaping as well as consuming culture, and in the process are forging new possibilities for social intercourse through their own reflexive self-projects (Giddens, 1991).

Although Ho’s analysis of teen sexual cultures is not situated within family studies, the implications for families and family research are unmistakable. The discourse of moral panic to which Ho is responding is largely directed toward parents, as well as toward the State as a kind of parent figure that should step in to discipline its unruly daughters. These ideas are elaborated in Ho’s more recent work on the emerging global hegemony of morality, and the role of the transnational “child protection imperative” in creating and disciplining marginal sexual subjects in Taiwan (Ho, 2008, 2010).

3.3.3 Compressed Modernity

The works I have just described by Shee (2007), Sun (2005), and Ho (2003) provide specific examples of how individuals, families, and laws respond to and refashion a

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30 That Ho is responding to Japanese cultural influences in Taiwan warrants emphasis, given the impulse within US sociology to frame globalization in East Asia primarily in terms of East-West relations. As Appadurai (1996) and others have argued, the global cultural economy is more complex than existing center-periphery models allow; in Taiwan, for example, Japanization may hold more immediate significance than Americanization.
fluctuating set of institutions, ideologies, images, commodities, and value systems, which represent unique ways of knowing and being but are all present simultaneously in a given society. Kyung-Sup Chang’s (1999, 2010) theory of “compressed modernity” offers a useful conceptual tool for delineating these complicated social relations. Chang defines compressed modernity as “a civilizational condition in which economic, political, social, and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner in respect to both time and space, and in which the dynamic coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements leads to the construction and reconstruction of a highly complex and fluid social system” (2010b, p. 446). The theory operationalizes compressed modernity along axes of time/space and condensation/compression, where condensation refers to the shortened distance between two points in time or two locations, and compression to the simultaneous existence of multiple forms of civilization, which have existed in different locales and eras, in one place and time.

Chang developed this theory first in relation to South Korea, which has undergone rapid capitalist industrialization, political democratization, explosive economic growth and restructuring in the second half of the twentieth century, and other profound changes on every level of society, as well as a strong family-centrism interpenetrating each of these aspects of social transformation. He later acknowledged the relevance of the theory for Asia as a region given its overwhelming reception among scholars in many Asian countries (2010, p. xi). The theory has been applied to an array of social processes in diverse locales, including Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam (e.g., Chang and Song, 2010; Endres et al., 2012; Martin and Lewis, 2012; Ochiai, 2011; Yeung, 2013; Yue, 2012).

Compressed modernity is in conversation with—but also departs significantly from—classic modernization theory, which presupposes that a core process of modernization is the declining social functions of the family. In contrast, in South Korea and in many other Asian
societies, family continues to dominate the economic, political, and social order (this is discussed extensively in the edited anthology by Chang, 2010). The theory also complicates conventional schematic classifications of traditional vs. modern vs. postmodern, and indigenous vs. foreign (colonial or neocolonial) vs. global (Chang, 2010, p. xi, p. 7) that assume sequential forms of development and bounded cultures. As Shee (2007) noted in her study of family law, described above, it becomes impossible to say what is traditional, what is indigenous, what is modern, and so on; under the conditions of compressed modernity, “dissimilar civilizations” are not cleanly delineated in chronology or geography, but instead co-exist and interact with each other in complicated ways.

Among the many existing theories of hybridity and glocalization, Chang’s model has several features that make it uniquely relevant to the present study. The theory focuses precisely on the economic, political, cultural, and social climates of contemporary East Asia, and it places family at the center of analysis. Chang identifies systemic family-centeredness alongside full-scale industrialization as a major feature and also a driving force of compressed modernity in South Korea. Thus, family studies are enriched by and also contribute meaningfully to theories of compressed modernity in South Korea and East Asia more generally. In addition, the theory provides a set of tools for analyzing divergent cultural and social formations among family members as well as in the wider culture, and for contextualizing the disenfranchisement of LGBT people in and through the central institution of the family (points I return to below). Chang’s description of the profound, socially cross-cutting diversity in societies experiencing compressed modernity—e.g., “depending on which generation, occupation or class individuals belong to, the diversity of their life experiences and views can range across histories and civilizations” (1999, p.33)—cannot be overstressed for Taiwanese LGBTs and their kin. My fieldwork unearthed what Chang might call “civilizational” differences both across LGBT cohorts and within family units.
3.4 **Taiwan Context**

3.4.1 **Family Life in Motion**

The civilizational differences mentioned above, and described throughout the dissertation, are a byproduct of the remarkable pace and scope of change in Taiwan, which has not ousted but rather coexists with many enduring social practices and cultural beliefs. During the second half of the twentieth century, Taiwan completed its transition from a rural, agricultural society to a highly urbanized, industrialized society with the features of late capitalism (Hermalin, Liu, and Freedman, 1994). On one hand, during this period Taiwan experienced sharp dips in mortality and fertility and smaller family sizes associated with both the first and second demographic transitions. At the same time, family-centered social policies and ideologies continue to structure everyday life, and family remains the primary source of social welfare. In addition, the meanings and mechanisms of family change in Taiwan differ significantly from those of changes that occurred in Europe and North America and undergird the demographic transition model. For example, even as families in Taiwan are shifting from joint-stem (parents living with multiple adult sons and daughters-in-law) to stem (parents living with one adult son and daughter-in-law) to conjugal family units (married couples living with their children, separately from their parents) (Lee and Sun, 1995), many of the roles and responsibilities shared by co-residing parents and children have endured, as adult children often live in close proximity to their parents, spend time with them daily, and report values, beliefs, and practices that were previously associated with intergenerational co-residence (Tung, Chen, and Liu, 2006). It would be erroneous therefore to take family size only as an indicator of nuclearization of the family comparable to that observed in Europe and North America.
Marriage and fertility offer further examples of changes in Taiwanese family life that are unique in their meanings and mechanisms. Marriage trends indicate that increasingly, individuals rather than families are making decisions about whom to marry, when to marry, and whether or not to have children. The percent of married Taiwanese women reporting that their parents arranged their marriages declined from over 75 percent for birth cohorts of the early 1930s, to just 15 percent for birth cohorts of the 1960’s, while the percent saying that the decision was entirely theirs increased from 5 to 33 percent (Thornton, Chang, and Lin, 1994). Taiwanese women’s mean age at first marriage rose from 23 in 1970 to 28 in 2000; the percent of women who married while still in their teens dropped from 10 percent in 1960 to 3 percent in 1990; and the percent of women in their thirties who had never married rose from 1 percent in 1970 to 16 percent in 2005 (Jones, 2010). Fertility levels peaked in the 1950’s, reaching a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 7, then plunged steeply to a TFR of 2 by 1984, and to a TFR of 1.1 (below replacement level) by 2008 (Lee, 2009). Today Taiwan continues to have one of the lowest TFRs in the world (Yue and Lan, 2013). In fact, the “lowest low” birth rates in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea are currently lower than birth rates have been anywhere at any point in history (Ochiai, 2011).

Pei-Chia Lan cautions against interpreting these trends through the lens of the modernization thesis, noting that Taiwan’s fertility decline was “not simply the natural result of industrialization or an endogenous process of social change. It was rather the consequences of global political and cultural interventions” (2014, p. 6). As Lan and other scholars have clearly documented, Taiwan’s “demographic transition” in terms of fertility was accomplished through an aggressive family planning program implemented by
Taiwanese governmental elites with US aid in the 1950’s and 60’s. During this period, the United States contributed US$1.5 billion to Taiwan as part of a global development strategy to establish its influence in the region during the Cold War. The family became a site for pursuing the compatible interests of Taiwanese and US policymakers in promoting Taiwan’s legitimacy and superiority vis-à-vis Communist China:

The US support confirmed Taiwan’s status as the only ‘free and democratic China’. Even the private sphere of family life became a site for achieving Western modernity and democracy. In 1953, under the suggestion of US experts, the first Department of Home Economics was established within National Normal University to promote the scientific management of domesticity. In 1959, Taiwan Provincial government started the first annual election of a ‘model happy family’. The celebration of family value in Taiwan carried deep political implications while Chinese Communism was experimenting with the revolution of defamilization. In the same year, the chair of the Department of Home Economics at National Normal University made a speech in the annual conference of home economics education sponsored by US aid (An, 2010: 60–61): ‘Chinese Communism is using violence to build the system of the People’s Commune in violation of human nature and dignity. Taiwan is the only free China… To build happy families in Taiwan is a crucial weapon to combat the Communist… Therefore, Taiwan’s home economics education has very crucial and timely significance.’ (Lan, 2014, p. 9)

In this excerpt from Lan’s insightful article on compressed modernity, glocal entanglements, and parenting discourses in postwar Taiwan, we see how Taiwanese elites together with US policymakers actively constructed and interpreted family changes in Taiwan, and how the family as an institution matters centrally in Taiwan’s claims to democracy, modernity, and autonomy from Mainland China.

Approaching the topic from another angle, Emiko Ochiai (2011) argues persuasively that the unprecedented decline in fertility and other demographic trends observed in East Asia differ from the second demographic transition in the West in crucial ways. Whereas declining fertility can be observed in a first and second demographic transition in Europe and North America, in Taiwan (as in several other East Asian countries) this decline has been more or

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31 I also want to thank Chiwei Cheng for encouraging me to look more closely at this issue after a very early presentation of my work to the Taiwan Tóngzhì Hotline Association in Taipei.
less continuous, and the transition from “modern” to “late modern” has been almost immediate. In other words, there was barely any “modern” period without late modern characteristics, and at the same time, many traditional aspects of the society have not yet disappeared (a core feature of compressed modernity), making these designations meaningfully different from their equivalents in classic modernization theory.

In addition, Ochiai highlights that despite the decline in marriage rates, there is not a comparable rise in extramarital births or cohabitation, which are prolific to the point of becoming normative in the West, where they are associated with the “transformation of intimacy” (Giddens, 1992). For example, in Taiwan in 2011, 96.37% of registered births occurred in the context of marriage, while 3.63% occurred out of marriage (Ministry of the Interior Department of Statistics, 2012); in comparison, in the US in 2011, 40.7% of births occurred out of marriage (Martin et al., 2013). Pointing to the low rates of extramarital births and cohabitation, Ochiai argues that in East Asia, the traditional roles, obligations, and meanings attached to marriage and family remain largely intact. This is also evident in responses to the 2006 East Asia Social Survey and other similar types of studies, where people consistently place very high importance on duty and responsibility to family members. Ochiai follows Kyung-Sup Chang in referring to marriage decline as “individualization without individualism” since it is the continued duties associated with marriage that deter people from this institution. Put another way, it is familism rather than individualism that has made the institution undesirable for growing numbers of people (see this argument unfolded clearly in Ochiai, 2011, pp. 227-229).

Ochiai answers the question she has set out to explore—is a second demographic transition occurring in Taiwan?—with both yes and no. On the one hand, demographic changes in East Asia bear similarities to those in Europe and North America; on the other
hand, these differ in their essence. This “yes and no” answer is directly applicable to questions about the impact of large-scale demographic and political transitions on the emergence of LGBT subcultures in Taiwan. As above, apparent similarities to Europe and North America nevertheless differ in essence and in their underlying mechanisms.

In the particular case of the United States, the transition from a high-fertility, family-based economy to a low-fertility, capitalist free-labor economy facilitated the emergence of lesbian and gay identities and communities—a process elucidated by John D’Emilio (1987) in his now canonical exposé on capitalism and gay identity. As the family ceased to be the basic unit of production in society, it became instead a site of personal life, responsible for the emotional fulfillment of its members. The conjugal relationship was imbued with a new ideology of heterosexuality, which emphasized spousal intimacy and companionship, and naturalized and romanticized different-sex desire. This new heterosexual ideology also naturalized women’s unpaid, supportive domestic work, freeing men from family responsibilities and thus enabling their labor power to be more fully appropriated by the capitalist wage labor system. As the imperative to participate in an economically self-sufficient, hetero-patriarchal family unit was relaxed, it became possible for some people to construct identities and communities based around their same-sex desires and relationships, while the concurrent ideological transformation of family life enabled new forms of gender subordination and homophobia to flourish.

Emerging data suggest that the transformation of family life in Taiwan is also facilitating new forms of sexual expression and subordination, albeit in different and contextually specific ways. By the end of the twentieth century, attention had begun to shift from intergenerational relationships, including ties to ancestors and future descendants, to the husband-wife relationship in heterosexual Taiwanese families (Hsueh, 2014; Thornton, Yang,
and Fricke, 1994). Whether this shift influences the family status of gender and sexually nonconforming people in positive, negative, or neutral ways has been underexplored, though some evidence exists that increasing romanticization of heterosexual coupledom has had a detrimental effect on tóngzhì in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. For example, tóngzhì today face the usual pressures of pleasing their parents and in-laws, as well as new pressures to perform heterosexual desire and emotionally and sexually please their spouse, in ways that were not previously a part of the marriage contract (Chou, 2001). This is consistent to some extent with D’Emilio’s argument about the emergence of heterosexual ideology and homophobia as twin phenomena in the developing West; however, the forms and functions of these ideologies, as well as historical and contemporary meanings of marriage and family differ considerably across the two cases.

We cannot assume that Taiwan will follow the trajectory of Western nations with regard to the relationship between family change and emerging LGBT cultures. In the US, the transition from a family-based economy to a free-labor capitalist economy occurred over a period of almost two centuries, while in Taiwan, the transition has occurred in a quarter of that time, under the influences of State engineering and different colonizing regimes. In addition, the function and meanings of “family” in Taiwan are not mere equivalents or variations of Western family constructs. Historically, the Chinese and Taiwanese view of family has been cosmological in scope, with family serving as the crucial link between the ancestors, the living, and the unborn. The quality of both the present life and the afterlife is determined by the quality of these intergenerational relationships. Ancestors are traditionally consulted about important family matters, and are centrally involved in family life through ritual participation in such events as engagement ceremonies, weddings, and funerals (Thornton, Yang, and Fricke, 1994). Increased autonomy from one’s family therefore involves shifting relationships not only with living family members, but also with one’s
ancestors. There is little empirical research on how LGBT subjectivities and familial-relational choices alter one’s position in this chain of relationships, and how this matters in people’s everyday lives. I return to this topic in chapter four, as part of my analysis of patrilineality as an embodied and negotiated practice.

3.4.2 **Beyond Culture**

While the specificity of Taiwanese understandings of “family” are important for this research, it is equally imperative to resist the impulse to depict Taiwanese family relations as over-determined by cultural values, or to conflate Taiwanese cultural values with actual family practices (an argument made eloquently by Shih and Pyke, 2010). In the analysis by Thornton, Yang, and Fricke (1994) discussed above, for example, the shift in focus from intergenerational to conjugal relationships is documented concurrently with continued observance of festivals and ceremonies involving the ancestors; it is not family practices, but the meanings attached to these practices, that have changed most significantly.

Gerald Creed (2000) suggests that we turn the notion of “family values” on its head to instead consider “the economic value of the family.” More than a semantic shift, this approach illuminates the complicated relationship between the economic returns for conforming to a particular family form, and the social and cultural meanings with which that family form is imbued. In Taiwan, family ties and family support continue to matter for such practical activities as securing bank loans, taking out insurance policies, settling lawsuits, and obtaining housing and medical treatment. To undergo an operation at the hospital, for example, an individual must procure the signature of a family member, defined as one’s spouse (understood in heterosexual terms) or blood kin (normally understood in patrilineal terms) (Chao, 2002). The consequences of estrangement from one’s normally defined “family” are not only emotional, moral, and cosmological, but also legal and material.
Antonia Yen-ning Chao (2002) is critical of the notion of cultural citizenship as it has been operationalized by queer scholars in Chinese area studies, overemphasizing family respect or “face” (miànzi) and family pressure to marry and continue the patriline. Chao argues that this model obscures the link between heterosexual marriage and the material base of one’s social security in contemporary Chinese societies. By emphasizing aspects of Taiwan’s citizenship that she terms “relational-materialistic,” Chao produces both a more class conscious frame, and a clearer picture of the kinds of day-to-day obstacles encountered by her T and pó informants. The issues that prevent Taiwanese queers from fully securing a citizen subject position are not only or even primarily cultural or cosmological, but are rooted in the structural and material conditions of everyday life. While these material practices are partially derived from cultural values, they are also entrenched in what Dorothy Smith (1987) called “the relations of ruling”: abstracted and generalized sites of power removed from the particularized ties of family, kinship, and household. Thus, the reproduction of these practices in each successive generation may be accomplished without necessarily relying on the cultural-familial belief system that gave them historical legitimacy.

Chao’s model of relational-material citizenship is substantiated in more modest ways by other studies highlighting the material basis of Taiwanese and Chinese family practices that are usually attributed to cultural values. For example, patrilocal parent-child co-residence has continued into the twenty-first century in Taiwan and Mainland China, but data show that co-residence is preferred by neither parents nor children, and families tend to make other arrangements when structural constraints, such as high housing costs, are relaxed (Hermalin and Yang, 2004; Logan, Bian, and Bian, 1998). In short, while Western-origin family theories are not appropriate for explaining family change in Taiwan, it is important to recognize that differences between Taiwanese and US families are not a function of closed cultural systems; rather, they are informed by State policies and practices, transnational
exchanges, economic conditions, and other material factors that continuously intersect with and influence cultural constructs.

3.5 **Sexing Modernity**

Debates about the meanings of modernity, culture, and global-local entanglements are widely apparent in the field of sexuality studies as well. Dennis Altman has written prolifically and controversially about these issues throughout his career, beginning with the “Americanization of the homosexual” (1982) and continuing in his more recent work on globalization and sexuality (2002, 2013). Altman has been widely critiqued for equating globalization with Westernization in his depiction of a “global gay/lesbian culture” and flattening cultural hybridity to “only that which he already knows” (Martin, 1996, see also other responses to Altman, as well as Altman’s reply, in the same issue of the *Australian Humanities Review*). Scholars writing about queer issues in contemporary Taiwan have responded to these ideas in competing ways (see Chao, 2000 for a more critical response to Altman, and Sang, 2003 for a more favorable reference to his work). Theories linking the materialization of lesbian and gay worlds to market processes under capitalism (Adam, 1985; D’Emilio, 1983; Sullivan, 2001) are harnessed on both sides of the debate, with some connecting these processes to Western cultural imperialism (Chou, 2000, 2001), while others argue that Asia’s emerging capitalist economies may enable new forms of lesbian and gay life without imitating the West (Jackson, 2009).

Day Wong (2007) argues that the problem is not the dissolution of the local/East into the global/West, but, more fundamentally, the construction of local/global and East/West as binary oppositions. These binaries essentialize Chinese culture, whether the distinction made is between a culturally repressed East/sexually liberated West, or between a collectivist and culturally superior East/individualist and culturally bankrupt West. Wong specifically
addresses the construction of “coming out” as a Western/non-Chinese practice versus “coming home” as a more authentically Chinese practice. Wah-Shan Chou (2001) proposed the term huí jiā, “coming home,” to denote tóngzhì self-confirmation that is not predicated upon a Western, individualist sexual self-concept that is separate and distinct from cultural-familial roles and relationships. For Chou, the “coming home” lexicon is deeply embedded in the culturally unique category of the jiā (home, family, household), which denotes both a physical location and a mental/spiritual one in Chinese cosmology, e.g., “the ultimate home and roots to which a person belongs.” To huí jiā (come home) is not only a physical or geographical movement, but also a discovery of one’s ultimate place/space of belonging (Chou, 2001; see also Eng, 1997 on meanings of “home” in the Asian American queer diaspora, and Martin, 2003 on the relationship of jiā to homosexuality in Taiwanese literature and films). Chou uses this notion of coming home to describe the behaviors of his Hong Kongese informants, many of whom integrated their same-sex intimate partners into the family through everyday rituals like sharing meals and playing mahjong, and through the use of quasi-kin categories like half-sister/brother, without discussing the sexual nature of these relationships with their parents. These informants did not “come out” by distinguishing themselves from heterosexuals, but instead “came home” by quietly integrating their same-sex partners into the family unit, without any discernible moment of rupture or “coming out” moment.

In contrast to Chou and others who view coming home as more culturally appropriate than coming out in Chinese contexts, Wong (2007) suggests that silent tolerance of homosexuality may in fact be a localized form of homophobia. She faults Chou for reinscribing a binary opposition between the (individualist) West and (collectivist) non-West, and for glossing over the personal and familial costs of the coming home strategy. This is not to suggest that a “Western” coming out model is its antidote. Wong challenges us to abandon
the East/West binary opposition altogether, and to consider instead how coming home is inseparable from and indispensable to coming out in the narratives of many Chinese lesbians and gay men. Drawing from years of work as a community organizer as well as a researcher, Wong argues that Hong Kongese lesbians and gay men use coming home tactics described by Chou to preserve family harmony, while simultaneously working toward—and yearning for—familial acceptance of their intimate partners as such, rather than as friends or quasi-kin. Wong reinterprets Chou’s data to show that this is true in Chou’s own sample, where less confrontational “coming home” strategies co-exist with longings for full disclosure and familial acceptance.\(^{32}\)

In their respective studies of lālā (lesbian) communities in Beijing and Shanghai, Elisabeth Engebretsen (2013) and Lucetta Yip Lo Kam (2013) provide lesbian family stories that also disrupt a coming out/coming home dichotomy. Women in these studies used creative strategies to carve out spaces for same-sex intimacy under pervasive structural and familial constraints. Some entered heterosexual marriages with plans to divorce, or set up cooperative marriages with gay men, in order to move out of their parents’ homes (something difficult if not impossible to do as an unmarried woman). At the same time, many of the women expressed deeply painful feelings because they could not be with their girlfriends openly in the context of their families. Like Wong, Engebretsen and Kam do not point us toward a superior way of being a lesbian following a “Western” or more authentically “Eastern” family model, but instead highlight the confluence of resources, challenges, and inequalities faced by lālās as they create families in twenty-first century China.

\(^{32}\) Somewhat similar practices have been observed in a variety of cultural contexts; see, for example, Héctor Carrillo’s (1999) analysis of gay men and their families in Mexico. Comparative work on queer family practices in Latin America, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and other regions of the world offer a fruitful way to explore if, and if so how, coming out/coming home-type strategies are operationalized and hybridized in the ways Wong describes.
These and other works from neighboring countries provide a complex and valuable glimpse of East Asian queer life, which have meaningfully informed the construction of my research in Taiwan. I will now turn my gaze more pointedly to the Taiwan case, reviewing the current state of our knowledge about Taiwanese LGBT family of origin relationships. In doing so, I will continue to engage the debates about modernity, culture, and sexuality that I have introduced above.

3.6 **LGBT Families of Origin in Taiwan**

3.6.1 **What Do We Already Know?**

This challenge of accounting for Taiwan’s specificity without depicting Taiwanese families as over-determined by cultural values is evident in existing studies of LGBT family of origin relationships. In the first of these studies to be published in English, psychologists Yen-Jui Lin and Cynthia Hudley (2009) interviewed eight members of a Taipei-based support group for mothers of tónghî children. Lin and Hudley analyze the cognitive processes that these mothers use to move from initial feelings of distress and self-blame to acceptance of their tónghî children, such as valuation of autonomy, independence, and intimacy over “traditional” Taiwanese values of respect, order, and duty. The authors conclude by discussing implications of these findings for practitioners who work with tónghî and people who have tónghî family members. The researchers astutely critique the Eurocentrism in the literature on lesbian and gay family relationships. At the same time—perhaps in order to enter an existing conversation among LGBT family scholars primarily in the West—the research questions, study design, analytic frames, and conclusions reached in this study parallel prior studies based on Western and primarily white samples. Whether similarities found between the Taiwanese mothers in this research and their US counterparts are due to similarities in the study design, and/or to the transnational exchange of information
about parenting a gay child, and whether the research process itself was one of the catalysts for this exchange, remain open questions.

In a second article, Tsen-Yung Frank Wang, Herng-Dar Bih, and David Brennan (2009) interviewed 40 Taiwanese gay men about their relationships with their parents. The stated purpose of the article is to explore how gay men come out to their parents in a cultural context that prizes filial piety and continuation of the paternal line. This research question appears to use a Western trope (the coming out story) to evaluate Taiwanese family practices that are problematically reduced to static cultural values. However, in the body of the paper, the authors offer a more nuanced analysis, noting that filiality is itself a social construction that is constantly negotiated, reinscribes power relations, and has been resisted in various ways by women and queers. Based on participants’ recollections and interpretations of their parents’ reactions to disclosure or accidental discovery of their sons’ homosexuality, the authors identify five main frames that Taiwanese parents use to cope with this new knowledge: 1) a transitional frame (homosexuality is a “bad habit,” heterosexual marriage is its antidote); 2) a social learning frame (homosexuality is due to the influence of bad friends); 3) a filial piety frame (homosexuality is irrelevant; the son has a duty to get married irrespective of his orientation); 4) a Buddhist spiritual frame (homosexuality is one of many possible paths to enlightenment); and 5) a brotherhood frame (same-sex intimate relationships constitute a deep friendship/sworn brotherhood). The authors conclude that some Taiwanese parents are able to resist the privileged discourse of filiality, even as pressures on gay men to marry and have children remain very strong. This work is oriented toward cognitive-psychological processes and outcomes, with the most salient variable being (perceived) parental attitudes toward homosexuality.

These two articles comprise the totality of published English-language works on the topic of LGBT families of origin in Taiwan. The Chinese language academic literature on
this topic is equally sparse, and is comprised mostly of unpublished master’s theses which rely on a very small number of informants (often less than 10) usually recruited through the student researcher’s preexisting personal networks. Three exceptions are journal articles by Herng-Dar Bih (2003), Guo-Bao Liao (1998), and Wen Yi Shieh (2006), which examine whether and how Taiwanese gay men “come out” to their parents, the heterosexual marriage pressure faced by gay men in Taiwan, and the impact of families of origin on gay and lesbian couple relationships, respectively. In Shieh’s interviews with 10 gay couples and 10 lesbian couples, one half of the informants cited family pressure as their biggest challenge in managing their same-sex relationships, and talked about protecting parents’ “face” as a powerful social constraint. All of the articles discuss how filial expectations shape LGBT family strategies and possibilities.

These studies break new ground toward a theorization of LGBT family of origin relationships in Taiwan. The challenges of seeing culture while not essentializing culture are evident in each, and are instructive for the nascent field of LGBT family studies in East Asia. An important next step is to situate these social-psychological explanations for why family members think, feel, and behave as they do in relation to structural conditions and power relations at macro and micro levels. This step will make it possible to move beyond culture as the primary or default explanation for Taiwanese family practices, by showing how LGBT family of origin relationships are materially and institutionally embedded. At the same time, it is important to unpack the complexity of culture itself in a period when many cultural characteristics are in flux, and when features of presumptively “traditional,” “modern,” and “postmodern” civilizations are all present in the family system.

33 The large quantity of these unpublished Master’s papers—showing clearly the importance of families of origin to students, many of whom are dealing with family issues in their own lives—compared to the dearth of peer-reviewed academic articles and books on this topic, reveals an interesting and, I believe, politically meaningful gap that is worth examining more closely.
Compressed Modernity as an Analytic Tool

As I have shown in this chapter, Taiwan shares in common with South Korea many of the core features of compressed modernity, including accelerated industrialization, US geopolitical presence and influence, and the endurance of family-centered modes of social life; as well as unique characteristics, such as the confluence of influences from Japan, the United States, mainland China, and local indigenous cultures, and Taiwan’s contested status as an independent country or a “region” of China. These characteristics make Taiwan a particularly fruitful site to study how social institutions and discourses evolve under the conditions of compressed modernity. The theory also has a significant use value for LGBT populations, emphasizing both the speed and unevenness of social changes, which often impact LGBTs disproportionately. For example, the changing meanings and functions of marriage matter for everyone, but carry a special urgency for LGBT people who increasingly desire a union with someone they love and feel attracted to (rather than a primary heterosexual union for economic and familial survival and a subordinate same-sex love relationship, as was more common previously). The unevenness of change is also highlighted by LGBT experiences, as many so-called “traditional,” “modern” and “postmodern” family values are simultaneously enacted by LGBT people and their kin. Thus the inclusion of LGBT families can help to emphasize and clarify various features and consequences of compressed modernity.

Chang notes that even as family-centerdness has anchored South Korea’s compressed social achievements, it has also contributed to the social disenfranchisement of those individuals who are not connected to families. At the same time, in South Korea today, “familial norms and expectations are so diverse across gender and generation that family itself has become a crucial source of alienation for almost every member of society” (Chang
In these observations, together with his descriptions of the reconfigured role of patriarchy in dictating family life, Chang sets the stage for a larger critique of heterosexuality as a core dimension of patriarchy and patrilineality (though he does not make this critique directly in his own work, and to my knowledge the existing literature on compressed modernity has not made this conceptual link). Similar types of disenfranchisement and alienation are evident in my interviews and fieldwork with LGBT families of origin in Taiwan. To begin with, LGBT people are automatically disenfranchised if they choose to create a life outside the patrilineal kinship system (an issue I discuss in a more detailed way in chapter four, Patrilineality). Those who do enter the system must face the diverse norms and expectations that Chang describes, with gender and generation determining the allocation of family resources, labor, and power. These allocations shape the experiences not only of LGBT people, but also of their families of origin; in this dissertation, I emphasize in particular the implications for mother and fathers of LGBT children (this is the focus of chapter five, Parenting). Meanwhile, policies that place the burden of social welfare on families have left family units functionally overloaded and produced “family fatigue symptoms” (Chang 2010, p.146) that Chang connects to steeply declining birth rates and other demographic trends. These sorts of new family pressures, combined with persistent forms of family inequality, create the unique climate of LGBT family life in Taiwan today. In chapter six, Coming Out, I show how compressed changes in the meanings and functions of family life have contributed directly to one of the most striking generational divides in my fieldwork. Each of these data analysis chapters (4-6) highlights a specific strand of the diverse norms, expectations, and forms of alienation within Taiwanese families, which are richly evident in LGBT family of origin relationships.

34 Chang’s observations are specific to South Korea, and the conditions in Taiwan differ appreciably (including more historical flexibility in the family system; see, for example, Barrett, 1980). However, the larger theoretical frame remains useful, with the differences in the two cases as a fruitful point of inquiry.
3.7 Connecting the Dots

The debates about modernity, culture, and sexuality that I have described open important doors for the study of LGBT families of origin. In particular, these debates connect LGBT family of origin issues to larger theories of local and global family change. By way of transition from the contexts presented in this chapter to my analysis of the data, I will reiterate the salience of compressed modernity (Chang, 1999, 2010) and relational-materialistic citizenship (Chao, 2002) for the present study of LGBT families of origin in Taiwan, and comment briefly on how these theories might be productively combined.

LGBTs in many parts of the world, including the United States, have experienced a version of “compressed modernity” through the radical restructuring of LGBT social life and ever-shifting legal and cultural terrains. Thus for LGBT populations, the theoretical relevance of compressed modernity may be more far-reaching geographically and many of its characteristics amplified. LGBTs in Taiwan are arguably experiencing a hyper-compressed modernity as postmodern queer theories inform the sex rights movement even as certain “traditional” family functions and forms remain deeply entrenched and necessary for social survival. This contributes to the unique climate of queer carnivalesque protest and Taiwan’s growing reputation as a “gay friendly” destination,35 at the same time that a majority of the protestors cannot reveal their sexuality to their own families and face intense pressure (materially as well as culturally) to enter heterosexual marriages.

Issues of Taiwanese identity and sovereignty add important dimensions to Taiwan’s specific trajectory of compressed modernity. Taiwan has made efforts to distinguish itself from Mainland China on the basis of its democracy and human rights record, as well as its

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35 During my field period, I met a number of visitors to Taiwan who viewed the society in this way; one Italian gay man described Taiwan as a “gay paradise” (tóngzhī tiāntáng). A Taiwanese gay man responded by saying “it is not a gay paradise for me” and telling a story about his difficulties with his family of origin to make this point.
promotion of family values vis-à-vis China’s program of defamilization, as Pei-Chia Lan’s (2014) piece effectively demonstrates. This complex identity project creates opportunities and challenges for LGBT activists, who find both tools and limitations in a discourse of human rights that is often tied up in complicated ways with notions of modernity (for a thorough discussion of related issues, see Bagchi and Das, 2013; see also Chao, 2000 for an analysis of how certain sexual and gender alternatives come to occupy a subaltern position in this context). Meanwhile, public opposition to LGBT rights in Taiwan is articulated primarily through transnational discourses of child protection (also often couched in human rights language) and promotion of the heterosexual conjugal family. This opposition has been spearheaded by Christian groups, which represent just 4% of the population (Hu and Leamaster, 2013), but have nevertheless mobilized to effectively block key legislation related to gender education (xìngbié jiàoyù, referring here to the incorporation of gender and sexual diversity in the public school curriculum) and oppose legal recognition of same-sex couple relationships. Recently, the symbol of one man + one woman has been appropriated from the US anti-gay movement and widely used by Taiwanese anti-gay protestors. This symbol was originally intended to represent a “traditional family” but in the context of Taiwan represents, instead, another kind of “modern family” departing from the intergenerational, ancestral, and extended family bonds that have been central to Taiwanese family structure and organization. This case drives home the point, emphasized throughout this chapter, that the very definitions of traditional, modern, and postmodern are contextual and in flux.

36 As reported on the 2009 Taiwan Social Change Survey, approximately 80% of the population is affiliated either with Buddhism (20%), Taoism (15%), or Chinese folk religion (45%), with another 15% reporting that they are nonreligious (Hu and Leamaster, 2013; see also Yang and Hu, 2012). Buddhism, Daoism, and Chinese folk religion do not take an official stance against homosexuality. While an analysis of how religious beliefs and practices shape LGBT family of origin relationships is beyond the purview of this dissertation, I anticipate elaborating on this topic in a separate article.
As much as LGBT issues are crucially linked to the political aspects of compressed modernity for families in Taiwan, they are also bound up in the material experiences of compression and condensation that shape people’s everyday lives and relationships. I draw on Chao’s (2002) concept of relational-materialistic citizenship to highlight the structural and material underpinnings of the uneven effects of compressed modernity, and to show how the reconfiguring of patriarchy that Chang mentions (2010, pp. 146-147) is accomplished “on the ground.” Together these theories call attention to sexuality as a core axis of inequality, which has been neglected in studies of social and family change in East Asia. At the same time, relational-materialistic citizenship pushes the study of LGBT families of origin beyond the common pitfalls of cultural reductionism and essentialism.

In the following chapters, I take on three topics that have been analyzed primarily through cultural and social-psychological frames—patrilineality, parenting an LGBT child, and the concept of “coming out”—and resituate these topics in relation to broader social and family changes, continuities, and inequalities. I begin by combining Chao’s concept of relational-materialistic citizenship with models of kinship as fluid and processual, to show how patrilineality is embodied and negotiated by my lesbian and transgender informants. I then show how similar forces differently structure the lives of mothers and fathers of LGBT children, and how the conditions of compressed modernity shape parent-child relationships and contribute to a new context for “coming out” in Taiwan. In conclusion, I emphasize the diversity in what my informants desire from their family relationships, underscoring again how compressed and condensed social changes have created “dissimilar civilizations” within and among the families in this research.
4. PATRILINEALITY

4.1 Is Continuing the Paternal Line a Heavier Pressure for Men?

“Chinese parents place more responsibilities on boys, so they are stricter with boys. Boys have pressure to continue the paternal line (*chuán zōng jiē dài*), girls have less pressure. So I think it is easier for lesbians than for gay men.” Huang Mama shared this with me as we finished a lunch she had paid for at a teahouse owned by one of her good friends, in the hills of New Taipei City. Although I fought to pay, Huang Mama had insisted in a motherly kind of way, maybe because I was around the same age as her lesbian daughter. All the feelings surrounding Huang Mama were motherly, from her rose-colored silk blouse buttoned at the neck, to the way she fussed over the details of my interviews with two of her children, advising us about where to meet and what drinks to order. With this comment, Huang Mama introduced a point of view I would encounter innumerable times over the course of my 16-month field period. “Continuing the paternal line” (*chuán zōng jiē dài*) appears with regularity in my interviews and fieldnotes, often paired with the notion of family pressure (*jiātíng yàlǐ*) as Huang Mama put it here. In every case I recorded, this phrase came up in relation to gay and bisexual men. Like Huang Mama, many people viewed lesbians as exempt from this pressure, and as having an easier time with their families as a result.

Academic literature on Chinese and Taiwanese homosexualities has similarly emphasized men’s filial duty to continue the family line as a primary source of pressure for gay men (see, for example, Hu and Wang, 2013; Wang, Bih, and Brennan, 2009; Wu, 1998), often citing the Chinese adage that bearing no descendants is the worst offense a son can
commit against his parents. My intention is neither to deny nor downplay the significance of this pressure for gay and bisexual men in Taiwan. This pressure is well documented in the literature and widely discussed in LGBT circles as well as popular culture. However, the pressure placed on men is only one part of the story. In this chapter, I shift the focus of analysis to examine patrilineality and family pressure from the standpoint of my lesbian and transgender informants. This shift is motivated by a set of questions emerging from my fieldwork: What family pressures do lesbian and bisexual women face, and why are these pressures less visible than those faced by gay men? How are contemporary transgender subjects positioned in relation to the imperative to chuán zōng jiē dài? What do lesbian and transgender perspectives collectively reveal about the gendered meanings of “family pressure” and negotiations of patrilineality within contemporary Taiwanese families?

As noted in the previous chapter, Antonia Yen-ning Chao has critiqued queer scholars in the field of China Studies for overemphasizing “face” (miànzi) and “marriage under family pressure so as to continue one’s patriline,” without paying adequate attention to the material

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37 The Confucian philosopher Mencius is popularly cited for having written, “There are three ways of being unfilial, and having no heir is the greatest of them” (bù xiào yǒu sān, wú hòu wéi dà). For a discussion about the principles of filial piety in this and other classic texts, see Chan and Tan (2013).

38 A simple Google search for chuán zōng jiē dài and tóngzhì (in Chinese characters) turns up thousands of results, overwhelmingly focused on gay men. The English language media has also overemphasized this issue in its coverage of Taiwan’s sex rights movement. For example, in a recent Huffington Post article on the 2013 Taipei pride parade, the first and among the only quotes appearing in the article are that “Chinese families are still very traditional” and “People still emphasize having an heir and passing on the family name” (Gold, 2013), although the person to whom the quotes are attributed, Jennifer Lu of the Taiwan Tóngzhì Hotline Association, provided much more varied information when speaking with the press, and did not make such issues the focus of her comments (Jennifer HsinChieh Lu, personal communication, October 28, 2013).

39 By “contemporary transgender subjects,” I am referring to individuals who have utilized contemporary pathways to undergo legal, physical, and/or social transition from one gender category to another, and/or live their daily lives as a gender or genders other than the one assigned to them at birth. I have chosen to focus on this group not because it represents the definitive or primary manifestation of gender variance in Taiwanese society, but because I interviewed members of this group and spent time with their families as part of my field research, and it is their experiences I wish to highlight in this chapter.
base of social security in contemporary Chinese societies (2002, p. 377; 2005). For example, scholars have explained entrance into marriage in terms of pressure to *chuán zōng jiē dài* without considering the importance of marriage for obtaining property in a competitive housing market and other material needs. Drawing from her ethnographic research with Taiwanese lesbians who grew up in the post-World War II era, Chao proposes a model of relational-materialistic citizenship, which foregrounds the material base of the patrilineal household and its impact on queer identities. She shows how relational-materialistic principles, such as the requirement of a natal or married family member’s signature to access medical treatment and other social welfare benefits, have created conditions of exile for lesbians within their own society. Chao’s concept of relational-materialistic citizenship effectively changes the conversation about patrilineality to one in which lesbian and transgender subjects have a louder voice, and as such provides one of the analytic anchors of this chapter.

In addition, I follow Yunxiang Yan in defining kinship as fluid, flexible, processual, and grounded in everyday practice. Yan (2001) and Stafford (2000) contrast this with a formalist approach, still prevalent to some degree in Chinese studies, which has emphasized patriliny as an ideal type over the lived experience of Chinese kinship and other forms of relatedness (see Yan, 2001, p. 277). My work enters this conversation through the inclusion of LGBT people and their families, offering a unique perspective on how gender and sexuality are central to the negotiation of patrilineal kinship processes and practices.

### 4.1.1 Analytic Frame: Embodied and Negotiated Kinship

In this chapter, I combine Chao’s (2002) emphasis on materiality with Yan’s (2001) emphasis on negotiated kinship to analyze patrilineality as a set of embodied and negotiated practices, shaped by historically specific resources and constraints. The central contribution
of this chapter is an analysis of the family pressures placed on lesbian and bisexual women through the patrilineal distribution of family resources, labor, and power. I argue that a culturalist (and, often, culturally essentialist) emphasis on filiality and posterity at the ideological level has obscured the material pressures of chuán zōng jiē dài which are so central to women’s experiences.

I then widen my analytic scope to consider the impact of gender transition on patrilineal reproduction and the other gendered family pressures I have discussed. At the outset of this research, I anticipated that a person’s family gender—that is, the roles and responsibilities that produce gendered subjects within the patrilineal family—would remain linked to assigned sex, even if families made space for gender fluidity at the interactional level; for example, a male-to-female trans woman would still be accountable to continue the paternal line, and a female-to-male trans man would not be counted as a member of his father’s household. But as is wont to happen in ethnographic field research, my interactions with transgender informants and their families pointed me toward a more complicated story. Because trans-identified people and their family members comprised only one-tenth of my interview sample (including eight out of eighty interviewees), these findings cannot speak for or about a larger transgender population. However, they do raise new themes for

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40 Importantly, these eight interviews do not represent the scope of my research with trans-identified people and their families; I also conducted fieldwork in explicitly trans spaces as well as LGBT spaces with a visible transgender presence. Moreover, any distinction between “lesbian” and “transgender” subjects is a somewhat artificial one, given that a significant number of my lesbian informants emphasized gender transgression as the major organizing framework of their family narratives, and some did not view themselves as “women,” without necessarily placing themselves under the trans umbrella. While in Taiwan, I also began to understand “lesbian” (lāzī or nǚ tóngzhì) as an umbrella category that incorporated transgender masculinity, in ways I found different from the meanings of “lesbian” in the United States. For example, in the US, I have avoided using the term “lesbian” to describe myself because in my mind it connotes a woman-woman relationship; in contrast, my transgender butch partner and I can both be classified as lesbians in Taiwan without misrepresenting her as a woman.
transgender family studies, and add new dimensions to existing understandings of how patrilineal obligations are carried out in contemporary Taiwan.

4.2 Distribution of Family Resources, Labor, and Power

To provide additional context for these stories, I will briefly outline three sets of practices that have been integral to the social reproduction of patrilineal kinship in Taiwan. These include family asset transfers, patrilocal co-residence, and the distribution of family labor. I have chosen these practices in particular because they are among the most frequently used indicators of family change in Taiwan, and because they correspond directly with findings I present in the remainder of this chapter. By providing the contours of the landscape in which my findings are located, I will also highlight the material base of patrilineality along the axes of resources, labor, and power.

Within Taiwan’s patrilineal family system, titles, properties, and inheritance are primarily allocated to men, who are expected to produce descendants and care for their ancestors through gendered rituals of ancestor veneration (for an analysis of the meanings these rituals hold in contemporary Taiwan, see Yang and Hu, 2012). Although the Republican Civil Code granted inheritance rights to women as early as 1930 (Bernhardt, 1999—the Civil Code was then imported to Taiwan with the Nationalist Chinese government in 1949), a majority of Taiwanese families continue to distribute their resources along patrilineal lines. Between 1999 and 2003, 73 percent of family asset-transfers in Taiwan were shared among sons only. Another 10 percent were shared inequitably among sons and

41 Traditionally a woman could receive a small share of family resources through her dowry (Greenhalgh, 1988; Parish and Willis, 1993). Unmarried lesbians in this research did not have access to such resources. Moreover, the housing and economic insecurity among married and divorced lesbian informants discussed later in this chapter suggests that dowries have not significantly mitigated sex-based family inequalities.
daughters, with sons receiving a greater share (Chu and Yu, 2010). In addition, sons receive a greater share of non-inheritance family gifts, as measured in taxes to the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of China on Taiwan. The Ministry of Finance reports that women are more likely than men to formally renounce their inheritance rights; in 2012, for example, 64 percent of inheritance renunciations were filed by women (R.O.C. Ministry of Finance, 2012). As this statistic suggests, and as my findings will show, women continue to face informal family pressure to cede their inheritance to their brothers, despite women’s protected status under the law.42

Sociologists and demographers have emphasized patrilocal coresidence (co-residence of a married couple with the husband’s parents) as a key indicator of patrilineal family organization across Asian societies (increasingly, scholars recognize that this practice is as much economic as ideological, with more affluent siblings likely to “buy their way out of co-residence”—see Hermalin and Yang, 2004; Lee, Parish, and Willis, 1994). Despite a growing number of nuclear family households, and a commensurate dip in the number of joint-stem households (multiple married sons living with their parents under one roof), co-residence with a son remains the most common living arrangement of the elderly in Taiwan (Lee and Sun, 2004), and in 2003, more than 40 percent of married couples in Taiwan were cohabiting with the husband’s parents. Cohabitation with the wife’s parents has barely increased in 40 years, hovering around 3 percent (compare Lee and Sun, 2004 to Chu, Xie, and Yu, 2011). Thus, the dip in joint-stem households is due to an increase in “nuclear” families rather than any gender convergence in living arrangements. And as noted in chapter three, “nuclearization” in Taiwan does not necessarily diminish the elder care tasks performed by sons and daughters-in-law who live close by (Tung, Chen, and Liu, 2006).

42 As Kathryn Berhardt (1999) points out, inheritance as a “right” is an imported concept that does not account for the ritual aspects of patrilineal succession.
Research shows that women who live with their husband’s parents have an increased workload (Chu, Xie, and Yu, 2011) and decreased decision-making power (Xu and Lai, 2002). There are no comparable penalties for men who live with their parents (as 40 percent of married men do) or their in-laws (as 3 percent of married men do). And whatever the family structure, women do nearly all of the unpaid labor. According to the Taiwan Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics (DGBAS), men’s share of the housework, as reported in time diaries, has increased only nominally, from 1.5 hours per week in 1987 (compared to 21.8 hours per week for women) to 2.2 hours per week in 2004 (compared to 15.6 hours per week for women).43

Placing emphasis on filial reciprocity between Taiwanese parents and their sons can obscure the work performed by daughters-in-law. Although Taiwanese parents are far more likely to live with their adult sons than with their daughters, it is daughters-in-law who do the bulk of the caregiving as these parents age. Sons pray to their ancestors, but it is daughters-in-law who plan, shop for, and prepare the food used in these rituals. One family described to me how the grandmother of the family had (as a young woman) made preparations for a family ritual just one day after giving birth to her son. Her husband did not know how to go to the market to buy the chicken needed for the ritual he was going to perform. So his newly postpartum wife got out of bed, took her five-year-old daughter, walked a long distance to the market, purchased the chicken and prepared it so that her husband could pray on the designated day. This is a simple but poignant example of how men’s filial duties become women’s work. For women in these households, chuán zōng jiē dài is an embodied practice,

43 The decrease in Taiwanese women’s housework is largely a function of class differences among women, which enable upper and middle class Taiwanese wives to outsource their domestic work, often to migrant women from Southeast Asia. For research on migrant women domestics in Taiwan, see Lan (2006) and Cheng (2006).
accomplished through pregnancy, birth, childrearing, and elder care. It is also a source of economic pressure, as it steers the flow of family resources away from daughters.

Feminist thinkers across disciplines have argued persuasively that patrilineal reproduction is a women’s issue as much as a men’s issue (see, for example, Greenhalgh, 1988; Mann, 2000; Sang, 2003; Wolf, 1972). Yet pressure to continue the paternal line continues to be conceptualized as a gay men’s issue in academic research, media reports, and conventional wisdom about lesbian and gay sexuality in Taiwan. In the following pages, I draw from my fieldwork and interviews with individuals and families throughout Taiwan, to show how the patrilineal distribution of resources, labor, and power profoundly shapes the lives of lesbians living within heterosexual marriage, lesbians who are divorced or unmarried, and the material and ritual experiences of my transgender informants.

4.3 Lesbians Living within Heterosexual Marriage

Demographers characterize Taiwan’s population in the twentieth century as “nearly 100% married for life” (Yang and Tsai, 2009) and childlessness during this period as almost wholly involuntary (Coombs and Sun, 1981). Most Taiwanese lesbians and gays who transitioned to adulthood in or prior to the 1980’s entered heterosexual marriages and had children in the context of these marriages. Some are now divorced or separated. Others continue to live with their heterosexual spouses while also having same-sex relationships. Among younger LGBTs, heterosexual marriage is less prevalent, but it is still a path walked by a significant number of people. While these patterns hold true for people of all genders,

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44 Divorce was also uncharacteristically low from the beginning of the twentieth century through the 1960’s, reaching its lowest recorded rate of 0.35 per 1,000 in 1969. Prior to this, divorce was relatively high in Taiwan (see Lee and Sun, 1995, p. 106 for an overview of the literature on this topic, including explanations for Taiwan’s high divorce rate relative to other Chinese societies). The rate rose again after 1970, reaching 1.36 per 1,000 by 1990.
life within compulsory heterosexual marriage has differed dramatically for people who occupy the positions of wives and daughters, and those who occupy the positions of husbands and sons.

My research with married informants primarily centered on ethnographic fieldwork with mid and later life lesbians and gays. A majority of the people participating in the Rainbow Bus trips for LGBT seniors were heterosexually married, divorced, or widowed. I attended several workshops on this theme, such as a forum on Lesbian Desires Within Marriage (Yìxìngliàn Hūnyīn Yǔ Nǚ Tóngzhì), which drew a standing-room only crowd to hear three lesbian panelists of different ages and genders (pó, bú fēn, and T leaning toward bú fēn) talk about their married lives. Additionally, roughly one-half of the interviewees in the midlife (45-60) cohort were heterosexually married or divorced with children. No interviewees in the young adult (18-29) cohort and only 2 interviewees in the early midlife (30-44) cohort had entered heterosexual marriages. Most strikingly, none of my young adult interviewees planned to get heterosexually married. Whether they eventually marry is not something my research can predict. Nevertheless their paths already differ meaningfully from mid and later life lesbians and gays, a majority of whom were either married or planning to marry at the same age.

None of the heterosexually married lesbians or gay men whom I interviewed considered themselves to be bisexual, in the sense that they found comparable fulfillment in relations with their spouses or felt desire for different sex partners. I did interview people with bisexual identities, but none were married, and all were in same-sex relationships at the time of interview. Among mid and later life lesbians, I observed a within-sex gender difference, in that a majority of lesbians over 60 who had managed to remain unmarried were T. I did not meet any pó over 60 who had evaded heterosexual marriage throughout her life; there are such cases, but these are comparatively rare. All of my trans-identified interviewees were unmarried at the time of interview. Two trans men who were in relationships with normatively gendered, heterosexual women were considering legal marriages to these women after completing their gender transitions, but had concerns about the gendered implications of entering a heterosexual marriage, an issue I return to in the latter part of this chapter.
Another important generational difference emerged in that the two married interviewees in the early midlife cohort (and one *T* partner of a heterosexually married *pó*) described these as transactional or “fake” marriages (*jià jiēhūn*). This term was not used by any of the mid and later life LGBTs whom I interviewed or spoke with about marriage as part of my fieldwork. In the chapter on Coming Out, I address why mid and later life LGBTs are far less likely to describe their non-loved based marriages as “fake,” and what “fake marriages” reveal about changing marital norms and expectations in Taiwan.

In this section, I draw from the life stories of lesbians married to straight men, and a lesbian informant who entered a cooperative marriage with a gay man, to show how the roles of wife, mother, and daughter-in-law have shaped Taiwanese lesbian identities and relationships. For many married lesbians, the identity of “mother” is formative not only to heterosexual kinship practices, but also to lesbian identity, often expressed simultaneously as having the identity of a *lāmā* (*lāžī māmā*, or lesbian mother). Mothers often enter the LGBT community through participation in *lāmā* groups and through dating other *lāmās*, with whom they strongly identify, in ways they do not identify with childless lesbians. There is no comparable category making fatherhood central to gay identity. In addition, married lesbians in my research found ways to integrate their partners into their families, often relying on them for childcare support, while men had more mobility and autonomy to maintain a separation between their gay lives and their family roles and responsibilities. The pressures women face within these marriages center on their compulsory reproductive labor and the constraints this places on multiple aspects of their lives, including the possibilities for forming and nurturing lesbian relationships. This is true for lesbians married to gay men as well as those married to straight men. As I will show, family pressure for married lesbians in Taiwan is not solely connected to sexuality and a function of heterosexism; it is just as deeply connected to gender and a function of heteropatriarchy and sex stratification within families.
4.3.1 Marriages to Straight Men

Lesbians married to straight men share many pressures in common with married heterosexual women, such as pressure to bear sons, the burden of unpaid family work, low family status as daughters-in-law, and, in some cases, mistreatment by their in-laws and/or husbands. They also face pressures connected to their sexuality, such as challenges balancing their marital obligations with their same-sex relationships, vulnerability in divorce and custody decisions (see, for example, Lee, 2001 and, Lin 2013), and physical and emotional pain and discomfort from unwanted sex (an experience that married lesbians in my research connected to their sexuality, while also shared with some straight women). Pressure to “continue [their husband’s] paternal line” touched these women’s lives in tangible ways.

My interview with a 57-year-old lesbian mother, Kay, is illustrative of this point. I interviewed Kay in an efficiency apartment in Xindian, creatively cluttered with books, papers, medicinal plants, and other knick knacks, as she prepared to relocate to her more permanent home in the southern city of Kaohsiung, closer to her girlfriend and her oldest daughter. At Kay’s initiative, we spent a large part of the interview discussing her children’s lives, her parenting philosophy, and other topics related to childrearing, which had become central to Kay’s identity. However, Kay herself had not wanted three children, and only had her youngest, a son, because of pressure from her husband, and hope that she might improve her unhappy marriage:

When I had my second child, I said I didn’t want to have anymore, and I gave away all the baby things. But at that time I happened to have a good heart, and since my husband wanted a son, I got pregnant again. We agreed to get the [prenatal] gender test, and if the test result showed a girl, we planned to have an abortion. But the test result showed a boy, so I carried my pregnancy to term. Later I regretted this course of action, because I thought we shouldn’t have had the third child… Raising him was exhausting for me. I was really too old to do it. I didn’t want to have another baby, but my husband wanted a boy, and I was used to compromising for others. Also, I thought that if I had a boy, my husband might treat me better… like maybe help with house
chores, or be more caring toward me. It turns out I was being stupid; it’s two separate matters, they have nothing to do with each other.

One year after her son’s birth, the family moved to a larger house. Kay described this to me as both a financial burden and a burden in terms of housework, especially because her husband’s relatives often came over and created more work for her to do. Eventually Kay found a good nanny and hired her to help with the children. At this point, she said, her relationship with her husband really turned sour. He did not understand why hiring a nanny was necessary, and criticized her for not taking care of the children by herself. Kay and her husband finally separated on account of her husband’s violent temper and attempts to beat her. He never succeeded, Kay said, because she immediately locked herself in her room whenever she saw that something was wrong with him. He would pound violently on the door and scream threats, but he never broke the door down, and Kay diffused the worst situations by calling the police. Kay’s husband suspected her of having lesbian affairs, but in fact, she did not begin her lesbian relationship until after she and her husband had separated. Kay entered the lesbian community through an online lămă group for lesbian mothers. Her girlfriend is heterosexually married with children of her own, and Kay views this as an important feature of their compatibility. Her girlfriend also prefers that they both be married, viewing this as a protective cover over their relationship. The pressures these women are concerned with do not revolve around performing filial piety, saving face, and “coming out” so much as practical considerations for their material wellbeing, such as the cost of divorce, as I later discuss, and investments in their children’s lives.

For Kay, as for many lesbian mothers in this research, the identity of “mother” mattered as much or more than the identity of “lesbian” in shaping her interactions with other LGBT people. I took part in several social events for lesbian mothers, and knew of many other such events and groups that I did not attend because they were for mothers only; my
status as a lesbian, without also being a mother, was not enough to grant me entrance into these settings. However I never found any comparable group for gay fathers. While there are many forums for gay men to meet and socialize—far exceeding those for lesbians in number and size—none of these forums are organized around fatherhood. It was not unusual for me to know a gay man for a long time before finding out that he had a wife and children. With women, the opposite was true; I sometimes found out that women were mothers before discovering that they were also lesbians.

This was the case for another of my informants, Yijun, a 50-year-old T from Tainan, who marched in the Taipei pride parade in support of her 20-year-old gay son. Yijun had little tolerance for LGBT-themed events. Later, I invited her to one I thought would be appropriate, a social gathering of T and pó lesbians in their forties and fifties from Yijun’s working/lower middle class background, and she fled after ten minutes, saying, “I don’t know how to act around these people!” In retrospect I felt that her participation in the pride parade was quite remarkable. Yijun marched with mothers of LGBT children, and so on our first meeting I did not realize that she is also someone “in the circle.”

Although she recognized her passionate feelings toward women and her T masculinity early in life, Yijun did not enter the LGBT community until her identity as a mother motivated her to do so.

In other ways, Yijun’s story is quite different from Kay’s, shaped in significant ways by her gender nonconformity and by the fact that she had a committed lesbian relationship prior to marriage. Yijun’s masculine qualities had been visible from childhood, and her parents and siblings abused her on this basis until Yijun escaped her natal family by getting

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46 I was introduced to Yijun as part of a group of mothers, and did not have an opportunity to interact with her one on one and thus recognize her T qualities. On this day she wore a plain blue T-shirt, jeans, a backpack, and long hair in a ponytail fastened at the base of her neck. I later found out that she was not sure of my sexuality either and checked this with another one of the mothers in the group some weeks after our meeting.
married. By this time, she had already fallen in love with a woman, and she brought this woman with her into her marital home as a “friend” who co-resided with Yijun and her husband for the duration of their 20-year marriage.

In these twenty years, Yijun made six different attempts to run away with her girlfriend. The first took place when she was four months pregnant with her son. However, due to complications with her pregnancy, she had to deliver the baby by C-section, and at that time the C-section procedure required a husband’s signature. As a result, her husband learned of her whereabouts, and he came to the hospital along with his whole family to collect his wife and child. At this point Yijun checked herself out of the hospital intending to run away again, but she could not bring herself to leave her son behind. She had neither the legal standing nor the economic and social stability to raise the child on her own, so for the sake of this child, she went back into her married life.

The years that followed were extremely laborious for Yijun, and her weight dropped rapidly from 50 kg to 40 kg (about 88 lbs). “In those years we fought a lot,” Yijun recalled, “because those two, my husband and my girlfriend, they both pulled for my attention, and the child needed me also.” Because Yijun could not give her girlfriend “a life with just the two of us” as her girlfriend desired, and because she feared that her girlfriend would leave her to marry a man, Yijun served this woman tirelessly: shopping for and preparing every meal (even returning home on her lunch break to cook for her girlfriend); buying, washing, mending, ironing, and laying out her girlfriend’s clothes each day; anticipating her desires and attending to her every need, while also shutting her eyes to her girlfriend’s infidelities. At the same time, she felt guilty for her inability to give her husband a normal marriage, and did what she could to make it up to him as well; she even submitted to her sexual “duty as a wife,” although she described this to me as a feeling of being raped. This was a powerful statement
for Yijun to make, especially given that she, like other Ts of her generation, avoided speaking openly of sex in her conversations with me. Yijun wanted to give her son a stable home and a good future, all the more so because of her own ongoing battle with depression. She expressed to me numerous times that she had found the LGBT community “too late,” having already experienced crushing sorrows, but that her son had a chance to build a stable life with his boyfriend and find real happiness.

Yijun sacrificed many years of her life for her girlfriend, husband, and son, whom she loved and cared for in different ways. In the end, Yijun finally divorced her husband, her girlfriend did leave her to marry a man, and Yijun broke ties with both her marital and natal families. When I met her, she described herself to me as a person without a home. In my outsider’s impression, Yijun had a harmonious home with her son, with whom she enjoyed an immensely close and affectionate relationship. However, for Yijun, this was not a jiā (home, family, household) and although she accepted this for herself, she wanted something different for her son.

What do these glimpses of Yijun’s story reveal to us about family pressure under patrilineality? For Yijun, “family pressure” took multiple forms, from her devaluation within her natal family on the basis of her female sex (placing her lower than her brothers) and her masculine gender (placing her lower than her normatively gendered sisters), to her forced dependence on her husband (e.g., the fact that she could not get a C-section without his signature), to the pressure she felt in balancing her competing commitments to her husband and girlfriend, while also striving to be an attentive mother to her son. Yijun acknowledged that some people look down on her for entering a heterosexual marriage. “But,” she added, “if I didn’t walk into married life, how could I get such a sweet and close friend, my son? We share all our secrets and support one another.” Moreover, Yijun used heterosexual marriage
strategically to leave her father’s household and create a life with her girlfriend that would have been impossible otherwise.

Chao describes “patrilineal obligation to maternal productivity” as forming the basis of oppression for lesbians in Taiwan (Chao, 2002, p.282). Yijun’s emphasis on her weight loss and physical decline—a theme brought up by several married women in my sample—underscores the stark embodiment of this oppression woven throughout her life story. Indeed, the emphasis on family “pressure” (yālì) may at times cover over the depth of family-based oppression (yāpò) which has characterized lives like Yijun’s. Yijun negotiated the terms of her patrilineal obligations by bringing her woman partner into her marital home, and, later in life, by finally divorcing her husband. Her resiliency does not excuse away the oppression she was forced to endure, and which she herself would prevent at all costs for her own child. What it does show is the strength and creativity required of lesbians who carry out patrilineal reproduction while also negotiating space for lesbian intimacy within their heterosexual households.

The stories shared by Kay and Yijun illustrate a pó and a T perspective, respectively, on lesbian life within heterosexual marriage, and are reflective of the kinds of stories I heard regularly in the field, at such events as the Lesbian Desires Within Marriage forum as well as in more casual conversations. Again, it is impossible to know what proportion of lesbians in Taiwan have entered heterosexual marriages (or put another way, what proportion of heterosexually married women in Taiwan might describe themselves as lesbians). On one hand, there is a lack of quantitative research to provide a sense of the numbers of LGBT people in different family situations; on the other hand, it is unlikely that heterosexually married lesbians would show up in any kind of survey data, since they would simply be counted as married and therefore heterosexual. At this point ethnographic evidence—
including that produced by LGBT organizations as well as scholarly research—remains the primary method for learning about how Taiwanese lesbians negotiate gender, sexuality, and family within the larger framework of heterosexual marriage.

I now turn my attention to another form of negotiated kinship, emerging from the increasing visibility of LGBT communities, which has made it possible for lesbians and gay men to find one another for the purposes of marriage.

4.3.2 Marriages to Gay Men

Activists and researchers have observed lesbian-gay cooperative marriages in several East Asian countries, and an increasing number of websites facilitate these matches (see, for example, Cho, 2009 writing about Korea, and Engebretsen, 2009 and Kam, 2012 writing about China). While there are no estimates of the number of people who have entered cooperative marriages, ethnographic evidence suggests that such marriages are increasing in number as more lesbians and gays meet one another in person and online. Gay legal activist Zhou Dan reports a steady annual increase in the number of people seeking legal advice about cooperative marriages in Shanghai (Kam, 2012, pp. 100-101). Consistent with the numbers of cooperative marriages reported by other ethnographers working with gay and lesbian populations in Asia, I met three people currently involved in cooperative marriages either as the marital partner, or as someone in a long-term same-sex relationship with a cooperatively married partner (e.g., a T in a relationship with a pó who is married to a gay man). Two of my gay interviewees were actively seeking cooperative marriages, one because of pressure from his parents to do so. Half a dozen other lesbian and gay informants

47 I follow Lucetta Yip Lo Kam (2012) in referring to these as cooperative marriages; Cho (2009) and Engebretsen (2013) refer to them as contract marriages. This is not a contract in the legal sense but rather a more personal agreement between the parties, although legal statements are sometimes drafted for financial arrangements (Kam, 2012, p. 101). As Cho (2009) discusses in his excellent article on contract marriages in South Korea, this agreement requires a very high level of trust, with gendered complications likely to arise.
mentioned cooperative marriage as a possibility, but were not actively taking steps to pursue this path. Some parents were also aware of these arrangements and brought them up during our interviews, as I discuss later in this section.

Arrangements within these marriages vary, but usually involve a public display of coupledom for the families and private maintenance of lesbian and gay relationships. Both partners are released from expectations for heterosexual consummation and, ostensibly, enjoy freedom to cultivate their primary same-sex relationships under the protective cover of marriage. In many other respects, however, lesbians who marry gay men face similar pressures to lesbians who marry straight men, particularly surrounding family work and pressure from in-laws. Such was the case for Betty, a 38-year-old pó married to a gay man and partnered with a 43-year-old T, Lu, whom I got to know over a period of several months. When I interviewed Lu in Taichung in the summer of 2012, she and Betty had been together for 16 years. Five years into their relationship, Betty married a gay man, Henry, and had triplets with him through in vitro fertilization. Lu explained to me that they did this to be filial (xiàoshùn) and to pass on Henry’s family line (chuán zōng jiē dài). In retrospect, she did not think this was a very good idea, “because getting married is not just two people’s business. It involves two families! What you need to do is more than you expect. It’s so much trouble.” At first, she said, Betty’s husband did a good job. He visited Betty’s family on holidays and made it appear as if they were a “normal couple.” But this arrangement did not last long:

48 That I tell this story through Lu’s eyes is itself a part of the story. Betty’s family responsibilities made it impossible for her to sit down for a formal interview. This was the case for several women—heterosexual mothers and sisters as well as married lesbians—who had young children or grandchildren at home and/or co-resided with their in-laws. In a few cases, we worked around this by doing the interview on the go, with the children present, but the combination of triplets and in-law pressures ruled this out for Betty. I am not aware of any men who declined my interview as a direct result of their family responsibilities.
He couldn’t stand it very quickly. He was like, ‘Why do I have to deal with your parents?’ His tolerance for pressure is very low, you know. I said, ‘My girlfriend has to live with your parents! Have you ever thought about that? Can you imagine the amount of pressure you’d be under if you had to go and live with another family? You’ve never lived with her parents!’ He merely visited them on Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, or Chinese New Year, and that’s it! And he couldn’t stand it!

Henry’s intolerance for pressure reached a breaking point in the year of his father’s death. In a series of volatile events, Henry revealed the cooperative marriage to his parents, exposing his gay sexuality and Betty’s lesbianism, asked Betty for a divorce, and called on Betty’s natal family to take her back. Seeing my astonishment in hearing of this turn of events, Lu explained:

[Henry] felt like he had fulfilled his responsibilities, he had paid his dues to his father by giving his father posterity (gěi tā yīgè jiăodài). That’s when he had a big fight with my girlfriend and said he wanted a divorce… I was very angry when I heard about it. I called him and said, ‘Why did you do this thing? Now that you have told your parents, should we carry on this act? You should’ve at least let me know first!’ He said, ‘This is our business; you have no right to get involved (nǐ méi yǒu zīgê guān zhè jiàn shì).’ I got so angry that I went over to his house immediately. He just hid upstairs and was too scared to come down to talk to me. I was like, ‘You chicken shit!’

In many months of knowing Lu, this was the only time I saw a disturbance in her good-natured demeanor and even temper. Her eyes flashed and she pounded the table with her fist, as she repeated “no right!” (méi yǒu zīgê) in a tone of rage and disbelief. It is no wonder she was so angry—despite the agreements they had made at the outset of the marriage, Henry had used Lu’s legal and social vulnerability to position her as a non-member of the family. The betrayal stung all the more deeply coming from a gay man. After a few moments she calmed down and continued with her story. In the end, Henry changed his mind about the divorce after Betty’s father threatened to take his daughter home but leave the triplets with Henry. “[Henry] thought we would take the kids with us and raise them ourselves,” Lu told me (referring here to herself and Betty as co-parents of the children). The prospect of being left with the kids frightened Henry into staying in the marriage.

Gradually things resumed a kind of stability. Henry continued to date men, but he kept these relationships out of the family’s sight. His mother, brothers, and children have never met
any of the men he dates, while Lu is well known to all members of the family, for better or worse—better when they appreciate her care for Betty and the children, and worse when they characterize her as an unwholesome person and a bad influence because of her T masculinity and the intimate nature of her and Betty’s relationship. The exposure of the relationship compromised Lu’s valued relationship with Betty’s mother, and has made it much more difficult for her to be involved in Betty’s and the children’s lives to the extent they desire.

Henry is similar to other gay men I spoke to who balanced their gay relationships and family lives by keeping these in separate spheres. But Betty’s daily family responsibilities make this kind of compartmentalization impossible. Like a large percentage of married women in Taiwan, she lives with her husband’s family (currently, her mother- and brother-in-law, as her father-in-law has passed away) and provides the bulk of the eldercare, childcare, and other domestic work for her marital family. When I asked about Henry’s contribution to the day-to-day work of raising triplets, Lu chuckled. “A gay man is still a man,” she said. “In this way he is no different from any other husband.”

Betty and Henry’s cooperative marriage provides a clear picture of “family pressure” as a gendered phenomenon. After the kids were born, Henry felt that he had fulfilled his obligations to his parents. He did not view rearing the children as part of his duty to chuán zōng jiē dài —for him, getting married and producing genetic offspring was the culmination of filiality. In contrast, Betty’s family obligations did not culminate, but rather multiplied with her marriage (constituting her entrance into her husband’s household) and the birth of her children. As a result, she had limited time to cultivate extramarital relationships. Like Yijun, the T mother introduced earlier in this chapter, Betty resolved this by incorporating her lesbian partner into her marital family structure, identifying Lu as a co-parent and merging
families.\textsuperscript{49} For example, on the Chinese New Year holiday, Betty visits Henry’s relatives, Lu’s parents, and her own parents on designated days. But because the bulk of her time is spent with her children and in-laws, and because the families have become uneasy about their close relationship, Lu and Betty are not able to be together as often as they would like. Meanwhile Henry has comparatively few constraints on his time and mobility, and his intimate relationships are not subject to the same level of family scrutiny.

Not surprisingly, gay men are more likely to initiate cooperative marriages than are lesbians in Taiwan. On several occasions, I observed (in person and online) gay men bringing this up as a possibility, and lesbians firmly rebuffing them. It is also notable that parents of gay men whom I interviewed held this out as a hope. Some had even encouraged their sons to find a lesbian to marry. One man shared with me that once this occurred to his mom and dad, he found himself under a new version of “marriage pressure,” the pressure to marry a lesbian! In contrast, parents of lesbians—and especially mothers of lesbians—emphatically opposed such arrangements. This lively conversation between Ye Mama (age 62) and her daughter DuoDuo (age 42) in their home in Luodong is representative of how mothers of lesbians spoke to me about this issue:

DuoDuo: Some gay men seek out lesbians online to have arranged marriages because they are under a lot of pressure. They would even pay a lesbian to marry them.

Ye Mama: No, don’t do it! If you ever need the money, I’ll give it to you.

DuoDuo: I am not going to do it! I’m just saying a lot of people do it. It’s very hard and unfair for the women.

Ye Mama: Yeah, I am someone’s wife, too, so I know, in a family, the son’s wife has the lowest status. Like some of your father’s sisters are younger than me, but they would complain to their mother about me, and my mother-in-law would believe them and treat me badly. So, living together with them was very tough for me. By the time I had my second child, my sisters-in-law had children, too. I had to take care of five

\textsuperscript{49} This merging of families was social, not legal; Lu has no legal standing or official ties to Betty and the three children (and Lu does consider these to be her children, referring to herself as their second mother and actively taking this role in their life).
children all by myself! When I washed the floor, I was not allowed to use a mop because my mother-in-law didn’t like that. I had to be on my knees wiping the floor with a rag in my hands. I had to get up at five every morning to make lunch boxes while I cooked breakfast. It was the most miserable period of my life (wǒ rénshēng zuì cán de yīduàn shíjiān). When I finished making breakfast, I had to feed all five children. By the time I could sit down and eat, there was nothing left on the table. So, I would mix whatever was left in the dishes in a bowl of rice. I really felt like a dog would have better food than me. That’s why I was very skinny then, less than 50 kg. Why on earth should a woman go through such hardship (dàodǐ wèishéme yīgè nǚrén yào rúcǐ xīnkǔ)?

DuoDuo: Yeah, but a lot of times, [lesbians and gay men who enter cooperative marriages] thought they had achieved an agreement, because those gay men need to chuán zōng jiē dài…

Ye Mama: Then it’s their business, they should not bring a lesbian into this as a sacrifice (gàn ma zhāo nǚ tóngzhì lái xīshēng)!

DuoDuo: They think if they pay the lesbian, then it’s a mutual agreement. I pay you to help me, like that.

Ye Mama: This help is a lifetime of suffering (zhège bāngmáng shì yībèizi de tòngkū). If the man refused to divorce, the money would run out eventually! The woman’s whole life would be ruined (yīshēng jiù huile). No, it’s not good.

In this conversation, Ye Mama marshaled evidence from her own experiences as a wife and mother to highlight the disadvantages for women who enter cooperative marriages “as a sacrifice” in the service of patrilineal reproduction. In her estimation, and in Henry and Betty’s example, men’s pressure to chuán zōng jiē dài becomes women’s work, or what Ye Mama called “a lifetime of suffering.”

Ye Mama was one of several mothers who had come around to her daughters’ lesbian sexuality (she had one T, one pó [DuoDuo], and one unmarried straight daughter) by recalling her own unhappy nuptial life, and concluding that women are not necessarily better off with a heterosexual marriage and family. Her willingness to support her daughters financially—perhaps due to the fact that she had no sons and had poor relationships with her husband’s relatives—made the option to forego marriage more viable for DuoDuo and her T sister. For many other lesbians, this option has carried a heavy economic penalty, as I will show next.
4.4 Family Pressures for Lesbians Who are Divorced or Unmarried

Rapid social and family changes in Taiwan have made it possible for increasing numbers of people to delay or forego heterosexual marriage. Women’s median age at first marriage rose from 22 in 1975, to 28 in 2005 (Zabin et al., 2005), to 29.5 in 2013 (R.O.C. Ministry of the Interior, 2013). Today, Taiwan is home to one of the latest marrying and lowest fertility populations in the world. The proportion of Taiwanese women ages 35-39 who have never married quadrupled from 4 percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 2005—and research suggests that women who have not married by their late thirties are unlikely to marry or become mothers (Yang and Tsai, 2009). During this period the divorce rate also increased dramatically, from 0.37 per 1,000 people in 1970 to 2.51 per 1,000 people in 2010 (Pan and Lin, 2013).

LGBT people have helped to shape this new social landscape and occupy it in ways that were impossible for earlier cohorts. A majority of informants in my young adult (18-29) and early midlife (30-44) groups do not plan to get heterosexually married. At the time of interview, many of my younger informants lived with their parents—the most common arrangement for unmarried twenty-somethings in Taiwan—while others had set up house with a same-sex partner, and still others lived in a college or work dormitory, or rented or owned a flat (with women more likely to rent and men more likely to own, as I soon discuss). In contrast to unmarried lesbians and gays a decade prior, these young people can point to a

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50 For substantial data on many of these changes—including education and employment opportunities for women, economic growth, and the transition from arranged marriages to love matches—see Thornton and Lin’s (1994) edited volume on Social Change and the Family in Taiwan. For a detailed account of revisions to Taiwan’s Family Code, with attention to the status of women in society, and continued ambivalence of the law toward women (of particular relevance to the findings I present in this chapter), see Shu-Chin Grace Kuo’s (2007) cultural legal study of the transformation of family law in Taiwan.
large number of singles in their own age bracket to explain why they have not yet married. Some have even bravely asserted to their parents that marriage is unnecessary or doesn’t interest them. Given these trends in LGBT circles and the wider society, lesbians who fashion lives outside heterosexual marriage constitute a rapidly growing and important social group in Taiwan.

Contrary to characterizations of these women as facing “less pressure” because they do not shoulder the ritual responsibilities of sons, divorced and unmarried lesbians are coping with immense pressures related to the distribution of family resources, labor, and power along patrilineal lines. These include barriers to wealth accumulation, gender-based income disparities, lack of social support for single mothers, housing insecurity, cumulative disadvantages due to favoritism toward sons in some families, and pressure to compensate for what they cannot provide to their parents as daughters. For these women, family pressure is not reducible to parents’ nagging about when they might marry, but is better conceptualized as a set of material conditions that place women outside the realm of family support.52

51 None of my informants went so far as to suggest same-sex marriage as an alternative. Although same-sex marriage is a topic of discussion within the LGBT community, and Taiwan’s Legislative Yuan is considering a family diversity bill (duoyuan jiating fan) that would extend legal rights and benefits to same-sex couples, this is not an issue any of my informants had broached with their own parents. My informants did not assume that State recognition of same-sex marriage would result in greater family acceptance, as is sometimes implied within the US marriage equality movement (they certainly hoped for greater family acceptance, but did not connect this to legal marriage), and many felt that the concept of same-sex marriage would be unintelligible to their family members. This is partly due to the deeply gendered nature of marriage, and the fact that it continues to be associated with the social reproduction of the patrilineal household rather than simply a contract between two people in love.

52 Of course, the capacity for family support is constituted by class as much as by gender, and some lesbians from economically advantaged families lived comfortably off the family’s support into their thirties. However, this created a condition of dependency in which families could (and did) demand access to and information about their daughter’s personal affairs (a phenomenon I discuss further in chapters 5 and 6). In contrast, men who received support from their parents were not treated as dependents who had not yet grown up and moved forward with their lives, so much as adults entitled to their share of family resources.
Women’s cumulative disadvantages relative to men within their families came up frequently in my interviews and fieldwork, through mechanisms as varied as the gendered distribution of labor among siblings (with sisters routinely caring for and cleaning up after their brothers), valuation of sons over daughters (zhòng nán qīng nǚ), parents’ greater willingness to bail sons out of difficult circumstances,\(^{53}\) and negotiations around family assets. Of these, the mechanism which emerged most consistently and intensely concerned the question of establishing and being part of a jiā—a word that simultaneously connotes one’s house or dwelling place, family, and home. In this section, I focus on the embodiment of patrilineality through decisions about property and household establishment, as a point of departure for analyzing family pressure among lesbians who are divorced and those who have never married.

4.4.1 Property Loss and Housing Insecurity

As for me, I think financially I would be at a disadvantage [in a divorce] because it has always been difficult to talk with my husband about these things. So now I’m just putting this topic on hold… I wanted a divorce before, but now I just go ahead and do what I want. Because divorce doesn’t benefit me, but I could lose a lot. I don’t know, I just think it’s not necessary to divorce now.

We had been talking for nearly three hours, the tea in front of us cooled to room temperature, my mind and the recording device on the kitchen table bursting with stories about Kay’s life, her unhappy marriage, years of longing for divorce, long journey of self-discovery, and tremendous relief at finally living by herself. Yet the place she landed—separation without divorce—was suffused not with emotion so much as a cool practicality. Kay’s house in Kaohsiung is one of the things she could lose in a divorce, a risk she shares in common with other women leaving their marriages (see Bih and Chen, 2010; Lee, 2001). Even divorced

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\(^{53}\) Both men and women acknowledged that this was happening in their families. For example, a gay man noted that his sister resented his coming out as gay because she viewed this as just one more thing his parents let him get away with, while she had to constantly attend to her brother’s needs and yet never earned their parents’ favor.
women who have made a sizable investment in family property with their own money may find themselves without a home, as a result of the common practice of placing only the husband’s name on the deed (Lee, 2001; see also Fincher, 2013 for a discussion of related issues in Mainland China).

While Kay’s children are grown, many lesbians who contemplate divorce face the task of raising children as single mothers with limited social support. The experiences of single fathers and mothers differ considerably in Taiwan’s welfare system, with men more likely to receive support from their natal families (Pan and Lin, 2013) and to use home ownership and remarriage as a pathway to upward mobility, while women are more likely to find themselves displaced from their homes and coping with poverty (Lee, 2001). In every case of (straight or gay) single fatherhood I observed, female family members were major caregivers, with children’s paternal grandparents and aunts (men’s mothers and sisters) doing the lion’s share of the childrearing tasks. Some single mothers also rely on family support, but most live alone with their children, often under conditions of financial hardship (Pan and Lin, 2013). For Yijun, as for many single mothers, this entailed frequent moving, as she shared while showing me photo albums of her life with her son during and after marriage:

I am really proud of my son. I feel sorry that I can’t give him a perfect home. My son will be 21 this year. We have moved ten times in his life. So many times. Every time, I tell him, ‘I’m sorry, we have to move again.’ My son always smiles at me and says, ‘It’s ok, I’m used to it.’ When I hear this, my heart aches.

Antonia Yen-ning Chao (2002, 2005) has written about the significance of moving house (bānjìa) for older generation Ts, showing how barriers to stable housing shaped T social identities under the conditions of relational-materialistic citizenship. Chao’s discussion of moving house is particularly salient for contextualizing Yijun’s comment to me. The term jià refers at once to home, family, house, and household, and “entails a specific form of material base on which a legitimate patrilineal household can be founded,” providing social security
through a family life defined in heterosexual, patrilineal terms; “more importantly, an ‘authentic’ house should be capable of self replication: very much like the ways a patriline regenerates itself through biological reproduction, the parents’ house (one’s ‘ontological home’) produces its replica as one enters into a nuptial life” (Chao, 2002, p. 275). From this view, Yijun’s description of herself as a person without a home is not merely a reference to her constantly changing place of residence, but also to her lack of social security as a result of her exit from a “legitimate patrilineal household.”

Issues of property loss and housing insecurity, such as those Yijun experienced and Kay avoided by continuing on in a heterosexual marriage, reveal the material base of the patrilineal household, which creates the conditions of severe family pressure for lesbians in Taiwan. These pressures are almost wholly invisible in writing and thinking about LGBT families of origin, as LGBT existence under patrilineality continues to be articulated in primarily male-centered terms. This male-centered approach is detrimental to the study of LGBT family of origin relationships and misses an important opportunity to identify patrilineally-based pressures and oppressions that persist within families, even as the society moves toward greater gender parity in some areas. The unevenness of these changes creates all manner of “catch-22” scenarios—for example, that it is now possible for more women to delay or forego marriage, but families continue to transfer almost all of their assets to sons, thereby increasing the financial hardships faced by women even as possibilities for living apart from men become more socially acceptable.

4.4.2 Using Women’s Money to Pay for Men’s Property

Unmarried women are often expected to contribute financially to their natal families even as they are cut off from family capital acquisition through property ownership. This wider social problem is evident in my sample in that women were far less likely than men to
own property, but just as likely as men to be helping to subsidize property with their income. Issues of property ownership came up in a majority of my interviews with lesbians in the early midlife and midlife groups; four of these women in total owned their homes, around 15% of the women in the study. Men in these groups did not mention home ownership unless asked, and nearly all men in their forties and older owned their homes and had received family support at some point to facilitate home ownership or other types of property ownership, including two cases in which parents subsidized the expenses of opening a gay bookstore and a gay bar, respectively. I never found a lesbian-themed business that was subsidized with family money; while such cases probably exist, they are even rarer than the already quite special cases of parents helping their sons to make these investments. Among young adult interviewees, rates of home ownership were much lower—two men and no women owned property; a majority lived with their parents or in apartments owned by their parents or other relatives—but expectations for eventual property ownership followed similar gender patterns to those described above. Overall rates of homeownership in Taiwan are quite high; in 2011, around 80 percent of homes were owned by the people living in them (compared to 67 percent of homes in the United States) and another 5 percent were owned by non-resident kin (R.O.C. Ministry of the Interior, 2012).

Across all cohorts, I found women who were making significant financial contributions to their families of origin. Peishan, a 47-year-old T from Taichung, shared this story about her sizeable investment and lack of return on family property:

My father left a house when he died. This is the house my mother is living in now. I knew my younger brother had debts, so I told him it’s better to transfer the house under my name, because I know myself, I know that I can keep it for him. At first, my mother said ok, but she probably felt very helpless and unsure about what to do, because my father passed very suddenly. So, she consulted with her sisters, who don’t know the situation of our family. They told my mother, ‘No! How can it be given to the daughter and not the son?’ But the truth is, when my family bought the house, I was 19 and had started working; I helped pay for the house, while my brother never
brought a penny home. Honestly speaking, the house was rightfully mine; it wasn’t too much to ask at all. But my mother said no. What she said was unacceptable to me; it was the biggest conflict I had with her in my life. She said, ‘No, the daughter is too overbearing. She can’t have everything (nǚ’ér tài bàqìle, yào quánbù bǔxìng)!’ I said, fine. My mother didn’t know my brother had debts, and if he had property under his name, the property would be seized… And then just as expected, his debt problems came up again. I paid those back for him too.

This was the second time Peishan had used her own money to settle her brother’s gambling debts. At the time of this interview, Peishan’s brother was unemployed and supported by his female relatives. Peishan is one of several lesbian informants who had paid debts and made other financial contributions for the benefit of their male relatives. I also interviewed men who had financially supported their younger brothers’ education, but I did not interview any men who were making similar investments in their sisters or female cousins.

Home ownership was unusual enough among lesbians in my sample to warrant special attention (in a way it did not for gay men, who largely took it for granted). For example, as I was completing the demographic section for Chunjao, a 39-year-old T, I asked, “With whom do you live (Nǐ gēn shuí zhù zài yīqǐ)?” To which Chunjao replied, “My mother. Actually, my mother lives with me. That’s not the same [as saying I live with my mother] (Yīnggāi shì wǒ māmā gēn wǒ yīqǐ zhù. Bù yǐyàng. Wǒ māmā gēn wǒ zhù).” Chunjao’s gentle correction of my phrasing was important because, as I would soon learn from her interview, it meaningfully shaped the power dynamic of her family. Chunjao did not worry about bringing girlfriends home because owning the residence in which she lived with her mother gave her a feeling of greater autonomy. Lesbians who cohabited with family members without sharing in ownership of the property experienced more constraints and conflicts about how they used the space.

It is telling that Peishan, the T who paid her brothers’ debts, identified the housing issue as the biggest conflict she’d ever had with her mother. When I asked lesbians about memorable “conflicts” with each of their family members, they were far more likely to bring
up these issues of resource distribution than to describe an inflammatory “coming out”
incident (although those had also taken place in some of their lives). Neither Kay, Yijun, nor
Peishan spent much time fretting about whether their parents knew of their lesbianism (for
Yijun and Peishan, like most Ts in my research, the issue of sexuality had always been
secondary to their masculinity, which their parents [especially mothers] had fiercely opposed
but gradually given up on changing). They spent a larger portion of their energies coping
with financial strain created by the same patrilineal principles that have been identified as a
source of family pressure for gay men. Importantly, the strain they experienced is not unique
to lesbians; straight women who live apart from men may experience similar kinds of strain,
though lesbians are more likely than are straight women to find themselves in such a position.
Recognizing these as lesbian issues requires a shift from thinking primarily or exclusively in
terms of sexuality (placing lesbians in the same group as gay men, separate from straight
women) to examining the places where lesbian and gay interests do not align and lesbians’
subordination as women is itself a legitimate concern for LGBT communities and queer
politics.\footnote{It is equally important not to err in another direction, subsuming lesbianism into feminism,
and obscuring the ways in which lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals of all genders have been
persecuted as sexual deviants and perverts, as Gayle Rubin has famously argued (English,
Hollibaugh, and Rubin, 1982; Rubin, 1993). Given the history of lesbian marginalization
within Taiwan’s feminist movement and break from that movement in the 1990’s (Sang,
2003, pp. 235-246), I do not believe the impetus for change lies in lesbian alliances with
heterosexual feminists so much as in distinctively lesbian and queer activism surrounding the
problems of gender oppression in the home and family.}

Struggles over housing and home are a lifelong concern for many lesbians, continuing
into and even after death. I conclude this section by showing how the patrilineal definition of
family materializes in death and burial customs, and in the physical exclusion of unmarried
women from an ancestral home. This is not a departure from so much as an extension of the
current discussion, as the housing of bodies and spirits in and after death both signifies and solidifies their place in the patrilineal household.

4.4.3 Housing After Death: Perpetual Dislocation from the Jiā

A small number of my informants also pointed to a pervasive, but far less visible form of lesbian marginalization under patrilineality, concerning funeral and burial customs. Customarily, to be granted status as an ancestor—incorporated into the family lineage, included on the ancestral tablet in the family home, and offered incense, food, and veneration by descendants—one must marry and produce a male heir. Funeral rituals are then performed to grant ancestral status, which is a primary mechanism for social reproduction of the patrilineal household (Shih, 2007, 2010). While unmarried and childless men as well as women violate the conditions that constitute a “good death” providing a pathway to ancestor status, rituals exist to reincorporate men into the ancestral line (see Shih, 2010 for a description of such rituals). However, no such rituals exist for women, who can never become members of their fathers’ households. Without a husband and son, a deceased woman traditionally became a maiden ghost, denied the permanent home and privileges associated with ancestor status. In contemporary Taiwan, she may be placed in a temple for unmarried women (gūniang miào) where her family members can visit, but where her primary after life care is provided by strangers. In contrast, an unmarried man can be buried with his natal family, and cared for daily by his own kin.

This marginalization is less visible because many younger people view end-of-life issues as far removed from their everyday cares and concerns, and do not place much stock in these customs in principle. However, when the customs are actually carried out, they can elicit strong feelings of injustice. For example, a 29-year-old T who lost a close T friend to cancer when both were in their late teens, told me with palpable anger how radically unfair
she felt it was that her friend had been banished to a temple as an “unfilial” daughter. The sting of this memory had persisted over a decade, and this T told her own mother that she would haunt her (wǒ zuòguì yě huì lái zhǎo nǐ) if her mother placed her in a temple rather than bringing her home, should she happen to die before her parents. Whether or not this T and her mom place much stock in the specter of haunting (neither considers herself to be a devout person or carries out any spiritual practices on a regular basis), this bold statement serves as a reminder that sexual and gender disparities in death are a part of lesbian existence under patrilineality. Moreover, these practices do not exist on a purely cosmological plane—rather, ideas about how bodies and spirits should be housed and cared for in the afterlife are tied up with the material practices of family resource distribution, and the unequal valuation of men and boys as family insiders, while women and girls may be placed outside the realm of family support.

Very few of my informants had experienced firsthand the deaths of unmarried lesbians and gays, due to the fact that most LGBT elders are married and have children. However, there is a growing concern about these issues within LGBT circles as increasing numbers of people plan to remain unmarried and childless through their lifetimes. Some of the most popular workshops hosted by the LGBT Elders Working Group concerned this topic—for example, bringing a funeral rites performer (lǐyí shì) to discuss issues of gender and sexuality and provide people with a greater sense of agency in demanding changes in their funeral participation and, eventually, in their own and their partners’ funeral rites and afterlife care. As some heterosexuals are also remaining unmarried and childless, this is an area where heterosexuals can learn from their LGBT counterparts, who have grappled deeply with what it means to be a family-outsider. Notably, it is not sexual orientation, but gendered family roles, that are most centrally at stake in these negotiations—serving as reminder that in Taiwan, as in many East Asian societies, the primary obstacles for LGBT people are not
moral objections to homosexuality per se, but rather objections to the “opting out” of LGBT people from normative gender and family relations (see, for example, Ching, 2010; Khor and Kamano, 2007; Sang, 2003).

Unfortunately, LGBT family issues are often defined in ways that exclude the pressures Taiwanese lesbians face as women living in a patrilineal society. The focus on “pressure to produce a male heir” has been centered on gay men, with more limited attention to how lesbians are also held accountable to the principles of patrilineal reproduction, in ways that significantly shape the conditions of their lives (and deaths). Making lesbians the center of analysis sharpens our knowledge of the literal and figurative bricks and mortar of the patrilineal household as it is reproduced from one generation to the next—the labor, resources, power, and daily negotiations that sustain it, and those that beset it with cracks and fissures.

4.5 Missing Transgender Voices

In the larger study of LGBT families of origin in Taiwan, identifying important differences between lesbians and gay men raises as many questions as it answers. If the social imperative to chuán zōng jiē dài matters as much for lesbians as for gay men, albeit in different and deeply gendered ways, how does it matter for those who live outside of conventional gender categories or transition from one gender to another? My choice to focus here on transgender (kuà xìngbié) informants is motivated by the presence of trans-identified informants and their family members in my fieldwork and interview data, and the absence of these voices in family studies more broadly. However, as discussed in the subsection On Language and Translation, kuà xìngbié is neither an approximation of US transgender identity, nor the only or definitive form of gender nonconformity in my sample. The “still
breaking wave” of transgender studies in Asia (Martin and Ho, 2006, p. 185) shows many ways to be and imagine “transgender,” and my transgender informants and their family members, including the eight life history interviewees, used this concept creatively to give meaning to their own experiences, without insisting on a particular definition or embodiment.

As noted previously, I had expected my transgender informants to negotiate the pressures of chuán zōng jiē dài primarily in relation to the sex assigned to them at birth, and to this end, I anticipated that transgender men would share in common with lesbians the pressures I have described throughout this chapter. There is certainly a great degree of overlap between the experiences of lesbians of all genders, including very masculine Ts, and the experiences of people who distinguish themselves from female masculinity on the basis of their more intrinsic maleness (see footnote 4 for a discussion about this distinction and its limitations). However, my interviews with transgender informants and my participation in trans spaces soon disrupted my assumptions about the singular authority of birth sex in determining a person’s place in the patriline.

I found that changing laws, policies, and practices surrounding sex and gender designation, as well as the production of gender through daily family roles and rituals, had in fact altered some informants’ obligations to their parents and relation to their ancestors. These changes also altered the pressures placed on their significant others, who were repositioned within the patrilineal family system as a result of their partner’s gender transition. My data suggest that gender transition does not only impact this family system—recalibrating the position of multiple people within the family (if and when the transition is known and accepted to some degree by kin)—but also is accomplished through it, to the extent that family roles and rituals produce gendered subjects. These findings enrich the
discussion of patrilineal kinship as processual and negotiated, as well as continue to show its embodied and relational-materialistic dimensions.

I will draw from the life story of my informant Zhixiong to illuminate gender transition from this new angle of vision. Zhixiong is among the pioneers of new modes of gender transition in Taiwan, having utilized medical and legal pathways to establish himself not only as a man in society, but also (and just as significantly) as a son to his mother. He is the oldest trans man I interviewed, and as such offers a particularly instructive glimpse into the family implications of gender transition, since my younger trans informants had not yet begun to think about such issues as elder care, ancestral care, or their future living situations (most were students, living at home or in dormitories, and in the very early stages of their transitions). Zhixiong’s story does not speak for or about other transsexual men in Taiwan. However, its great value is not in its representativeness, but in the unique possibilities it reveals for gender transition and family change over the life course.

4.6 Gender Transition within a Patrilineal and Patrilocal Family System: Zhixiong’s Story

Coral, the trans woman introduced in the introductory chapter, is close in age to Zhixiong (also in her mid-forties). At the time of interview, she had not undergone a medical or legal transition but dressed as a woman every day in the home she shared with her parents. Her parents had not withdrawn financial support or cut her out of the family line on the basis of her femininity, and I never directly observed any families cutting off their gay sons; although such cases certainly exist, they are more infrequent in Taiwan compared to the US, where cutting off, throwing out, or even disowning one’s child remains a major contributor to LGBT youth homelessness (virtually unheard of in Taiwan). It would seem that male privilege, once earned, is hard to dislodge. Coral did not feel pressure to pass on the family name, but she also had an older brother with two kids, thus it is not possible to say whether the relaxing of this pressure had anything to do with Coral’s gender. I strongly doubt that pressure to chuán zōng jiè dài would ease for an only or oldest son-to-daughter; however, further data is needed to answer this question.
Zhixiong is a 43-year-old straight man who was assigned female at birth and identified as a T lesbian for a large part of his life. At age 36, he had top and bottom surgeries, took testosterone injections, and changed his legal gender from female to male. I will highlight several aspects of Zhixiong’s transition in relation to patrilineality as embodied practice: his role in family rituals, his gendered relationship to his mother and brothers, and implications of transition for his girlfriend’s position within the family. I conclude by discussing the implications of my findings for transgender family studies, as well as for the analysis of contemporary patrilineal kinship which has concerned me throughout this chapter.

4.6.1 Transitioning through Family Rituals

Zhixiong’s physical and legal transition seven years prior to our interview marked an important set of changes in his family and personal life. However, becoming a man did not, for Zhixiong, begin or culminate with surgery or with the receipt of his new ID card. The family roles and rituals he performed were equally important in constructing his maleness. For example, he has always been the one to burn incense and pray to his ancestors, a task ordinarily reserved for men. This, as much as his men’s-style clothing, hair, posture, and mannerisms, communicated to Zhixiong’s family that he was not a woman. He even took on the role of a son during a funeral, one of the most intricately gender scripted rituals in contemporary Taiwan. Zhixiong brought up the funeral during our interview and noted its significance:

If you are a woman, the rituals you perform [at a funeral] are less complicated. They would just say, oh, you are the daughter of so and so, and then they would give the incense to pray, and that’s it. But if you’re a man, the rituals you have to perform and how you are treated is all very different. Like for some procedures in a funeral, because a woman is viewed as unclean (bù jié), they wouldn’t let a woman take part in those things. For men, they don’t have this concern. I went to my uncle’s funeral as

56 “Top surgery” to remove his breast tissue and create a more male contoured chest, and “bottom surgery” to remove his female reproductive organs and construct a penis.
a son of my family. Some relatives knew, and some didn’t. The ones who knew didn’t ask much, and the ones who didn’t know just thought I was a son, because my mother just told them, ‘This is my son.’ One special thing about my family is that we have many children, many sons, so they had no idea which son I was. So, there was no need to say much about it (bù yào jiàng tài duō).

Zhixiong’s experience at the funeral is important for several reasons. First, this occasion illustrates how gendered family roles may be negotiated, in this case, by relatives who knew but “didn’t ask much” and by his mother, who chose to present Zhixiong as a son rather than a daughter. In this moment, the family acted cooperatively to place Zhixiong in the position of a son for the purpose of the funeral rites. This occasion also illustrates how family rituals create gender. Stepping into this role made Zhixiong a man as much as his identity as a man made this role possible for him.

Acting as a son at the funeral was not about “gender identity” at the individual level, but about Zhixiong’s relationship to his uncle, mother, and brothers and, in a larger sense, his place in the patriline. These ritual and relational components are part of a collective transition in which all members of the family adjust their roles relative to one another.

4.6.2 Family Transition: From Daughter and Friend to Son and Daughter-in-Law

My interview included a set of questions about who does what for aging parents, and when I began by asking who takes his mother for doctor visits, Zhixiong said, “Me, me, me. It’s all me. Even the grocery shopping!” He explained that because his siblings have families of their own, “it is undoubtedly me who will take on this responsibility. That’s how I’ve always felt.” While Zhixiong has always felt this way, he senses that his mother’s feelings have changed as she increasingly comes to perceive him as a son:

I felt like I started giving back pretty early, but it became more visible after I had [gender confirmation] surgery. Surgery kind of justified everything. For example, she wants me to get married now. She’s quite traditional. Before, she probably felt that she has sons, so she should not let a daughter support her. She never said it, but I could tell that’s how she felt. But now, she feels that it’s right, like ‘I am being supported by my
son, not my daughter,’ and no one can say anything about it… Before surgery, my mother didn’t pressure me for marriage because she thought I was a homosexual, that I would never get married. But after surgery, she started saying things like, ‘Why is it that only two of you brothers got married? How about the rest of you? When are you getting married?’ stuff like that. She said, ‘If you have a girlfriend, bring her home.’ So I did. But then she started asking questions like, ‘The girl that you brought home the other day, when are you going to marry her? Will the two of you live at home after getting married?’ It’s like the questions you would get as a heterosexual!

His mother’s newfound interest in the possibility of marriage created new pressures not only for Zhixiong, but also for his girlfriend, who previously enjoyed the status of a friend and a guest in his mother’s home:

After surgery, [my girlfriend and I] talked about getting married. I thought, ‘Yeah, we could get married.’ But when we started talking about marriage, problems began to emerge. She realized she wasn’t ready for it yet. First, she said she didn’t want to live with my mother after marriage. I said, ‘Ok, we don’t have to live with my mother.’ But then she had more requests and conditions. I told her, ‘But if we get married, my mother is going to have expectations of you. It won’t be the same as when you were just my girlfriend. You will be her daughter-in-law, that’s a different role. Traditional or not, that’s just how it is. You won’t have to get up in the morning to cook or something, but you will still have to do your duties as a daughter-in-law. Like you can’t always go to my mother’s place and have her cook for you. You’ll have to help her do things. You don’t have to do it now because you are my girlfriend, you haven’t entered my family yet (nǐ hái méi jìn wǒ jiā mén).’ So, we had a lot of issues in this regard. And I realized I wasn’t ready for all this yet.

Throughout the interview, Zhixiong talked at length about the ways in which he had to learn to be man, ways he wasn’t prepared for yet. Although he was comfortable being a man in his own mind and body and in his daily interactions, he was not prepared for the transformation of his family gender—the possibility of bringing a wife into his family as a daughter-in-law and even becoming the head of a household. As he put it to me at one point,

After I got my new ID, I became a man, but there are many things I need to learn as a man. You were used to being someone’s boyfriend, but now you could be someone’s husband, and then a child’s father! You could become a family (nǐ huì biànhéng yīgè jiātíng).

At that moment I was reminded of Yijun, and her insistence, in the face of my protests, that she could never have a proper home and family. For Zhixiong, like Yijun, family formation is defined in heterosexual and male-centered terms. Yet in other ways,
Zhixiong’s new role in the family troubles the very system it appears to reinforce. It is physically impossible for Zhixiong to have biological children, having had his reproductive organs removed as part of his surgeries, thus he can never chuán zòng jiē dài; nevertheless he imagines stepping into shoes usually filled by a patrilineal successor. In this way Zhixiong is redefining what it means to be a husband and father, even as he grapples with the profound changes this transition holds for himself and his girlfriend. Transition is unmistakably a family process, a recalibration of multiple intersecting familial roles, and even as Zhixiong steps out of the category “woman,” he makes new space for a daughter-in-law to enter the family and care for his mother, in ways traditionally expected of a son’s wife.

4.7 **Implications**

Zhixiong’s story illustrates patrilineality as an embodied practice, as his bodily performance and transition altered his role in the family ritually as well as materially. Before his physical and legal transition through the contemporary pathways of medicine and the household registration system which issued Zhixiong’s new ID card, Zhixiong’s mother viewed him as a homosexual and did not treat him as a son for the purposes of co-residence, elder care, marriage pressure, and viewing his girlfriend as a potential daughter-in-law. The dramatic shift in his mother’s views is evidence of medical and State authority in making sex and gender determinations, which are then incorporated into the patrilineal family structure. At a particularly low point in Zhixiong’s (pre-transition) life, he was hospitalized for depression, and a psychiatrist advocated on his behalf, telling his mother that she should allow and accept his transition. The profession of psychiatry thus played an important role in facilitating Zhixiong’s transition from daughter to son.
At the same time, Zhixiong’s story suggests some measure of flexibility in that same patrilineal family structure. After all, he performed the family prayers and took responsibility for his mother’s welfare prior to his physical transition. Some of his relatives knew of his then-female status at his uncle’s funeral, and no one opposed him acting in the role of a son. Zhixiong’s gender is continuously negotiated through family roles and rituals, and individual decisions by various family members (such as his mother’s decision to call him her son at the funeral), as much as by his personal identity or State classification of his body as “male” or “female.” These roles, rituals, and decisions are not only responsive to but also constitutive of Zhixiong’s gender.

Existing English language concepts such as “gender identity” and “gender expression” are inadequate for making sense of the origins and effects of such changes, which are family- rather than individually-based. In order to widen the scope of transgender studies to include people and families in Taiwan as well as other parts of Asia and the world, the familial and patrilineal basis of gender must be examined in relation to the transition process. Transgender family studies should not be limited merely to analyses of whether and how family members accept a transgender individual, but expand to incorporate an analysis of how all family members “transition” in relation to one another, with regard to gendered family roles, rituals, and expectations.

These findings bring us full circle to the model of patrilineality advanced in the opening pages of this chapter, as a historically embedded process that is embodied, material, and negotiated. Married lesbians embody patrilineal reproduction through pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and elder care; divorced and unmarried lesbians face a material penalty exacted by housing insecurity and exclusion from family support networks; and while people of all genders negotiate their place within the patriline, these negotiations carry a special
urgency and visibility among transgender populations. An overemphasis on cultural and ideological constructions of filial piety and face has obscured the very real pressures created by the patrilineal distribution of family resources, labor, and power, which shape individuals’ life chances and decisions as significantly as any cultural norm.

Such pressures are not limited to LGBT populations. Indeed, many of the trends I have described also matter for normatively gendered, heterosexual people. Sharing a pressure in common with heterosexuals does not preclude it from being an “LGBT issue,” of import to LGBT communities, nor does it mean that LGBT and normatively gendered, heterosexual experiences are one and the same. The fact that straight divorcées and unmarried women also face housing insecurity does not negate the significance of this problem for lesbians, who are disproportionately represented among the ranks of women who live apart from men and the “legitimate patrilineal household.” At the same time, lesbians’ experiences of housing insecurity and other social problems are not necessarily equivalent to those of straight women. While straight women may be placed outside the realm of family support, they are still socially and culturally intelligible within the dominant scripts of gender, sexuality, and family. By contrast, lesbians are completely outside the system—at risk of becoming, as Chao put it, refugees in their own society (2002, p. 347; here Chao is writing specifically about older generation Ts)—both more vulnerable to exclusionary practices and more likely to experience these in multiple realms simultaneously (for example, facing discrimination in the workplace as well as the loss of family support, and no opportunity to reenter the family system through marriage to a desired partner). It is important to learn about lesbian and

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57 As my data have shown, these are not mutually exclusive categories—for example, Sam experienced the pressures of marriage and is now coping with housing insecurity as a divorced single mother; Zhixiong experienced the pressures of being an unmarried T and is now negotiating his new relationship to the patrilineal kinship system as a man and a son of the family.
transgender experiences of sexism to gain a fuller picture of the issues at stake, and to serve lesbian and transgender populations more effectively.

Taiwanese lesbian and transgender perspectives offer a sharply focused lens through which to analyze changes and continuities in the patrilineal family system. These perspectives also contribute meaningfully to the field of LGBT family studies. In particular, they show the importance of analyzing material as well as cultural facets of family life, recognizing the subordination of women within families as a lesbian family issue, and paying attention to the ways in which everyday family roles and rituals are a part of gender transition. As I have argued, notions such as “gender identity” and “gender expression” do not adequately capture the complexity of gender transition in the family context. New concepts are needed to reflect how family genders are mutually constructed, deconstructed, and negotiated. In the next chapter, I shift the focus of analysis yet again, to consider LGBT family issues and pressures from the standpoint of mothers and fathers of LGBT children in Taiwan.
5. PARENTING

5.1 Listening for Parents’ Voices

Raising my children was extremely difficult for me. Their father was away all the time, my mother died, I was really all alone. It was just me, I did everything for them. How could it have turned out this way? – Bai Mama from Hsinchu (mother of a gay son and two straight daughters)

Bai Mama shared these painful feelings at a Taipei support group meeting for parents of LGBT children, which I attended regularly as part of my fieldwork. Her gay son brought her to the meeting and then politely excused himself so that his mother could express her feelings more freely. Bai Mama sat near the door with her hands tightly folded in her lap. As the meeting progressed she became more and more agitated, ultimately bursting into tears and sobbing for a full 30 minutes while other parents and volunteers worked to console her. Through her sobs, Bai Mama repeated her bitter disappointment: How could it have turned out this way (zhěnme hui zhèyàng)?

What Bai Mama expressed, and the place and manner in which she shared these things, reveal important changes and continuities in the meanings and experiences of motherhood in Taiwan. In the previous chapter, I showed how cumulative material disadvantages; the unequal distribution of family resources, labor, and power; and daily negotiations of family roles and rituals have shaped lesbian and transgender lives. In this chapter, I will show how similar forces structure the lives of parents of LGBT children. Like other mothers, Bai Mama had worked ceaselessly and made enormous personal sacrifices to rear her children in ways that would secure their future and her own later life social security. Yet after all this she would not see the fruits of her labor in the conventional form of her son’s marriage and the respect it would accord her, not to mention the help and service of a daughter-in-law to continue the reproductive labor that had been compulsory for women of
Bai Mama’s generation. Bai Mama had lost her last vestige of any “patriarchal bargain” and as Kandiyoti predicted, she experienced this as a genuine personal tragedy (1988, p. 282).

The sense of loss and disappointment surrounding a child’s sexuality is deeply and fundamentally gendered. Fathers in this research also expressed disappointment, but for different reasons. Their position and authority within the family remained intact irrespective of child outcomes (whereas a woman’s position in the family has traditionally been secured through her son; see Wolf, 1972 for a historical analysis; Chen, 2006; Das Gupta et al., 2003; Li and Lavely, 2003; and Shek, 2006 for more contemporary views). Moreover, fathers did not connect child outcomes to their own labor. Thus they did not feel the same level of personal responsibility for their children’s sexuality as did mothers in this research. Mothers turned their disappointment inward, questioning themselves and their childrearing practices, asking what they could have done differently to produce a more properly gendered and heterosexual child. This introspection is consistent with wider cultural messages about women’s social responsibility for bearing and rearing children (Chen, 2006; see also Chalmers, 2002 and Sutherland, 2010 writing about such messages in Japanese and US contexts, respectively—these contexts are relevant inasmuch as Japanese and US mothering ideologies have been widely circulated in Taiwan). Fathers, by contrast, objected without implicating themselves in the construction of their children’s sexuality. Mothers and children portrayed fatherly disappointment as something to be painstakingly avoided, not because fathers could or should have done something differently, but because fathers are entitled to their children’s respect and obedience. The adage “if the father wishes for the son to die, the son has no choice but to die” (under the Confucian concept of wù lún or five cardinal relations)—underscores the historical construction of fathers’ authority as unimpeachable. While views about fatherhood and fathering practices
are changing (Ho et al., 2010, 2011; Zhao, 2010), my data suggest that ideas about paternal authority are reinscribed in new forms.

The unique setting in which Bai Mama expressed her disappointment is also significant. These small gatherings for parents of LGBT children are a part of the larger context of shifting parenting discourses in Taiwan. Specifically, the concept of parent education and non-familial authorities on parenting, which emerged in Taiwan in the postwar period (Lan, 2014), and the subsequent proliferation of books, television programs, websites and other sources devoted to parenting (Fung et al., 2004, see especially p. 307), have been utilized by both LGBT and anti-LGBT groups to inform social understandings of gender and sexuality. In my research, I found that non-governmental organizations, such as the group Bai Mama attended, served as knowledge brokers, synthesizing expert knowledge claims and more personal stories as a specialized form of education for mothers and fathers of LGBT children. These knowledge claims are usually gender-neutral, in that they are directed toward both mothers and fathers, but they are nevertheless filtered through the gendered power dynamics within the family, to impact mothers and fathers in different ways. They are also embedded in and reinforce class dynamics in ways I will soon discuss. Thus it is important to shift from over-interpreting parental responses to gender and sexual non-normativity as a loss of face and a function of Confucian cultural values, and instead to look at how these values interpenetrate material conditions and accelerated changes in families and society.

To this end, I examine how mothers and fathers of LGBT children navigate the ever-changing terrain of parenthood in 21st century Taiwan, focusing on gendered labor in three overlapping areas: daily childrearing tasks, emotional labor or the “labor of love,” and accountability for child outcomes. Each of these areas represents a place of change and

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58 For work on the emergence of civil society in Taiwan and its implications for lesbians and gays, including utilization of the resources described, see Chu (2005) and Damm (2005).
continuity, as new parenting discourses coexist with enduring modes of family life and stratification systems internal and external to the family unit. Narratives of parents who have LGBT children offer a particularly fruitful site from which to identify the differential impacts of compressed modernity on mothering and fathering in Taiwan today. It is my hope that through this analysis, we might gain insight into Bai Mama’s particular challenges as well as the tools available to her for making sense of this unexpected twist in her life path.

5.2 Parenthood in Transition

Chang’s theory of compressed modernity highlights both the condensed time and space in which social transformations occur, and the disparate historical and social elements that co-exist and shape each other as a result, creating uniquely fluid (2010b, p. 446) and often alienating familial and social systems (2010, p. 143). Parenthood brings these dimensions of fluidity and alienation into sharp relief, as cross-generational views about parent-child relations (including those of individuals within the same family) diverge from and often conflict with one another. Today’s Taiwanese mothers and fathers have adopted parenting styles that differ appreciably from those held by their own parents (Poston et al., 2014), who as grandparents are also often caregivers of children with a say in how those children should be reared (Shih, 2014; Yi, 2006). At the same time, children themselves are forming aspirations for the parent-child relationship as they grow up, which are often at odds with the worldview of earlier generations. This is not to say that generational cohorts are homogeneous. To the contrary, generational changes in parenting discourses are actively mediated by gender and class.

As part of a larger analysis of the transformation of parenting discourses in post-war Taiwan, Pei-Chia Lan (2014) identifies new ideals for the parent-child relationship emerging
at the end of the 1980’s and in the early 1990’s, the same era in which many of the parents in my research grew their families. Although they did not know at the time that their children would be lesbian or gay, these parents were already forming some of the ideas and practices that guided their responses to this discovery later in life. During this period, the concept of “parent education” was widely disseminated through Taiwanese society. Expert opinions, often translated from the West, urged parents to attend to their children’s needs and emotions, and promoted such concepts as “understanding your child” and “keeping your child company” (Lan 2014, p. 6). Lan notes that this was double edged, enabling parents to form emotional bonds with their children that most had not enjoyed with their own parents, while also intensifying the mental and physical demands of parental labor. As my data suggest, and as I will show in this chapter, these demands mapped onto existing family-based stratification systems, intensifying especially the labor performed by mothers.

These parenting discourses and demands also exacerbated class disparities by holding up as “modern” and superior a child-centered, hands-on parenting approach that privileges middle class families with full time homemakers and with resources to afford supplementary educational tools (Lan, 2014). This occurred at the same time that women’s labor force participation was increasing, from 44 to 57 percent for all women and from 34 to 62 percent for mothers of preschool aged children between 1983 and 2006. The simultaneous increase in women’s earnings potential, labor force participation, and a discourse of intensive mothering has contributed to the challenge of balancing work and family for mothers in Taiwan. Using data from eleven waves of the Women’s Marriage, Fertility, and Employment Survey to analyze various features of these changes, Jao and Li (2011) note that husbands’ earning potential tempered the work commitments of mothers with young children—that is, women whose husbands’ earnings were higher were less likely to work than women whose husbands’ earnings were lower, pointing again to the class privilege of certain mothering styles. In
addition, parents draw on personal resources to pave the way for their children’s upward mobility, for example, by sending children to private, profit-generating cram schools (bǔxībān) to give them an edge in a hyper-competitive educational system and wage labor market (Kwok, 2004; Shih, 2011). Those who cannot afford to take these measures are characterized as deficient or “unmodern” parents (Lan 2014, p. 14). The construction of the “modern” parent is thus simultaneously classed and gendered, as a modern mother is expected to devote a large portion of her time and energies to daily childrearing tasks and to organizing her child’s education through consumption and market-driven techniques, now as well as emotionally attending to her child’s needs.

These new parenting discourses and techniques contextualize trends captured by the nationally representative Taiwan Social Change Survey, showing an increase in emotional reciprocity between Taiwanese parents and their children (Yi and Lin, 2009, analyzing data from the 2006 wave of the survey, and focusing specifically on children who do not coreside with their parents). The variable of emotional reciprocity is constructed from survey questions about how often children listen to parents’ ideas and share emotions and vice versa (p. 311). This is a gendered trend in that sons tend to assume the normative role of material provision, while daughters provide more emotional support to their own parents (see also Lin and Yi, 2007). Thus as emotional or affectual exchanges increase, we have good reason to expect that these will increase especially among daughters, as is observed in Yi and Lin’s (2009) analysis. Yi and Lin predict that future intergenerational relations in Taiwan will retain a strong normative ideal in addition to an affectual component not observed in the culture before. Under the conditions of compressed modernity, we might also expect to see women’s continued carework for their husband’s parents in the role of a daughter-in-law as well as increased emotional support for their own parents, thus increasing rather than redistributing women’s family work.
Yi and Lin’s modeling is focused on the reporting of adult children with elderly parents. It is likely that a gendered dimension of emotional reciprocity also exists among parents of different ages. My research enters this conversation by illuminating the exchanges between parents and their children when the normative ideals are compromised by gender and sexual non-normativity. In such circumstances, parenting discourses and techniques and intergenerational exchanges are meaningfully transformed. However, these transformations do not merely depart from, but also reinscribe existing gender and class dynamics. That is, some of the new tools that parents use to cope with gender and sexual non-normativity—such as an emphasis on upward mobility as a buffer against discrimination, or a discourse of parental love—also rely on and reinforce gender and class distinctions, as I will demonstrate in this chapter.

5.3 Methodological Note

In this chapter, I draw most heavily from my interviews with 12 heterosexual mothers and 6 heterosexual fathers, and from my field observations at bimonthly informational and support group meetings for parents of LGBT children, workshops on LGBT family issues, lectures on homosexuality organized and attended by parents, and visits in family homes. My parent interviewees differ from my LGBT interviewees in that they are less diverse by social class. All of the fathers in the study have college or graduate degrees and hold professional (or “white collar”) jobs such as teacher, businessman, or professor. All but one of the mothers in the study finished high school and some have college degrees; one is a businesswoman.

59 My interview sample includes two lesbian mothers and one gay father who have known lesbian and gay children. These parents’ narratives differed meaningfully from those of heterosexual parents, and I discuss these in a separate article. In this chapter, I have chosen to focus on the gender dynamics among mothers and fathers who are rearing LGBT children in more normative heterosexual-parent households.
four are retired schoolteachers, and the others are housewives or retired from various clerical and technical jobs. These parents constitute a distinctive group, hailing from upwardly mobile families that benefited from Taiwan’s rapid economic growth in the second half of the 20th century. Many recalled poverty as a major characteristic of their childhoods, and a majority of their own parents, especially their own mothers, had received limited or no formal education. In contrast, my parent interviewees enjoyed a more middle class lifestyle, replete with leisure activities, pensions upon retirement, and reserves to support their children through a prolonged transition to adulthood; most were fully funding their children’s higher education. Due to the uneven nature of this rapid mobility, many parent interviewees had siblings and other close relatives who had not attended college and held blue collar jobs, and some parent interviewees had achieved their mobility precisely because their older siblings started working at young ages and helped to fund their education. Categorizing families as simply upper, middle, or working class is misleading because the class variation within families is so significant. For the purposes of this analysis, I will refer to these as “upwardly mobile” parents to emphasize the changes they have experienced over time and within their families.

I also interviewed LGBT people from less economically and educationally privileged families, and I spent time with many of these informants in their family homes and family businesses while doing these interviews. Across class indicators, such as education, income, and occupational prestige, I found families who were genuinely supportive of their LGBT members, providing clear counter-evidence to the stereotype that lower education levels are correlated with lower tolerance of sexual diversity (the Lu family members introduced in chapter one illustrate this fact). Some of the working class parents (again, using “working class” provisionally as this term may not be precise in the Taiwan context) welcomed me into their homes as a guest; however, they did not take much interest in my research or see it as
being connected to their lives. They had many other demands on their time, which took precedence over being interviewed. It was primarily middle and upper class parents who agreed to be interviewed, either because they wanted to put their grievances on record, or because they believed a PhD thesis on this topic might help other parents like themselves, and because they had the leisure time to do so. This in itself is a finding of the study, as it underscores the value placed on research and expert knowledge among my sample of upwardly mobile parents, as well as the material aspects of research participation (also brought up in the Methodology chapter, with regard to access to private space and the difficulty of young mothers/daughters-in-law in securing time of their own to be interviewed). Again, it is important to stress that the lack of interest in being interviewed among working class parents did not reflect a greater discomfort with their children’s sexuality per se, but rather very practical and material constraints, a lack of personal connection to work conducted by a foreign PhD student to be written up in English (as Shih, 2010 shows, the “internationalization” of childrearing is a pursuit of Taiwanese upper class parents primarily, and this pursuit may help explain the interest in my study taken by some parents in the sample), and a preference for communicating about this issue in ways not captured by the formal interview approach. In fact, the form and arguably the existence of the interview is itself representative of a particular way of understanding gender, sexuality, and parenthood. Thus, ethnographic fieldnotes serve as an especially important tool for learning about a wider cross-section of parents and families. Taking this argument a step further, my construction of the entire research project is situated in an understanding of gender and sexual non-normativity as something to be defined and analyzed in a particular way, and this is also a class-inflected endeavor.

On another dimension, the sample is very diverse by parent attitudes toward homosexuality. I had expected parents who felt negatively about having a lesbian or gay child
to opt out of the research, either because the topic was too painful to discuss or because they assumed I would characterize them unfavorably. However I found that I had overestimated the social desirability bias surrounding the topic of lesbian and gay sexuality in Taiwan. In other words, parents did not feel social pressure to underreport their more negative feelings. I had also worried that parents would underreport these feelings to me based on assumptions about my liberalism as a white American gay woman. Instead, I found that my age (29-30, around the same age as many of these parents’ children) and my status as a student and a cultural outsider created a different power dynamic, in which parents wanted to educate me about Taiwan and give me advice about my own life and future. In addition, those who felt more negatively saw me as relatively safe because of my outsider status; as Tong Mama (mother of a gay son and a straight daughter) put it,

I don’t want anyone to know [that my son is gay]. People like you and that teacher [a counselor she had seen] will have no influence on me at all, you don’t really know my life. But for most people, I wouldn’t let them know because Taiwan is very small, I wouldn’t know what to say if we somehow run into each other.

It is likely that some parents opened up to me about particularly painful and embarrassing subjects because my opinions about them simply didn’t matter. In contrast, several other parents told me that they hoped the research would be widely disseminated, and came to hear me speak about the research in community forums that were open to the public in Taipei and Hualien. This is just one example of how parent attitudes varied widely, from a keen concern about confidentiality to an equally keen interest in discussing the topic publicly and educating others about LGBT family matters.

The parents in my sample ranged in age from 53 to 70 (birth years 1942 to 1959) and had LGBT children ages 21 to 45 at the time of interview. When introducing parents in this chapter, I include the number, genders, and sexual orientations of their children in parentheses; e.g., “Lin Mama (mother of a gay son and two straight daughters).” Consistent
with the identity-relational categories used by my informants and their families, I distinguish among *T*, *pó*, and *bù fèn* lesbian daughters. I anticipate discussing these distinctions and their implications in a more detailed way as part of a separate article on within-sex gender differences in lesbian family-of-origin relationships. In this chapter, I am concerned with lesbian genders principally as these intersect with parental gender and childrearing strategies, keeping parents themselves at the center of analysis.

### 5.4 Gender, Class Mobility, and Childrearing

The daily work of childrearing is embedded in larger systems of gender and class, often with upward mobility of the family through the child’s achievements as an explicit goal. New parenting discourses that emphasize high levels of parental attentiveness are not purely ideological constructs, but are interwoven with economic pressures and the privatization and profitability of childrearing resources. In this section, I will show how childrearing tasks were allocated among mothers and fathers in my research, how this allocation influenced the relationship of LGBT people to their parents, and how both gender and class aspirations shaped parental responses to lesbian and gay sexuality.

#### 5.4.1 Division of Childrearing Tasks

The Lin parents from Taitung (parents of a gay son and two straight daughters) are typical in their division of family work. The excerpt below captures the busy nature of Lin Mama’s childrearing activities in contrast to her husband, although both parents are retired schoolteachers who worked full time while their children were growing up. In fact, Lin Mama named many more activities, but I have shortened the quote for brevity:

**Lin Mama:** For my son, we put him in piano lessons when he was three, and then swimming lessons and all kinds of activities. When he was in sixth grade, someone
gave me a set of Sesame Street English cassettes. So I would play the cassettes for them every morning and give them quizzes. They had to memorize the vocabulary words before they could go out to play. So that’s what they’d do, all three of them together. And then in the evening I would take them to swimming classes… They all took writing classes, and my daughters took dance classes. We also subscribed to children’s newspapers, and I would ask them to read and memorize proverbs.

Amy: Mom worked hard (māmā xīnkuò).

Lin Mama: Yes, mom worked a little harder (bǐjiào xīnkuò). It’s usually moms who do these kinds of things. Dads aren’t as attentive (bù huì nàme xīn).

Amy: How did dad interact with the children during this period of life?

Lin Mama: At that time, he had a lot of activities, especially a lot of gatherings with his friends after work. They would go out to eat and sing karaoke or drink. But for me, after work I had to go home. I felt like after work is the time when I go into war (jǐnrù zhàncáng) because I had to cook and take care of the children. And my husband would call me and say, ‘Oh, I’m not coming home for dinner tonight.’ He would stay out very late. But we did go on family trips together. We took them to neighboring countries, like Korea for skiing, Thailand, and other places.

My exchange with Lin Mama illustrates how new parenting approaches reinscribe the gendered division of family work by placing mothers in charge of honing their children’s social and cultural capital, making them productive middle class citizens and consumers. As Lin Mama explained, “We put in so much effort and energy to educate them, to ensure that they will have a good life, and that the next generation will have a better life. Upward mobility, not downward mobility (xiàngshàng de, bùshì xiàng xià de)”

When I interviewed Lin Baba later the same day, he did not mention any of these childrearing tasks. Lin Baba had affectionate relationships with each of his children and had thought deeply about their lives and futures. However he had not been nearly so involved in their day-to-day care as they were growing up. Although the Lin parents had similar professional demands on their time, it was Lin Mama who went “into war” after work while Lin Baba used this time to relax with his friends and coworkers. The gendered nature of childrearing in the Lin household is consistent with that described by a majority of my informants. In the few instances where a mother was not present (in one instance because she
had passed away, in another because of a complicated divorce scenario) it was not fathers but grandmas and aunts who stepped in to perform these tasks.

Sharon Hays (1998) coined the term “intensive mothering” to describe a child-centered, expert-guided model of motherhood that is emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive. Hays’ work is specific to US culture and thus cannot be applied wholesale to the Taiwan context (see Shih, 2010 for an analysis of Taiwanese parents’ unique adaptations of intensive mothering and concerted cultivation, considering such variables as the power dynamics within Taiwanese three generational households, Confucian influences on parenting practices, and a powerful cross-class valuation of educational attainment with deep historical roots). At the same time, there are elements of the intensive mothering discourse that aptly depict the situation of mothers in my sample—specifically, the combination of physically, emotionally, and financially demanding tasks, and the proliferation of expert opinions on what motherhood should entail.

This sort of intensive mothering was institutionalized in Taiwan, such that those mothers who opted out faced sanctions by their children’s schools. Tan Mama (mother of a T lesbian daughter and a straight son) chose not to over-emphasize academic achievement because she herself had been “a victim of that system.” As a result, she was called in to talk to her son’s middle school teacher, “because they [school personnel] thought I was wrong for not pushing my children, you know.” The school did not call in Tan Baba or inquire about his role in pushing the children to excel. Something similar happened when the Tans’ daughter started middle school having never been to any extracurricular English classes:

I brought my daughter to see the [extracurricular English] classroom when we moved here and she said, ‘I don’t want to go’ so I didn’t send her. And in middle school, the other children could write English sentences, and my daughter was still learning the alphabet. I worried too, but I don't know how to…my daughter is not one I can push, so I just let it go. And on the first day of the parent’s meeting for middle school, the teacher said, ‘Only two children don't know 26 letters.’ One was my daughter. The
other child, he looked Chinese but he had an Arabic name, so maybe he had a foreign mother or something. But luckily she got a good teacher because she was in a public school.\(^{60}\) The school still taught the basics so she could catch up.

Notably, Tan Mama surmised that the child with the Arabic name might have a foreign mother—not a foreign father—which resulted in his falling further behind, as the mother of the family would be responsible for ensuring that her son knew the 26 letters of the English alphabet (see Yi-Chen Lan et al., 2013 on Taiwanese mothers as their children’s first English teachers; see also Pei-Chia Lan, 2008 for an analysis of how migrant women in Taiwan have been culturally constructed as unfit mothers). As Tan Mama’s experiences demonstrate, the demands of intensified parenting are allocated to mothers by institutions as well as families. For the upwardly mobile mothers in my sample, it was almost impossible to escape such a system, regardless of their personal parenting philosophies.

### 5.4.2 Implications of Gendered Labor for LGBT Parent-Child Relationships

Intensive mothering, which I have described with the help of Lin Mama and Tan Mama, provided a context in which families dealt with the issues of gender and sexuality, as well as a set of parenting strategies that mothers utilized to cope with these issues as they emerged. A majority of LGBT people in my study reported that they had spent significantly more time with their mothers than with their fathers as they were growing up. This generated, simultaneously, more day-to-day conflict with mothers, a greater impression of emotional closeness with mothers, and a greater chance of mothers discovering lesbian and gay sexuality through their attentiveness. In many cases mothers had carried out extensive negotiations about children’s gender and sexuality without involving fathers at any point.

\(^{60}\) In Taiwan a good public school is more competitive to get into and viewed as more intellectually rigorous than a private school.
Han Mama from Hualien (mother of a T lesbian daughter, a straight daughter, and a straight son) is typical in this regard. She became suspicious about her daughter’s sexuality when her daughter, Skye, was in middle school, and confirmed her suspicions by reading Skye’s diary and letters to her girlfriend. After that, Han Mama took her daughter to many different Daoist temples to have the impure spirits exorcized, as well as to hospitals for psychiatric evaluations (two very common practices among parents of LGBT children in Taiwan). Thus Han Mama’s intensive mothering was imbued with the new aim of re-orienting her daughter toward heterosexual femininity. She performed all of these tasks without involving her husband, who was frequently away on business. At the time of my interviews with Skye and her two siblings, this had been going on for 12 years and showed no signs of letting up. Han Mama also heightened her surveillance of Skye’s physical person, resulting in numerous confrontations like the one Skye recalls here:

[My mom] started picking on my dressing and all that. I remember one time I was wearing a polo…I really didn’t notice the button part of a women’s polo and men’s polo is on opposite side. You didn’t know that either right? [Amy: no] Yeah, I didn’t know that. On pants it’s like that too, the button is on the opposite side. You know, I always buy guys’ clothes. But this is just two buttons, I really didn’t think she would care! And she had a problem with the polo. I think at that time I was in her room, and Tim [Skye’s older brother] was also there, and he supported me. Tim said, ‘I don’t think there’s anything wrong with the polo. Why do you make a big deal out of such a small thing (xiǎo tí dàzuò)’? And my mom said, ‘Ask your sister if she’s a freak’ (biàntài—a word that has been applied to LGBT people with extremely negative connotations).

Han Mama’s level of attention to Skye’s clothing—even noticing when the button hole is on the “wrong” side of a polo shirt—is remarkable but not unusual. A majority of the mothers in my research, like Han Mama in this story, had devoted enormous quantities of time to studying their children and managing even the smallest details of their daily lives. The parenting discourses brought up by Lan (2014) of “understanding your child” and “keeping your child company” contributed to a heightened surveillance, which for LGBT young people and Ts in particular, often translated into a continuous gender harassment in their homes.
Many Ts in this research reported a period of daily gender-related conflicts with their mothers. None of the Ts I interviewed reported the same level of conflict with their fathers, not necessarily because their fathers were more tolerant, but because their fathers were simply not paying such close attention to their bodily comportment, clothing, hairstyles, the tenor of their voices (e.g., dropping their voices into a more masculine register), masculine accessorizing (e.g., buying and using products marketed to men, such as very masculine bags, phone cases, etc.), or other characteristics that their mothers deemed insufficiently feminine. And in many cases, their fathers had simply not figured out that they were T and that they had girlfriends, while their mothers had connected the dots long ago.

I did hear secondhand stories of fathers pressuring their T daughters around gender. In one case, for example, a father and mother acted together to confiscate and destroy their T daughter’s chest binders. They later came to one of the LGBT organizations feeling uncertain about what to do next, as their daughter had since slipped into a deep depression. Ultimately these parents decided to permit their daughter to wear binders rather than risk the deterioration of her mental health (fear of lesbian and gay suicide was extremely prevalent among parents due to the excessive coverage of such cases in Taiwanese media). The father in this story is typical in that he took these steps—destroying the binder and then coming to the organization to seek counsel—together with the child’s mother. Whereas mothers often acted alone to regulate T masculinity, fathers primarily acted in concert with mothers, and often at the mothers’ initiative. Thus the mother retained responsibility for collecting information and determining a course of action (noticing the binder, deciding it should be destroyed) and then called on the father’s authority to carry out this task.

Daily interactions about gender also became an important site for expressions of support for LGBT children. For example, the owner of a gay bookstore that also sells chest
binders reported that mother-daughter pairs would sometimes come in and buy binders together, a fact that he found especially touching. The purchasing of gender-appropriate clothing sent a meaningful signal to Ts, trans people, and, often, their normatively gendered, heterosexual siblings, who noticed and commented on these actions by mothers in their own interviews (and, again, it was always mothers who made such purchases). Affirmation of gender through such mundane daily activities is a part of the ongoing negotiation of gendered family roles and rituals, described at length in the previous chapter.

Here I have used the case of T masculinity to illustrate a larger point about the gendered division of childrearing tasks among families in this study. Western-based literature would predict that fathers are more concerned about policing sons’ masculinity than daughters’ femininity (see, for example, Grant, 2004; Kane, 2006). The situation among Taiwanese families in this research is somewhat similar in that fathers did concern themselves with sons’ masculinity, but also very different in that appropriate masculinity was embodied through family roles and career choices—for example, choosing a suitably masculine career path, marrying, producing an heir, venerating the ancestors—much more so than physical appearance and mannerisms. In other words, gay boys could get away with more flexible gender presentations than their lesbian counterparts, but faced their primary obstacles in their success or failure at performing masculinity through male privilege and dominance in the family, work, and society (see Taga, 2005 for more on such constructions of masculinity in East Asian contexts).

In sum, I found that new discourses of parenthood that emphasized intensive, hands-on, micro-management of children’s activities allocated a disproportionate amount of work to mothers, and that this shaped how mothers and fathers related to their LGBT children—in particular, putting mothers on the front lines of family negotiations about sexuality and
gender. Fathers occupied a more authoritative but also a more distant role, and as such
stepped in principally to dictate marital and career choices, while mothers managed the more
on-going aspects of their children’s everyday lives.

5.4.3 **Implications of Class Aspirations for LGBT Parent-Child Relationships**

As hinted above, parental responses to gender and sexual non-normativity were
shaped as much by class aspirations as by gender dynamics. New parenting techniques were
adopted with the aim of achieving “upward mobility, not downward mobility!” as Lin Mama
aptly described. Given such, it is not surprising that blocked mobility was among the most
common concerns raised by parents in interviews as well as parents’ meetings—specifically,
parents worried that children’s mobility (and thus the future of the child and the family)
would be hindered by their lesbian or gay sexuality. LGBT people responded by pointing to
normatively successful lesbian and gay friends and celebrities in order to quell their parents’
fears (elsewhere I have referred to this as “strategic normativity” in Taiwanese LGBT family
of origin relationships; Brainer, 2013). Additionally, both mothers and fathers viewed the
achievement of social status as an important precursor to disclosure of lesbian or gay
sexuality. This abbreviated conversation with Sun Mama is representative of the kinds of
conversations I had with many parents:

Sun Mama: Don’t feel pressure to tell others that you are gay. This is your privacy… If you are well prepared, and if you are sure that nothing will harm you, then it’s a good time to come out. For example, the famous celebrity Cài Kāngyǒng (Kevin Tsai, a bestselling author and popular television host in Taiwan), he’s so famous that even when he came out, nothing could harm him or take away what he has. But some people, they haven’t prepared anything, and they just come out. It’s like lifting a rock only to drop it on your own foot (nà shì tóu zā zì jǐ de jiǎo). First, make sure you have a good job and can support yourself completely. Have a certain social status… If you have no power and just speak loudly, no one will listen to you.

Amy: It sounds like your son has some power now, because he has a good education and a good job. (Sun Mama’s gay son graduated from Taiwan’s most prestigious university, studied abroad for his MBA and now works for a foreign firm in Taipei.)
Sun Mama: Yes
Amy: Do you feel that he’s prepared to come out?
Sun Mama: I think he is not qualified now. He needs more reputation, higher status. For instance, I saw in the newspaper yesterday that Belgium’s new Prime Minister is gay… If a lot of powerful men are gay, then the society will change. You see, this is very important. To change something, you need power (says the word “power” in English).

Here, Sun Mama eloquently introduces a class and status-based pathway to family and social integration of gay men. The pathway is both a pragmatic one—emerging from this mother’s practical concern for her son’s safety, and her awareness of how power and influence can effectively change social systems—and one that relies on and reinforces existing class disparities. This pathway is inaccessible to most lesbian and gay people, who can never dream of becoming a prime minister, a bestselling author, or a popular television host. Sun Mama said that she would advise more ordinary people to “keep your head down and live well,” meaning they should look out for themselves and not disclose their sexuality to others because of the social consequences this might incur.

In the example I have given, Sun Mama is talking about status in the context of the whole society. A majority of parents said that famous, high status, normatively successful lesbian and gay people would help improve the image of the gay community in Taiwan (I did not pose the question this way—parents brought it up themselves during the interview). Status within the extended family also mattered greatly. If parents and/or their children achieved a higher level of education than their relatives, the family became somewhat untouchable by gossip. Similarly, parents and children with lower levels of education lacked a buffer against relatives’ criticism of their lives. Thus for my upwardly mobile parent interviewees, mothers’ constant attention to child development impacted family life in two very clear ways: it shaped their interactions with their lesbian and gay children, including their discovery of and responses to gender and sexual non-normativity; and it informed a set
of class aspirations for their children, which also directly informed their responses to non-normativity of every kind.

5.5 **A Labor of Love?**

Against the backdrop of emergent parenting discourses described by Lan (2014) and increased emotional exchanges described by Yi and Lin (2009), new ideals of parents who love (ài), know (rènshi), and accept (jiēshòu) their children permeated the meetings and workshops I attended for parents of LGBT children. This was part of a very clear messaging strategy by parents (both mothers and fathers, but disproportionately mothers) who adopted activist-educator roles in reaching out to other parents and families. Love, knowledge, and acceptance formed a template for coping with gender and sexual non-normativity that centralized the emotive aspects of the parent-child relationship and promoted a more egalitarian communication style between the generations.

In the parents’ meetings, love for one’s children was presented as a gender-neutral concept—that is, both mothers and fathers were extorted to show love, and children were encouraged to trust in their parents’ love and eventual acceptance in order to “come out” (an issue I return to in chapter six). Within families, however, the contexts in which love was invoked differed for mothers and fathers. Discourses of maternal love centered on mothers’ reproductive labor, and on their lifelong service to their families and support for their children, while discourses of paternal love centered on fathers’ entitlement to their children’s respect and obedience. In addition, many people connected maternal love to ideas about women’s innate and indissoluble connection to their children. Meanwhile paternal love appeared to be more fragile in that it was more easily lost.
Speaking to a roomful of LGBT young people, Tsai Baba from Taipei (father of one gay son) offered this explanation for why Taiwanese mothers share a particularly close bond with their children and are (perceived to be) less rejecting of lesbian and gay sexuality than are fathers: “Because your mother gave birth to you, because you came from her own body, she feels that you are a part of her. No matter how old you are, you will always be her child and a part of her.” Here, mothers are constructed as permanently connected to their children through bonds formed during pregnancy and childbirth. Thus a woman’s once-compulsory reproductive labor (what Tse-Lan Sang describes as women’s “compulsory marriage, compulsory sexual service, compulsory reproduction, and compulsory chastity” under traditional Chinese patriarchy, 2003, p. 92) is reframed as a natural and even physiological bond with her children. Within this new ideological framework, the logic of love becomes an explanation for women’s continued service to the family.

Lesbian and gay informants also characterized maternal love in terms of routine care work, as Bubble, a T lesbian from Kaohsiung, describes here:

She’s a great mom. She always takes care of our life. She cleans our desks, makes our bed, she’s a perfect mom. But she doesn’t really have power. Once things happen, then she will just step aside. I think because my dad is stronger, so she will just give up. But since I was a kid up to now, I’ve always known that she loves me very much. As I said, I have lived outside61 for a long time. When I come home, I can feel her happiness. She cooks for me, asks me what I need, and she gets me whatever I need. She will buy everything for me. And she’ll say, ‘You need to keep warm, don’t get cold.’ … You can just feel that she loves you and cares about you so much; she will do everything for you because you are her child.

Writing about mothering as an arena of political struggle, Evelyn Nakano Glenn notes that, “Because motherhood is often romanticized as a labor of love, issues of power are often deemed irrelevant or made invisible” (1994, p. 17). Bubble’s account is unique in that she acknowledges power dynamics as well as love—that is, she recognizes not only her mother’s

61 “Living outside” (zhù wàimiàn) refers to living away from one’s family home.
ongoing labor of love, but also her mother’s lack of power in the family context. Power is especially salient as Taiwanese mothers’ labor, which has traditionally been wholly appropriated by the patrilineal family system, is reframed as a voluntary expression of maternal love.

In contrast, paternal love came up most often in relation to fathers’ potential to be hurt and disappointed by their children. This was cited by LGBT people and mothers alike as a reason not to disclose lesbian or gay sexuality to fathers. Liang Mama from Taoyuan (mother of a bisexual son and a straight daughter) learned of her son’s sexuality in his second year of college (like my other bisexual informants, this son came out to his mother as gay rather than bisexual because he felt this would be easier for her to comprehend). She has helped him to keep this secret from his father for nearly a decade, even as her son has gone to work full time for an LGBT organization. Liang Mama and her husband share a close relationship and talk about “everything” except this, so her silence has required an enormous effort on Liang Mama’s part:

If I’m going to some gay event, I will make up an excuse, tell my husband I am going somewhere else. I help my son and his boyfriend to find excuses. I tell my husband that my son is not ready to have a family because he’s not yet secure financially (tā jǐngjì hái bù wending) and he’s going back to school. I tell him that our son works for a foundation mentoring youth. Because his father knows that he goes to schools to give lectures. So I’ve discussed with my son that I’ll tell his father he’s a mentor for youth. And if there’s more my son wants to talk about related to his job, he’ll talk to me afterward, when the two of us are alone… It’s very difficult. I’m under great pressure (yālì). When I go to Hotline, I sometimes see parents who attend together. I wish it could be this way for our family. I wish his father could accompany me to Hotline… If a gay-related topic comes on TV, I quickly change the channel. For example, when the pride march happens once a year, I feel nervous that his father might see it, might see him on the news. I have a dilemma (wǒ xiànrù liǎngnán). I really want him to know, to participate with me in this activity. But I fear that this would ruin the harmony in our family (jiātíng héxié) and bring him deep disappointment (ràng tā hěn shǐwàng). Because I know he has such high expectations (xīwàng hěn gāo) and love (ài) for our kids. So, it is a dilemma. I don’t want him to be hurt and disappointed, but I really want him to know! (italics added)

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62 Taiwan Tóngzhì Hotline Association
Here, Liang Mama connects her husband’s love to his high expectations and (anticipated) deep disappointment in their son. Many of my informants said such things about fathers. For example, Han Mama told her daughter Skye, “You are your father’s treasure; if he finds out [that you like girls], it is as if his treasure fell to the ground and shattered.” Autumn, a bisexual woman from Changhua, cited her dad’s loving and tender (wēnrorú) personality as a reason to keep quiet about her sexuality because she didn’t want to hurt and disappoint him. This is striking in that people who described their mothers in this way usually attributed these characteristics (love, tenderness) to their mothers’ greater potential for acceptance of rather than disappointment in their children.

LGBT people also said that they did not want to disappoint their mothers, but they did not connect this directly to their mothers’ love, and they were much more likely to risk disappointing their mothers in order to seek support—that is, mothers’ love was a reason to “come out,” while fathers’ love was a reason to keep quiet. My findings suggest that even as a discourse of love emerges for both mothers and fathers, it reinforces the gendered division of emotion work and fathers as authority figures, by linking maternal love to mothers’ sacrifice and paternal love to children’s obedience.

Because LGBT people are more likely to rely on their mothers for support, and because mothers often know of their LGBT status first (or second only to siblings), some mothers also shoulder the task of educating fathers about gender and sexuality. Huang Mama from New Taipei City (mother of a bù fēn lesbian daughter and a straight son) described numerous instances in which she implored her husband to change his attitude toward their daughter. For example, on several occasions her husband threatened to cut off their daughter’s finances, but Huang Mama intervened to make sure this did not occur. Recounting these tense occasions, Huang Mama said, “It has always been difficult (xīnkù) for me. I have
to be the bridge between them (tāmen zhī jiān de qiáoliáng).” Huang Mama built this bridge through years of emotion work, smoothing over her husband’s conflicts with their daughter, talking to him about lesbian and gay issues, exposing him to films and TV shows with lesbian storylines, reasoning with him (“Can you just cut off your own daughter? Of course not”) and taking care of his emotions in other ways. His gradual opening up was due in a large part to Huang Mama’s patient efforts.

Mothers in this research faced pressure from multiple sides. On one side, many lesbian and gay people anticipated greater acceptance from their mothers than from their fathers. As a result, they were more likely to disclose their lesbian or gay sexuality to their mothers, and then ask their mothers to help them keep the secret from their fathers and other relatives. Mothers also placed pressure on themselves to support their children and felt it reflected poorly on them if they could not. Bai Mama, introduced in the beginning of this chapter, described herself as appalling (wǒ zhīdào wǒ zhèyàng hěn zāogāo) because she did not feel warmth toward her son since learning of his gay sexuality one month earlier. Fathers did not make such self-critical remarks in the parents’ meetings or during their interviews, no matter how sad or angry they were.

For Bai Mama, as for many mothers, the pressure to support her gay child conflicted with an even stronger pressure to equip her child for a normal heterosexual life, which she viewed as central to her maternal love and labor. Every mother I spoke to had asked herself at some point whether she played a role in causing her child to become lesbian or gay. In fact, some mothers feared telling their husbands precisely because their husbands might criticize them for raising the children improperly. In 16 months of fieldwork, I never heard any father ask whether his own actions and choices had caused his child to become lesbian or gay, or worry about telling his wife for fear of what she might say about his fathering abilities.
As I have shown, the construction of mothers as more loving and fathers as more distant and intolerant created pressure for many mothers. At the same time, some mothers were able to use these social constructions to express support and simultaneously exercise caution for the ostensible purpose of protecting their husbands. For example, Tong Mama’s son had never brought his boyfriend home, because, she explained, “Honestly, it would be difficult for my son to bring his boyfriend home. I can accept it, but my husband can’t, because it will draw the neighbors’ gossip immediately (mǎshàng huì yīn lǎi línjū de xián yán xián yǔ).”

In every other instance recorded in my fieldwork, it is not fathers, but mothers, who worry about neighbors’ gossip. This is due in a large part to the greater amount of time mothers spent at home and in their neighborhoods, where they shopped, performed chores, and carried out day-to-day relationships, which often involved queries about their children. In addition, Tong Mama herself said on several occasions that she does not want anyone in her life to know about her gay son…how could she face them later if they did? (See, for example, Tong Mama’s comment in the Methodological Note in this chapter.) However Tong Mama did not have to articulate these feelings directly to her son; instead, she attributed such feelings to her husband and thus succeeded in keeping the boyfriend from coming home without directly opposing it.

Similarly, mothers who attended the parents’ meetings frequently cited fathers’ disapproval as a reason to keep quiet about homosexuality in the context of the extended family. While it is likely that many of their husbands would indeed disapprove of disclosure, most of these mothers had never broached this possibility with them, and in some cases fathers’ reactions differed markedly from mothers’ predictions. Han Mama’s prediction that Skye would become her father’s “shattered” treasure is an example of such an instance. As
Skye discovered near the end of my field period, Han Baba was actually ok with Skye being a lesbian because she would continue to work for him in their family business. It was Han Mama whose dreams for Skye were shattered, yet Han Mama appealed to Han Baba’s potential disappointment as a bid for greater authority to achieve the desired changes in her daughter. In these instances, mothers strategically used the discourses available to them to achieve their own social protection (e.g., protection from relatives’ and neighbors’ gossip) while often also aligning themselves with their children (e.g., Tong Mama’s statement that “I can accept it”).

I have shown how intensified emotional labor is unequally distributed among mothers and fathers, and how the concept of love is gendered in ways that uphold existing power dynamics within families. I have also shown how some mothers strategically use gendered discourses to access fathers’ authority without sacrificing their own position as loving mothers. Already, we can begin to see the contradictory demands placed on mothers’ emotional, physical, and material resources, as mothers increasingly feel pressure to provide emotional support to their children, while they continue to be held accountable for training their children to lead normatively successful heterosexual lives. The resources available to parents in my research equipped them with tools to both resist and reinforce this script of gendered accountability, as I show next.

5.6 Accountability for Child Outcomes

In the previous section, I discussed a comment by Tsai Baba connecting the experience of pregnancy to mothers’ unconditional love for their children. Mothers in this research also connected their pregnancies to their children’s sexual development, and felt responsible for child outcomes in utero as well as after birth. As Tan Mama shared:
I flashed back to the day when she was born, my pregnancy with her — I must have missed some sign. Maybe I could have brought her back to normal. And I admit, I felt guilty. I just flashed back to every sign from the time she was born. ‘Did I do this? Did it make a difference? If I did that, would it have made a difference?’ … Or maybe I wished she was a boy, because when I was pregnant, my mom said, ‘You have to have two boys; if you have two boys you can have the choice whether or not to have a third child. But if the second one is a girl, you must have another boy.’ So when I got pregnant, my first worry was, ‘Oh, maybe it’s a girl.’ Maybe that affected [my daughter’s sexuality]. — Tan Mama from Kaohsiung (mother of a T lesbian daughter and a straight son)

Tan Mama is one of several mothers who wondered if her secret wish for her daughter to be a boy had somehow influenced her daughter’s gender in utero. This is consistent with a prevalent belief that the ecology of the mothers’ womb directly impacts the child’s characteristics, and the closely related practice of tāijiào (fetal education) in which mothers begin to carefully cultivate their children during pregnancy (Shih, 2010, see especially pp.129-130; see also Johnson, 2011 for a discussion of how tāijiào practices intersect with modernizing discourses). As a component of traditional Chinese medicine, fetal education practices were believed to influence fetal health, the ease of the labor, and the gender of the child, with proper tāijiào producing sons and improper tāijiào resulting in daughters; more recently, tāijiào practices have focused on improving the child’s intellect and disposition.

Thus intensive mothering may begin well before a child’s birth, and the possibility of mothers causing homosexuality or transgenderism at this point fits perfectly with this logic. (I suspect that an increasing body of research, primarily conducted in the US, which aims to show that prenatal hormones impact sexual orientation, may contribute to this concern for mothers of lesbian and gay children in Taiwan. Whereas in the US, biological explanations for homosexuality are usually presented as evidence that no one is at “fault,” and that being born gay somehow makes gay people more socially acceptable, in the context of Chinese medicine such explanations may in fact exacerbate fault and accountability among mothers in particular.)
Other mothers worried that they had contributed to their sons’ gayness by encouraging feminine behaviors in early childhood. For example, when Tong Mama’s son was very small, she dressed him up in pink clothes, and a coworker who had studied counseling told her that such actions might cause her son to become homosexual. Now that her son really is gay, the memory of this occasion plagues Tong Mama with anxiety and guilt.

Tan Mama and Tong Mama have markedly different orientations toward their T lesbian daughter and gay son, respectively. Tan Mama and her husband fully embrace their daughter and are among the most supportive parents in my sample on every dimension, including the provision of additional financial support to offset the discrimination their daughter will face on the basis of her female sex and masculine gender. They speak openly and comfortably about their daughter’s gender and sexuality to family members, friends, and neighbors (e.g., when Tan Mama’s neighbor asked “which one is your daughter?” after seeing the daughter come in with her girlfriend, Tan Mama cheerfully replied, “My daughter is the one that looks like a boy!”). Tong Mama has told no one; she is deeply sad about having a gay son and desperately wishes for him to enter a heterosexual marriage. Yet these mothers share in common a nagging feeling that they may somehow be responsible for their children’s sexuality. Among the mothers in my sample, this sense of accountability ran very deep, beginning from the moment of inception (as Tan Mama’s comment shows) and encompassing the whole of their children’s lives.

This was not the case for fathers. When I asked Wu Baba and Mama from Kaohsiung (parents of a gay son and a straight son) about how parents of lesbian and gay children are viewed by the general public, Wu Baba jumped in right away:

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63 No mothers mentioned encouraging masculine behaviors in their daughters, and when masculinity did emerge in daughters it was identified and problematized much earlier.
Wu Baba: My answer to this question is very simple: I don't know! (laughs) I've never heard anything about this.

Wu Mama: Well, for example, I've heard some people say the mother is to blame for not bringing her child up correctly (māmā méiyǒu bā xiǎoháí jiào hǎo).

Wu Baba: (incredulously) What? People say that? How strange!

Wu Mama: So I think parents themselves also need support to face this kind of pressure (fùmǔ yě yǎo zhīchí lái miàn duì zhè zhǒng yàlǐ).

Wu Baba: I didn't know there was such a pressure.

Wu Baba, like other fathers I interviewed, was highly knowledgeable about public opinion and Taiwanese society writ large; in fact, I often had to steer fathers away from these abstract topics in order to elicit descriptions of their day-to-day lives. Yet when it came to this topic, even the most thoughtful fathers were surprised and puzzled to hear that mothers are under a disproportionate amount of pressure related to childrearing. Through this simple conversation, a clear gender difference emerges on two dimensions—mothers’ greater accountability for bringing up their children as “correctly” gendered and heterosexual members of the society, and subsequently, mothers’ greater attention to wider public opinion on this issue.

This sense of personal and social accountability for their children was a primary factor motivating mothers to seek information about lesbian and gay sexuality from experts (such as fortune tellers, Daoist masters, psychiatrists, and NGOs), self-help books, and other resources marketed to parents. Both mothers and fathers procured information with a goal of changing their child (often the first goal) and/or understanding the child (often a later goal, once avenues of change are exhausted), but mothers had an additional goal of understanding themselves, and making sense of their own role in the child’s life. As Liang Mama shared in this conversation with me,

Liang Mama: There are two sides. On a more positive side, people might recognize that the mother [of a gay child] is having a really hard time (zhège māmā hěn xīnkǔ). On a more negative side, people might say, how did this mother educate her child (zěnme jiàoyù xiǎoháí, zěnme jiàoyù de zhèyàng zǐ) or is it because of your genetic...
factors (huò shì shuō, shì bùshì yīnwèi nǐ de yīchuán yīnsù)⁶⁴ … In the beginning I also thought, is this because of how I raised my son? Because from the time he was small, I brought him up to be well mannered (yōu lì). Because my husband is not very well mannered, not such a controlled person. But my son is the opposite, very courteous and well behaved. So I thought that raising him to be so well mannered might have affected him. Could it be this?

Amy: How did you resolve that?

Liang Mama: I participated in the parents’ meetings several times. I also read the book my son gave me (a book by the Hotline Association, entitled Dear Mom and Dad, I’m Gay / Qīn’ài de Bà Mā, Wǒ Shì Tóngzhì) and did research online.

Amy: What did you learn that helped you?

Liang Mama: I just think that if I’m always suffering from all these thoughts, then I won’t be happy (wèile zhèxiē shìqíng mènmènbùlè, nà wǒ yě bù huì kuài{lè}). So I should be more open-hearted (fàngkāi xīnxiōng) and accepting (jiēshòu) so that I will be happier (wǒ yě hùi bǐjiào kuài{lè}).

Like Wu Mama above, Liang Mama reflexively connected society-wide criticism of mothers to her own nagging questions about how her childrearing practices might have influenced her son’s sexuality. The places she went for information—meetings, a book, online research—reflect the new culture of parent education that I have described in this chapter. Gradually Liang Mama adjusted her thinking not only about her son’s sexuality, but also about her own suffering and happiness. This process of resolution had a personal dimension for Liang Mama and other mothers that was not present in fathers’ narratives. That is, fathers achieved resolution not through self-reflection so much as an understanding of lesbian and gay sexuality as a more general phenomenon. For example, Lin Baba explained,

Lin Baba: I didn’t really understand, but I wanted to know more. So I talked to my son and listened to him. A lot of my information about this group, tóngzhì, came from my son. I also did a lot of research (yánjiū). I wanted to understand what causes homosexuality. I gathered a lot of information.

Amy: Did you find an answer that satisfied you?

Lin Baba: Even though there’s no scientific explanation for homosexuality, I think it’s important for people to understand homosexuality as one of many phenomena in our

⁶⁴ Here, again, genetic factors are presented as reflecting poorly on the mother. This presents a serious challenge to assumptions (widespread in the Western scientific community) about the social value of “proving” that homosexuality is genetic.
society. And that it’s not a disease (jíbìng); it’s one of many human conditions (rénlèi de xiànxiàng). We need to guide more people to this understanding so that they can accept homosexuality. That’s the right thing to do.

The difference between Liang Mama’s and Lin Baba’s approach is indicative of a larger difference between mothers and fathers, in which mothers’ disproportionate carework and accountability for child outcomes created a need for different kinds of information and resolution pertaining to a child’s lesbian or gay sexuality. More specifically, mothers worked to relinquish a sense of personal responsibility for the child’s sexuality, and create their own alternative pathways to happiness, while fathers worked to understand homosexuality as a scientific and social concept.

5.6.1 **Parent Education: Resisting or Reinforcing Gendered Accountability?**

Throughout the chapter, I have mentioned parent education as part of a backdrop for my analysis of gendered parenting labor. Above, I pointed out parent education in the form of support groups, books, and Internet resources, as tools that Liang Mama used to adjust her thinking about her son and herself, and this was typical of mothers in my research. However, it is important to note that new modes of parent education are exactly that—tools—and that they can be wielded in different ways, often simultaneously. While some educational resources helped mothers to resist a sense of accountability for their children’s sexuality, the same resources also reinforced gendered accountability for love and nurture by emphasizing these qualities as innate to mothers. Still other resources stated implicitly or explicitly that mothers are indeed responsible for shaping their children’s sexual preferences. Often the messages provided by experts directly contradicted one another, and parents were put in the position of choosing which set of messages to internalize.
Here, Tong Mama describes her oscillation between Loving Parents of LGBT Taiwan, described by its founder, Guo Mama, as “Asia’s first PFLAG,” and Out of Egypt, the Taiwan branch of the US-founded “ex-gay” organization Exodus Global Alliance.65

Tong Mama: Then a counselor told me about an organization, Out of Egypt (Zǒuchū Āijì). I went there, too.

Amy: How did you find this counselor?

Tong Mama: I participated in a six-day camp at a Christian college. They had professors and doctors come in to give lectures everyday. One of the teachers offered free individual sessions, so I went to talk with him. The teacher believed that homosexuals more or less could change (tóngxìngliàn duōshǎo shì kěyǐ gǎibiàn de). It’s different from what Guo Mama said. I felt very perplexed. So, I stopped going to Guo Mama’s activities for a while. What the teacher said had given me hope again. I thought if there was any chance that it could change, I would work hard for it. My son and my husband didn’t know about this, only I knew. The teacher told me not to tell my son.

Tong Mama felt drawn to the promise of change offered by the Christian group. But she also felt pained by their strong assertion that mothers could influence their children’s sexuality.

This is something she brought up repeatedly during her interview with me and also in parents’ meetings that we both attended. In each of these settings, Tong Mama’s voice trembled and tears appeared in her eyes as she quoted the group as saying that mothers could cause their children to become gay or straight. She appeared unconvinced by the responses of other parents, who assured her that mothers could not have this kind of impact. The possibility of changing her son, while restoring hope, also reinforced the system of gendered accountability described in this chapter. As such, it exacerbated Tong Mama’s enduring feelings of guilt and insecurity about her own parenting decisions.

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65 Exodus Global Alliance, the parent organization of Out of Egypt (Zǒuchū Āijì, which also goes by the English name Rainbow-7), has remained active even as the US-based Exodus International officially closed its doors. Exodus International (which, despite its title, mainly served North America) was a founding member of Exodus Global Alliance; it withdrew publicly and amicably in 2013 after 18 years of membership. Out of Egypt maintains an active web presence here: http://www.rainbow-7.org.tw/48 (retrieved April 21, 2014).
Both Loving Parents of LGBT Taiwan and Out of Egypt have a strong transnational component, drawing on parenting discourses generated in the West and adapting these to the Taiwan context. These divergent discourses belie the myth that US culture is unilaterally more “open” than Taiwanese culture and that access to transnational discourses will produce a more liberal response to having a lesbian or gay child. In fact, some of the most conservative ideas about homosexuality now circulating in Taiwan are funded and strongly informed by US Christian groups. Although Christians make up just under 4 percent of Taiwan’s majority Daoist and Buddhist population (Soper and Fetzer, 2013), these groups have a loud voice in speaking out against gender and sexual diversity in the society, and “concerned parents” have been targeted as both the primary messengers and recipients of this opposition (see Ho, 2008; see also South China Morning Post, 2013 for news coverage of a recent highly publicized anti-gay protest staged by some of these groups). Significantly, both kinds of groups represent a kind of “modernity,” which they reflexively embrace—see, for example, the discussion in chapter two about one man + one woman as a new, modern family composition in contrast to the “traditional family” it supposedly represents in the West.

Transnational parenting discourses and new modes of parent education are part of a toolkit of resources harnessed to promote LGBT rights as well as opposition to homosexuality in Taiwan today. As such, these tools can be used to both challenge and reproduce the gender differences and inequalities between mothers and fathers of lesbian and gay children, which I have identified throughout this chapter.

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66 It is not the case that a majority of Taiwanese people embrace these discourses. Instead, a small, minority group has mobilized effectively to block political actions, such as LGBT-inclusive curriculum in primary and secondary schools. In this sense, Out of Egypt differs from the US-based Exodus International, which reflected and was nurtured by the wider US culture (and beliefs about homosexuality as a “sin” are still much more prevalent in the US than they are in Taiwan). At the same time, Out of Egypt has managed to tap into local anxieties about an increasingly visible sexual politics (Ho, 2010) by claiming to offer a cure from homosexuality, and by offering counseling support for parents, who often have few alternative resources at their disposal.
5.7 **Conclusion**

As I was completing my analysis of these data, a story from Taiwan’s popular *Apple Daily* newspaper (*Píngguǒ Ribāo*) popped up in my Facebook newsfeed, where it immediately caught my eye. The story, titled “So what if my daughter doesn’t have a heterosexual family (Nǚ'ěr wúfā yixìng chéngjiā nà yòu zěnyàng)?” was submitted to the newspaper anonymously by the mother of a pó lesbian (Apple Daily, 2014). This mother devoted a large part of the story to her experiential knowledge of women’s suffering and sacrifices within heterosexual marriage:

> My mother never had a happy or comfortable life. My father committed suicide as a young man, so my mother had to take care of our entire family… My mother gave her whole life to her family, and I followed her in this path. I began working at age 16. I shouldered the economic burden of the family, and I married the man that my family recommended… All of my income before marriage was given to my family of origin, and after marriage all of my income was given to my marital family. I never saved anything for myself… For over 10 years I have worked 20 hours a day… I am like my mother; I don’t have a sense of self (dōu méiyǒu zìwǒ)... As a woman, I saw my mother and myself, and I know the days that we spent with men were not really happy. My daughter is an adult now. Maybe she cannot form a family with someone of a different sex. But so what? Did my mother and I achieve a happy and stable life? We have not been happy our whole lives (wǒ gēn wǒ mā yībèizi dōu bù kuàilè)... If my daughter wants to form a family with another woman, I have no reason to oppose it based on sex. (Selected excerpts translated from Chinese)

Reading the article, my mind returned to Bai Mama, the mother of a gay son whose painful feelings I wrote about in the opening passage of this chapter. Like the anonymous author of the *Apple Daily* article, Bai Mama referenced her suffering and loneliness within marriage in relation to her child’s sexuality. However, as the mother of a gay son, Bai Mama had more to lose if her son did not marry and carry on the family name. Like other mothers and fathers of gay sons in this research, Bai Mama recognized marriage as a source of comfort and happiness for her son, providing him with an attentive companion to take care of his life, a task that Bai Mama had fulfilled up until that point. In contrast, mothers of pó, T, and bù fēn
lesbians whom I interviewed held strikingly similar positions to the one articulated by the author of the *Apple Daily* article. They did not see heterosexual marriage as necessarily bringing happiness to their daughters, and they often pointed to their own lifelong suffering as a reason not to oppose their daughters’ same-sex relationships, as Ye Mama did in her conversation with DuoDuo, presented in chapter four. Having lesbian daughters thus provided mothers with an opportunity to reflect critically on marriage as an institution, identifying its disadvantages for heterosexual women as well as lesbians.

Across all of these cases, mothers’ responses to their children’s sexuality are integrally shaped by the conditions of gender inequality in their own lives. Unfortunately, most analyses of parents who have LGBT children take gender inequality into account only to the extent that it shapes LGBT lives. It is my hope that this research will both illuminate the situation of mothers and fathers in Taiwan, and also raise new questions about how gender matters for parents of LGBT children in many different social and cultural locations.
6. COMING OUT

6.1 Setting the Stage

As a warm October afternoon turned to a chilly evening in Taipei, I sat on the pavement in front of the Presidential Palace, watching the speeches and performances that capped off Taipei’s 9th annual Pride Parade. Together with some 50,000 other Pride-goers, I cheered as Guo Mama, the founder of Asia’s first organization for parents of LGBT children, mounted the stage to deliver her annual charge. Consistent with the message she shared at smaller and more intimate gatherings I attended monthly, Guo Mama stressed parents’ love and support for their children, and encouraged children who had not yet “come out” (chūguì) to draw on the resources of her organization in order to do so, with the goal of attending next year’s Pride Parade together with their parents. Three young women seated on the ground in front of me immediately turned and pointed to a friend of theirs, who just as quickly pointed back at one of them while pushing their hands out of her face, in a kind of hot potato game with Guo Mama’s challenge to chūguì: no one wanted the challenge to land in her own lap. Yet this act of refusal also functioned as an acknowledgement of the challenge—of the possibility of coming out—which now hung in the air around us as surely as the women’s nervous laughter.

Watching them, I was reminded of something an older gay man had said to me at a social gathering in the southern city of Kaohsiung a few weeks earlier: “Many of these younger tóngzhì haven’t come out yet, but they’re planning to do it once they get an education, find a job, and are financially independent from their parents. We (older tóngzhì) already have all those things, but we still don’t come out.” I asked him how he could be sure this wasn’t a result of age rather than generation—whether younger tóngzhì wouldn’t change.

67 Estimate provided by the Taiwan Pride Committee: http://twpride.org/
their minds about this as they grew up. “Oh, that’s the difference between younger and older tóngzhì,” he replied. “You see, we never planned to come out.”

If we rely on the prevailing wisdom about “coming out”—that one is either in or out of a closet symbolizing repression and the hiding of one’s sexuality—we might take this man’s comment to mean that older tóngzhì are more “closeted” and thus more sexually repressed than their younger counterparts. But this interpretation rests on a host of assumptions; among them, that the challenge to “come out” articulated by Guo Mama existed under a markedly different set of economic, political, cultural, and social conditions. This assumption obscures a much richer and more complicated story about sexuality and family change in Taiwan today. By unpacking “the difference between younger and older tóngzhì” (as my Kaohsiung companion put it) in more careful ways, we can move beyond analyses of the variation in “coming out” behaviors, to discover broader changes in how people relate to one another within families, and the meanings attached to these relationships.

In the previous chapter, I analyzed changing parenting discourses primarily in terms of the gender variation among parents of LGBT children. I now turn my attention to how some of these same discourses have contributed to a generation gap in LGBT family of origin relationships. I will show how the transformation of parenting discourses and practices, including a trend toward self-revealing intimacy between parents and their children, has created a new cultural intelligibility around “coming out” as a concept and as a family practice. Looking across this gap to another shore, I will also show how parent-child intimacy and communication among previous generations, which focused on reproduction of the family rather than individual self-revelations, yielded more tacit negotiations of gender and sexuality, not predicated on “coming out” to kin. I refer to this as a generation gap, and not
simply a generational difference, because it involves markedly different worldviews that are often mutually unintelligible—that is, people on one side of the gap often do not fully understand how and why people on the other side are behaving so differently. With many social and cultural cues in flux, “coming out” may serve as both a byproduct and a catalyst for changes in how parents and children relate to one another, and what they expect and desire from the people with whom they share homes and families.

6.2 Ethnographic Encounters with the “Coming Out” Discourse

When I arrived in Taiwan in August 2011, I did not intend to study “coming out” and had not included the word chūguì anywhere in my interview or other research materials. I soon found myself encountering this word at every turn—in magazine articles, on popular talk shows, in how people introduced themselves at LGBT support group meetings (“I’m so-and-so, and I’ve been out for ten months”; “I’m so-and-so and I’m not out yet, but planning to come out one day”). The more time I spent with LGBT people and their families in Taiwan, the more pervasive this word appeared to be, so much so that some Taiwanese activists introduced me as “a researcher who studies coming out”—knowing that I study sexuality and family relationships, they assumed that “coming out” must be my focus. Similarly, when a local radio station invited me to be interviewed about my research, nearly all of the questions they asked me concerned “coming out,” and I struggled to pull the conversation in other directions.

Yet more careful attention to my data revealed that “coming out” stories are unevenly distributed across family narratives, following some clear patterns. These patterns belied many of the stereotypes I also encountered in the field, about what kinds of people are more likely to “come out” to their parents, siblings, and other relatives. I found no relationship
between “coming out” to family and region of the country, urbanity/rurality, social class background, education, involvement in activism (public “outness” does not predict outness at home) or having a non-heterosexual identity. For example, I interviewed a young woman who described her sexual orientation as “liking guys” (xiān nánshēng) while also being in a monogamous long-term relationship with her female classmate. She has introduced this classmate to her siblings and parents, has told her siblings that this is her girlfriend, and plans to tell her parents as well if the relationship proves to be a stable one. For this young woman and many others in the research, the pathway to “coming out” is not a fixed identity but a relationship. I also interviewed numerous people with strong LGBT identities who do not have any plans to “come out” to their families. Thus identity and “coming out” do not appear to be tightly connected for my informants. Instead, the patterns in “coming out” emerged most clearly along generational lines: I found “coming out” to be as absent in concept and practice among mid and later life LGBTs as it is pervasive among their younger counterparts.68

While LGBT informants in their late teens, twenties, and thirties often placed “coming out” at the center of their family narratives (without my prompting), mid and later life LGBTs organized their family narratives around very different themes. Most had not “come out” to their families, yet neither did they appear to be “closeted” in the ways their younger counterparts described. Younger LGBTs volunteered information about which family members they’ve told and which they haven’t, as well as reasons for why certain

68 Which side of this story is surprising and interesting will depend in a large part on the social location of the reader. I have found, for example, that US audiences are usually surprised by the irrelevance of “coming out” in some LGBT family of origin relationships, while Taiwanese audiences are more likely to be surprised about the salience of this discourse among younger LGBTs in Taiwan. Thus the contribution of this chapter may also be context specific, providing a new lens on “coming out” as both unexpectedly relevant (to younger LGBTs) and irrelevant (to mid and later life LGBTs).
family members don’t or shouldn’t know that they are LGB and/or T, and, more often than not, attached some deeper meanings and emotions to these decisions. When I asked mid and later life lesbians and gays if they’d discussed their sexuality with anyone in the family, the question itself seemed odd. Usually it was met with a pause, followed by, “They wouldn’t ask” or “This is impossible for them to understand”—at which point my informant would return to their story of balancing various family roles and relationships, with the implications of my more boring and even irrelevant question fading to the background.

People who responded this way were not, as a group, any less sure of or comfortable with their own genders, sexual desires, and intimate relationships. Thus, my findings do not support the conventional wisdom, which attributes nondisclosure to shame, internalized homophobia, and fear and anxiety about family reactions. While these emotions—shame, homophobia, fear, and anxiety—are likely to occur among LGBT people growing up under the burden of compulsory heterosexuality, viewing these as predictive of “coming out” behaviors is inaccurate for the people and families in my sample. Instead, the new salience and, often, urgency of “coming out” to one’s family is linked to a broader set of social and family changes. These include changing forms of interdependency, with a prolonged transition to adulthood and the flow of resources between parents and children shifting later in the life course; changing meanings of marriage and marriage pressure; new parenting discourses like those described in the previous chapter, which proscribe intensive mothering and emotional fulfillment as important components of the parent-child relationship; and, consequently, different interpretations of silence and of the tacit negotiation of gender and sexuality, which were primary modes of communication for previous generations, and remain

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69 In this chapter, I have limited my focus to “coming out” to families of origin. “Coming out” in the context of other spaces and relationships will occur for different reasons and in different ways, also warranting scholarly attention but beyond the purview of this analysis.
important even as new norms and expectations crowd onto the family stage. As the theory of compressed modernity would predict, the social meanings surrounding silence and disclosure vary greatly within families, so that norms and expectations differ profoundly by gender, generation, and other social locations (Chang, 2010, p. 143). This has created a generation gap internal as well as external to the family unit, as ways of addressing gender and sexual non-normativity differ not only in form and function but also in the meanings they hold across generations.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will use four selected case studies, supplemented with additional interviews and fieldnotes, first to illustrate family of origin relationships that are not adequately represented by the “coming out” discourse, and then to analyze the turn toward “coming out” in relation to emerging parenting discourses and other family changes. These four cases are representative of the generation gap I observed in my data, including more typical and more atypical cases on either side of the gap. By taking readers deeply into these individual lives, I hope to draw out the nuances and complexities of these compressed family changes, disrupting any neat typology of “out” younger and “closeted” older adults, to reveal instead a more complicated story of shifting family values, roles, and relationships.

6.3 Tacit Subjects in the Taiwan Context

Carlos Decena (2008, 2011) introduced the metaphor of “tacit subjects” as a challenge to the out/closeted dichotomy in his analysis of Dominican immigrant gay and bisexual men in New York City at the turn of the twenty-first century. In Spanish grammar, the tacit subject is not spoken, but is ascertained through the verb used in the sentence. Extending this principle to sexuality, Decena shows how tacit sexual subjects are neither secret nor silent, but intuited. In addition to drawing from his own fieldwork, Decena synthesizes existing
scholarship to reveal the tacit subject across diverse communities of color in the United States, suggesting that this principal has a broad applicability even as it takes culturally specific forms. Tacit subjects also appear in studies of LGBT family life in East Asia, where family communications are shown to rely heavily on what is intuited or implied, rather than verbally expressed. See, for example, works by Katie Acosta (2011), Keja Valens (2013), and Chris Tan (2011) engaging these principles in US Latina, Caribbean, and Singaporeen family contexts, respectively.

Tacit negotiations of gender and sexuality, rather than a “coming out” discourse, formed the currents that flowed through the family stories of my mid and later life informants. Silence also emerged as a meaningful tool and in some cases a supportive one, making a relationship feel safer with no imperative to disclose. The family issues that mattered most did not concern self-revelations, or being “known” by one’s kin, so much as family interdependency and lifelong carework. In addition, the question of marriage and the question of sexuality were usually entertained separately—that is, whether or not one married was decided by factors other than sexual attraction and romantic love, and family pressure to marry was not interpreted as a direct statement about sexual orientation, as it has come to be in younger generations. These findings emerged from my 11 life history interviews with midlife LGBTs (ages 45-60), from my weekly participation in the LGBT Elders Working Group, and from other fieldwork with lesbians and gays in their sixties and above. To provide a richer description and analysis of these findings, I invite readers into my interviews and fieldwork with three informants in two families: Minxiong, a gay man in his fifties, and LJ and J Mama, a T mother and daughter in their fifties and seventies, respectively.

6.3.1 Minxiong (age 53): “My boyfriend also encouraged me to marry my wife”
Minxiong identifies as tóngzhì or gay, and hails from Keelung, where he was born in 1959; he has a high school education, runs his own business, and plans to retire when his youngest child, a daughter, graduates from college. Like most LGBT people of his generation, he is heterosexually married with children. Minxiong’s story is reflective of the kinds of stories I often encountered in my fieldwork with gay men born in the 1950s and earlier periods.

I became acquainted with Minxiong through the Rainbow Bus sightseeing trips organized by the LGBT Elders Working Group, as well as numerous other events that we both attended. He is exuberant, flamboyant, and seems to thrive on being the center of attention. On just one occasion I saw Minxiong’s demeanor change quickly and markedly. In a gift exchange game involving people of all genders, Minxiong won two bottles of vaginal wash. He found this hilarious and bounded around showing the wash to everyone. At one point he posed for a photo that I took, displaying the wash daintily with wide eyes and pursed lips. “Give me your email address so I can send you the photo,” I said after snapping the shot. Minxiong’s smile vanished and he physically backed away, saying apprehensively, “I don’t use email, I don’t use email.” “Never mind!” I said quickly, realizing I had put Minxiong in a very awkward position, potentially connecting his unhindered movements in the gay world with his very separate home and family life through the link of an email address. Like others of his age cohort, Minxiong did not use his real name or share any personal information at the gay events he took part in on a regular basis.

I knew of his long-term boyfriend, a Taiwanese citizen who lives in Australia but visits often and is never far from Minxiong’s heart and mind, but it was several months before Minxiong spoke to me about the rest of his family. Eventually I learned that he is the doting father of two grown sons, one of whom is also gay, and a daughter; his children know
and love their “god daddy” (Minxiong’s boyfriend) while his wife is not aware that her husband is gay. At a particularly tumultuous point in their marriage, his wife took a boyfriend of her own—a turn of events that greatly angered Minxiong because “in Taiwan it is not acceptable (for a woman), absolutely not!” He gradually calmed down after some gay friends pointed out that he doesn’t like having sex with a woman and should thank the person who is taking care of this for him. After feeling furious for several days, Minxiong resolved that “it’s right, she needs sex too.” Acceptance of his wife’s boyfriend did not automatically stem from the fact that Minxiong has a boyfriend of his own, because as in a majority of the world, extramarital sex is not a gender-neutral concept, but is connected to the control of women’s fertility within families; often men who have affairs do not tolerate similar behaviors in their wives. In this case it was the gay community that helped Minxiong to develop a more egalitarian viewpoint.

Minxiong got married at age 18, in the year 1977, an era I have previously described as having “nearly universal marriage” by conventional demographic standards (Jones, 2010). Like the heterosexually married lesbians introduced in an earlier chapter, Minxiong entered and remained in his marriage for a complex set of reasons, perhaps most significantly to ease the pressure of his mother’s life, as I will describe shortly. He never referred to this as a “fake” marriage, although he repeatedly emphasized his lack of desire for his wife, at one point lamenting, “I asked my heterosexual friends how often did their wives want sex in a month. They all said, once a month is enough. But when my wife was in her 40s, she wanted

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While Minxiong’s wife does not know he is gay, she almost certainly knows or suspects that he has other lovers. However, without hearing from Minxiong’s wife directly, we cannot assume that she took her boyfriend for this reason alone. Over one-half of the married women in my sample knew or suspected that their husbands had extra-marital relationships, and none had taken lovers of their own. Minxiong portrayed his wife as a selfish woman who had gambled away most of his money, and in his mind her having a boyfriend was further evidence of her bad character. Minxiong did acknowledge that he was not able to fulfill his wife sexually, but he viewed this primarily as a tribulation for himself, as depicted in the quote above.
sex many times a month! I felt like I had such a hard life (wǒ nà shíhòu juédé wǒ mìng hǎo kǔ).” The absence of love and desire did not delegitimize the marriage in his mind; it was simply part and parcel of performing his duties as a husband to his wife and son to his mother. His boyfriend encouraged him to do this and even showed his support by sending Minxiong bottles of lube to use during sex with his wife, urging him to have sex to prevent her from developing suspicions. Minxiong found this gesture very touching and symbolic of his boyfriend’s love and care for Minxiong and his family. This attitude toward heterosexual marriage departs significantly from that of many younger lesbians and gays, and from the mainstream media in Taiwan, which has come to depict such marriages as dishonest (notably, concerns about dishonesty are only raised when gay men marry straight women—lesbians married to straight men are entirely invisible in the public view).

Minxiong’s mother shares some characteristics in common with Bai Mama, introduced in chapter five; namely that she has one son and became a widow in her twenties, increasing the difficulties she has endured throughout her life. At the time of her husband’s death, it was considered unseemly for a widow to remarry. Minxiong’s mother had married into a reputable family, and this increased the pressure she faced to remain permanently single out of respect for her deceased husband, and to devote her labor and income to her marital family. Moreover, her in-laws refused to bequeath their assets to her son until they were certain that she would not take another husband and drain those assets from the family. Minxiong recalled that in the year following his father’s death, his mother would often stay up crying late into the night. During this period, she told Minxiong (then a young boy), “You must quickly grow up, get married, and have children; watching over you is all I have in this life (nǐ yào gānkùài zhǎngdà, jiéhūn shēng xiǎo háizi, wǒ zhè bèizi jiù shǒuzhe nǐ).” From childhood, Minxiong understood that all of his mother’s hopes hinged on his establishment of a heterosexual household. As a result, his marriage and his sexual orientation were two
separate matters; they really had nothing to do with each other. In other words, Minxiong never considered not getting married, not because he was “closeted” but because his gay sexuality did not diminish his responsibility to provide for his mother’s life by getting married and having sons.

In the narrative excerpt below, Minxiong alternates between describing his mother’s hardships and her response to overhearing a tender conversation between Minxiong and his boyfriend. Notably, his mother did not directly oppose Minxiong’s gay relationship, nor did she amend her expectation that Minxiong would get heterosexually married. Minxiong’s boyfriend also encouraged his marriage, as was typical among same-sex couples in this period:

Actually, I knew my boyfriend even before I got married. He told me to get married because I was under a lot of pressure. My mother had a lot of pressure too, because she only has one son. My father was the oldest son, and I am the oldest and the only son. I am the reason that my mother didn’t get married again (so that Minxiong could receive his inheritance from his paternal grandparents). If I refused to get married, if I told her I am gay, she would kill herself. Taiwanese women are like that. She suffered a lot. She had to work for my father’s family, she had to do bookkeeping for the family business, she had to take care of my father’s parents. She was very skinny when she was young because she had so much pressure. Her husband was dead, and her children were so young, so she was under a lot of pressure. But one time she found out that I am gay. I was talking to my husband on the phone (Minxiong recognizes his partner of 30 years as his husband; they are not legally married). She was listening in from another phone. I didn’t know that. So I said things like ‘honey, I miss you so much.’ She heard everything, but she just kept it inside and didn’t say anything, until one time, we were watching TV together, and she saw the news about a foreigner getting deported from Taiwan because he had AIDS. Then she said to me, ‘You must be careful.’ She never said anything else again. But she still insisted on me getting married. My boyfriend also encouraged me to marry my wife. He said, ‘No, you have to do this, your mother has had a very tough life since she was young. You have to get married.’

The marriage encouragement Minxiong received from his boyfriend is similar to that described by other mid and later life lesbians and gays. For example, J Mama, a T lesbian in her seventies, once severed her relationship with her pó for three years because the pó declared that she would not marry and wanted to be with J Mama monogamously. Only after
the pó backed down and got heterosexually married did J Mama resume their relationship. This was not a rejection of the pó, but rather a function of J Mama’s concern for this woman’s long-term wellbeing, which she knew that she could not provide; it may be viewed as a pragmatic and sacrificial love, giving up the chance to have a devoted pó to ensure that her lover would be properly cared for by a family of her own.

Minxiong’s story is also representative of my mid and later life informants in its depiction of a mother-son relationship that is not predicated on self-revelation through the sharing of personal ideas and feelings, but rather on a different kind of intimacy, that of interconnectedness within the social and familial system. While the imperative to marry and have children may be conventionally framed as Minxiong’s responsibility to continue the line of his deceased father, Minxiong did not talk about his duty to his father or paternal ancestors as motivating his marriage; instead, here and elsewhere in the interview, he attributed this decision to his responsibility to relieve the pressure faced by his mother. As I have argued in other parts of this dissertation, attention to the material underpinnings of patrilineality brings women’s experiences more fully into view—this includes the experiences of mothers of LGBT children, as well as those of lesbian, bisexual and queer women presented in earlier chapters. Here, again, reproductive labor is embodied, even causing Minxiong’s mother to become physically skinny, and Minxiong is cognizant of his role in ensuring that his mother’s labor and her sacrifices are not in vain. Thus he is less concerned about whether or not his mother “knows” that he is gay, and more concerned about how to take care of her life as she ages. This suggests that reducing the cumulative disadvantages accrued to women within families will also have meaningful implications for the lives of gay men, potentially addressing some of the pressure men feel to participate in a system that has tied not only their fathers’ name, but also their mothers’ material wellbeing to their performance of heterosexuality.
Throughout the interview and my other conversations with him over the period of one year, Minxiong did not talk about whether and how to “come out,” but rather about how to care properly for all of his family members, including his children, mother, wife, and boyfriend. His goals for the future are also focused on this aspect. For example, his current plan is to care for his mother until her death and then move abroad to care for his husband, who is eight years his senior—“I would be willing to push his wheelchair and change his diapers,” he said to me, in the same fervent tone that he used to express his love for his husband throughout the whole of the interview (in fact, I had some difficulty steering the interview to family of origin relationships because Minxiong answered each question I had prepared by referring back to his love for his husband, which I finally accepted as constituting the core of his family narrative). Prior to his mother’s passing, Minxiong hopes that one of his three children will move in with his husband and take care of him; his daughter appears to be the best candidate for this, as she is the most open to living in Australia. Minxiong has also given careful thought and preparation to how he might bring his boyfriend into his family at the end of their lives, and in the next life he hopes they will share together:

I have purchased columbarium niches for my mother, my wife, and my boyfriend. My wife’s niche is on the 9th floor; mine, my mother’s, and my boyfriend’s are on the 12th floor. We are Buddhists. I hope that when we die, we can be placed together. If he dies before me, I am going to bring his ashes back to Taiwan to place them with mine. I told him, ‘If there is a next life, I hope I can be a woman and you a man, and we can stay together.’ So that we don’t have to be on this path. (In this life) I can’t hold his hand on the street. If it’s possible, I would like us to be a normal heterosexual couple in the next life… I want to stay with him even after death.

By purchasing these columbarium niches, Minxiong is defining family on his own terms, rejecting the social definitions that have separated him from his boyfriend in this life. It is significant that he has placed his boyfriend, rather than his wife, with himself and his mother (ordinarily a husband and wife would be placed together with the husband’s parents). I
observed similar reworkings of end of life and afterlife care among other gay men and lesbians who were faced with the prospect or actual death of a loved one. For example, another of my gay interviewees in his late sixties had created a small alter for his deceased boyfriend in the home they had shared, where he prepared food and incense as one would ordinarily do for paternal ancestors. He appropriated this custom to show his continued love and devotion to his boyfriend’s spirit, and, as Minxiong has done with the columbarium, to redraw the boundaries of family with his boyfriend as a family-insider.

Through the above example, two things are very clear: Minxiong may not be “out,” but neither is he “closeted”—his mother is aware of his boyfriend and has not interfered with Minxiong’s quite radical plan of having the three of them housed together in the columbarium, yet all of this occurred without any defining “coming out” moment. Secondly, and related to this, the family issues that matter to Minxiong and his mother concern larger systems of inequality and cannot be reduced to his mother’s response to Minxiong’s “coming out.” As I have previously noted, research on LGBT family of origin relationships has focused disproportionately on “coming out” and on parents’ pathways to acceptance following verbal disclosure of a child’s lesbian or gay sexuality. This approach flattens the experiences of Minxiong, his mother, and many others for whom “coming out” is not the most salient or pressing family issue.

Having introduced Minxiong as a representative case, I now turn to the life stories of a T mother and daughter, whose stories are unusual in some specific ways that help to further illuminate the incongruity of “coming out” for their generational cohorts.

6.3.2 J Mama (age 72) and LJ (age 51): “They accompanied me silently”
LJ is a self-identified T from Taipei, born in 1961, with some college education; she worked as a painter until her recent retirement.\(^1\) She is unique in that she has never married and her mother is also a T. LJ’s story is particularly instructive for addressing the salience of “coming out” for her generation. If mid and later life LGBT people are “closeted” because of fear, shame, and stigma, then we would expect someone like LJ—who has never been married, and who has a robust tóngzhì identity (LJ is very involved in the LGBT movement, even appearing on posters and brochures related to LGBT causes)—to be more likely to “come out” to her family. That this is not the case raises a host of questions about the appropriateness of the out/closeted dichotomy for LJ and others of her cohort.

My first “fieldnote” about LJ is in fact a scribbled conversation between my research assistant and me during a symposium on gender and sexuality, which LJ happened to attend. In between my notes on the symposium, my RA scrawled: “You should go talk to that older T.” I wrote in response: “I know! But she’s so handsome, I feel shy.” (“She gets that a lot,” our mutual friends said, when I told them this story some months later—with her salt and pepper hair and T swagger, LJ is never lacking for women’s attention.) In fact, I did not approach LJ until the second day of the symposium, when I worked up the nerve to sit beside her on the bench where she was eating her pork chop lunchbox. LJ spoke only a few sentences to me, allowing her companion—a lesbian woman in her 50’s, whom I guessed to be LJ’s partner but turned out to be only an acquaintance—to do most of the small talk. However, upon learning about my project, LJ announced that she would help, and did so in numerous ways in the year that followed. She introduced me around to lesbians of her generation and mine (at 30, I was already older than the average demographic at many LGBT

\(^1\) This is an early retirement but not unheard of in Taiwan, where early retirement remains quite common for numerous social and cultural reasons; the average retirement age has been around 56 for the past decade (Liu and Osawa, 2013).
gatherings in Taiwan) and arranged for me to do interviews with two other people in addition to being interviewed herself. As a co-member of the LGBT Elders Working Group, which I later joined, LJ always greeted me warmly, asked about my research, and looked out for me as we worked and sometimes traveled together. In addition to her reputation as a shuài (handsome) T, LJ is known for her efforts to bring older lesbians to events dominated by young people and by men, and for her unique family background—specifically, for having a T mother in her 70’s, whom I will refer to as J Mama.

LJ’s mother is somewhat legendary among the circle of LGBT friends with whom LJ socializes. On multiple occasions, I was among a group of a dozen or so people regaled with an enactment of J Mama’s gendered behavior: how she sits (legs wide apart, shoulders thrust forward, chin tucked in a cool and aloof posture) and smokes (also very aloof and therefore cool; for someone of her generation, smoking is coded as a masculine behavior). The enactment is usually performed by a gay man and accompanied by admiring exclamations of, “oh, such a man!” I met J Mama herself on just two occasions, once at home, at LJ’s invitation, and once on the biannual Rainbow Bus sightseeing trip organized by the LGBT Elders Working Group. LJ took part in the trip six times before persuading her mother and aunt to come along. But, she told us, “My mother won’t play any of the games (organized by the Working Group volunteers), she’ll just sit to the side and smoke.” This is exactly what her mother did, in a detached but friendly manner; she did not play any of the games, but good naturedly chatted with me as I peppered her with questions about her life and her impressions of other LGBT people on the sightseeing trip.

In this section, I will focus on the relationship between LJ and her mother, as well as the relationship between J Mama and her own natal family, as narrated by LJ. In doing so, I wish to draw attention to the absence of any clear “coming out” moment in this family story,
and the more tacit ways in which family members showed their disapproval and support of gender and sexual non-normativity.

J Mama lives with LJ rather than following the custom of living with one of her two sons. When I asked LJ about this unusual living arrangement, she replied: “My mother is quite special (hěn tèbié). She smokes and stays up late. My brother goes to bed early and doesn’t smoke. This makes my mother uncomfortable, as she can’t smoke in the house.”

My own assumptions about why LJ and her mother live together are revealed by my next statement: “You say your mother is special. I’ve heard some people say that your mother is also a T…” (At this point, I had not yet met J Mama in person.) “Yes, my mother is a T,” LJ said immediately. Although she followed me easily into a conversation about her mother’s sexuality, it is important to note that for LJ, “special” was not explicitly queer.

While living together for much of their lives, LJ and her mother have not (needed to) “come out” by explicitly discussing the fact that they are both Ts, and have mutually acknowledged their relationships with women only once (a conversation I will describe below). When I asked LJ how she came to know that her mother likes women, LJ recalled that as a child, she saw her mother interacting with friends who looked and behaved like her mother did—using more vulgar language, refusing to wear dresses, and acting and appearing like men in other ways.72 At the same time, her mother kept company with more normatively gendered “aunties” and was close to one auntie in particular. LJ referred to this auntie as her mother’s girlfriend, although her mother never identified the auntie as such, and the auntie was married and raising a child of her own. Of her parents’ relationship, LJ said:

72 Based on the photographs J Mama showed me of herself as a young person, it would have been difficult if not impossible to visually distinguish between her and more normatively gendered men (those assigned male at birth) in those days, just as it is now that J Mama is in her 70’s.
My father didn’t mind her (bù guān tǎ). He knew she and that auntie were very close. But my father didn’t think too much about this (bù huì qù xiǎng tài duō). The average person doesn’t know what tóngzhì is. They won’t make the connection. In my father’s mind, there are just two kinds of people in the world, men and women. So my father didn’t really care what my mother did with women.

When I pressed for details about her mother’s family, LJ said something similar: “They also felt their child (LJ’s mother) is a bit different (zhège xiǎo háizi bù tài yìyàng). But they didn’t have that…that knowledge (tāmen yě méiyǒu nà zhǒng… nà zhǒng zhīshì ba).” However I posed the question, LJ’s answer remained the same—gender and sexual non-normativity could not be understood or acknowledged by her mother’s kin.

But later in the interview, as part of an aside to a longer story, LJ mentioned an interaction between her mother and her aunt, which suggested a more implicit kind of acknowledgement. When LJ’s aunt got married, she asked LJ’s mother (her sister) not to be at home when the bridegroom and wedding party arrived on her wedding day.73 She did not want her future in-laws to see her sister (J Mama) and think that there was something strange (qíguài) about her family. Many months later, as I was chatting with LJ and a mutual friend, a gay man in his late 40’s, LJ told this story again, and I wondered aloud whether J Mama had any particular feelings (gănjué) about this incident. “I don’t think she has any feelings now,” LJ responded. At this point our gay friend chimed in: “She remembers. That’s your answer. LJ’s mother remembers this incident.” His point is well taken. For J Mama, the act of remembering is its own kind of feeling; no further emotional display or statement about the incident is necessary to confirm its significance.

Just as J Mama’s sister tacitly disapproved of J Mama, so J Mama tacitly supported LJ. For example, J Mama did not pressure LJ to get married, and in fact served as a buffer

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73 In a traditional Taiwanese wedding ceremony, the groom leads the bridal party to the bride’s natal home; the bride is then carried (usually by sedan) to the groom’s home where the wedding rituals are performed.
between LJ and potential suitors, turning down invitations on her behalf. On one occasion, J Mama’s friend initiated an introduction between LJ and her son. J Mama felt she could not get out of this invitation, and the two of them went to the boy’s home with one of LJ’s grade school friends. However, LJ never interacted with the boy, instead excusing herself to the balcony to chat with her friend, and her mother never brought it up again.

LJ could think of only one conversation in which her mother said something explicit about the same-sex relationships they both have had: “One time, as we were chatting, my mother said something a bit more direct. She said, ‘In the past, we didn’t spend so much money on our girlfriends.’ This clarified for me that my mother acknowledges that we’re both T.” J Mama went on to say that in the past, Ts’ girlfriends, almost all of whom were married, would give them money, and the Ts wouldn’t have to buy dinner or gifts for these women. LJ described this conversation as her mother “boasting about her glory days” (fēng gōng wèiyè). Among her grander boasts was the fact that she had once kept 18 girlfriends at the same time. In those days, her mother said, a T could keep girlfriends in different cities, writing to them and visiting them at her convenience. Upon hearing this, I said playfully to LJ: “Oh, so Ts today aren’t like this?” LJ sighed dramatically as she replied: “Nowadays, for a T to have even one girlfriend is pretty good!”

The challenges J Mama has faced in her life are undeniable: among them, poverty and raising three children by herself after the death of her husband when she was still a young person, as well as living through the intense political oppression of White Terror under Martial Law (I heard someone ask J Mama directly about this experience on just one

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74 According to LJ, this is because “the less you have of a product, the more valuable it becomes”—indicating the larger number of Ts relative to pó today since “most Ts don’t get married, but pó might get married.” LJ’s girlfriend is 20 years her junior, and this is not unusual for Ts of her age, who often date progressively younger women as many of their previous girlfriends enter heterosexual marriages.
occasion; she described being harassed by police for cross-dressing, but quickly changed the subject back to mountain-climbing, her favorite hobby and conversation topic). Yet she still “boasts about her glory days” and compares these days favorably to the lives of Ts her daughter’s age and younger. It would be inappropriate to characterize J Mama as closeted, pre-liberated, or secretive because she never “came out of the closet” by declaring herself to be T or tóngzhì (words her family members would not have understood) or by talking about her sexual exploits with her kin. Her tacit support for LJ is an important reason why LJ was able to remain unmarried while most of her LGBT peers entered heterosexual marriages. In this and other ways, J Mama created space for T masculinity and sexuality within their family. Throughout this work, I have argued that the major obstacles for lesbians in Taiwan are connected to sexual inequality within the family system, and that this matters as much or more than an identity-based politics of sexual self-reference. Thus, J Mama’s protection of LJ from marriage is a far more revolutionary gesture than simply naming and verbally affirming her sexual orientation.

In addition to tacit negotiations like those presented above, LJ described silence, or not asking about one’s sexual orientation, as a meaningful form of support that she had received at various stages of her life—for example, after her first break up:

LJ: The first time I was heartbroken from a relationship, my sisters from the church were there to help me. They were all married housewives with children. At that time my first girlfriend was getting married (to a man), so I was feeling terrible, and I lost a lot of weight. Whenever I had a day off, I went to have coffee and chat with these women. They talked to me about their own lives, and they sat there with me. They didn’t ask me to explain what was going on with me (tāmen yě bù wèn wǒ fāxiàn shénme shì). They just kept me company as I helped myself to get over it.

Amy: Did they know why you were so sad?

LJ is referring to the jiàotáng or Christian church that she began attending as a teenager.
LJ: I’m not sure if they knew or not. They wouldn’t ask (tāmen bù huì wèn). They just accompanied me silently (mòmò péizhe wǒ).

Although LJ is not discussing her family relationships at this juncture, her comment holds direct relevance for family of origin issues, shedding light on how not only the deployment but also the meanings of silence have changed from one generation to the next. I found that mid and later life lesbians and gays were more likely to describe silence appreciatively, as LJ does here, while younger lesbians and gays were more likely to feel uncomfortable or even oppressed by the silence surrounding sexuality in their homes, families, and other spaces. At another point in our interview, LJ explained to me that this don’t ask/don’t tell policy is precisely what made the church appealing to her:

LJ: I’ve been ok because my church doesn’t really discuss tóngzhì issues. If they hold anti- tóngzhì views, they don’t express them openly (bù tài huì gōngkāi jiǎng). There are other tóngzhì in our congregation, but they aren’t that obvious (míngxiàn).

Amy: (repeating for clarification) The tóngzhì aren’t that obvious…

LJ: I mean, you don’t come out and say that you’re tóngzhì. At our church, you wouldn’t say, I had intimate relations with this woman.

LJ is clearly not talking about gender display, since she herself is unmistakably $T$ and arguably quite míngxiàn to the casual observer. But no one is going to put LJ in the difficult situation of having to articulate her same-sex relationship as an intimate one. As a result, LJ is comfortable bringing her girlfriend to church in the same way that many of her peers are comfortable bringing their partners around family members who won’t ask or directly point out the nature of their relationship, even after the two of them have lived together for many years.

These tacit negotiations and strategic silences have not disappeared among the younger generations. But younger LGBTs are also more likely to interpret silence as a lack of understanding or support for lesbian and gay sexuality, and describe it as exacting an emotional toll. Bing’s story, presented below, illustrates this way of thinking; at 35, Bing is in my early midlife group, for whom some very different family structures and processes have taken root.
Before introducing Bing, I will briefly describe some of the changes that have occurred. The shift I wish to emphasize here is not entirely away from Decena’s “tacit subjects,” or from the kinds of family issues that I have identified as being important; rather, it is a shift toward a complex landscape where tacit negotiations coexist with expectations for more direct interpersonal sharing among family members.

6.4  The Turn Toward “Coming Out”

In the previous chapter on Parenting, I incorporated work by Lan (2014) and Yi and Lin (2009) showing how parenting discourses and intergenerational support systems have been transformed. These new parenting discourses emphasize parents’ attentiveness to their children (Lan, 2014), while new intergenerational support systems include an “affectual component” and “emotional support” alongside the more normative and functional exchanges (Yi and Lin, 2009, p. 322). Other work suggests that the social and interpersonal value placed on this form of support has also increased. For example, Lin, Chang, and Huang (2011) found that sharing “intergenerational affection” with an adult child improved the life satisfaction of middle aged Taiwanese women (mean age 66). These studies let us know that something significant is happening with regard to the norms and expectations that surround Taiwanese parent-child relationships. “Normative” expectations are increasingly combined with “affectual” expectations that remain under-examined in the literature. These expectations are primarily identified through survey questions with limited context or interpretation of how emotional support is differently operationalized for mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons. Ethnographic approaches and LGBT family stories provide useful sites for investigating these changes in deeper and more nuanced ways. In my interviews, people frequently framed
“coming out” in the language of emotions and interpersonal sharing—what I will call “self-revealing intimacy”—which comprised a new measure of relationship quality.

It is important to emphasize that intimacy and deep affectual bonds have long existed between Taiwanese parents and their children. While previous generations of children may not have told their parents about their inner thoughts and feelings, they usually arranged their entire lives around care and respect for their elder family members and ancestors, continuing parent-child intimacy even after death. Thus to suggest that these relationships lacked emotional intimacy is to narrowly and problematically define emotions and intimacy in terms of a friendship-style dynamic, which does not capture the complexity of intimacy in most Taiwanese families. In an effort to clarify my meaning, I use the term “self-revealing intimacy” to describe the turn toward parental knowledge of the child as an individual, either through interpersonal disclosures or through parents’ own pursuit of information about their children’s personalities, tastes, preferences, and daily activities.

Increased expectations for self-revealing intimacy between parents and their children have been a game-changer for LGBT people in Taiwan on multiple fronts. Parenting discourses that emphasize “knowing” and “loving” one’s children are staples of a burgeoning social movement to support Taiwanese parents of LGBT children, and to make it possible and desirable for more people to openly discuss their gender transitions and/or same-sex relationships with their parents. Some feminist groups have marshaled notions of intimacy and the sharing of “inner emotional qualities” to promote more egalitarian relationships between husbands and wives, and between parents and their children (e.g., Chang, 2009, see especially pp. 110-115). At the same time, self-revealing intimacy can be a

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76 I thank Pallavi Banerjee for her insightful comments about the problems of defining emotions and intimacy in a narrow and often Western-centric way.
thinly veiled mechanism of parental surveillance and control, as parents demand more access to their children’s inner lives. Parents’ love and wishes for their children to be “happy”—an increasingly common refrain—are often used to buttress normative and class-specific ideas about what constitutes happiness. As new currencies of emotional pressure and emotional support emerge in family negotiations about gender and sexuality, these negotiations have become more explicit, and the meanings attached to silences and more tacit gestures have changed significantly.

While both parent-child and spousal relationships have been imbued with new ideas about mutually sharing one’s inner thoughts and feelings, new economic conditions have also dramatically restructured family life. Interdependency of families has shifted, as many parents now support their children financially through early adulthood. Minxiong and LJ are representative of their cohort in that neither of their parents had above a grade school education; Minxiong, LJ, and most of their peers started working immediately after high school to contribute to the family income (J Mama’s parents had no schooling; she was reared to work at home as a farmer’s wife, but ultimately did perform wage labor after her husband died\textsuperscript{77}). In contrast, many of my early midlife and young adult informants had college educations paid for by their parents, and some had or planned to pursue graduate degrees; among the young adult informants (ages 18–29) only a small number had given any money to their parents, and most were still receiving money from their parents on a regular basis.

\textsuperscript{77} After her husband’s death, J Mama became a labor migrant to Japan to support herself and her three children. At that time she could only get female-typed jobs such as cooking, which, LJ told me humorously, she had no idea how to do. J Mama handled this by charming some of the other women in the kitchen, who helped to cover up her lack of knowledge while teaching her how to cook.
At the same time, in the last decade, Taiwan has experienced an economic decline and rising unemployment, particularly hard hitting among younger workers. The unemployment rate, long maintained below 2 percent, exceeded 10 percent for young adults ages 20-24 in 2002 and has continued to rise (Huang, 2013; according to the Directorate of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, in 2002 the unemployment rate was 5.17 percent for the general population). While unemployment in the general population saw a modest dip to just over 4 percent in 2013, it saw a year-to-year increase to 13 percent for the 20-24 age bracket (in the next age bracket, 25-29, the rate hovered around 7 percent; Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, 2013). Drawing from the 2007-2009 panels of the Taiwan Youth Survey, Wendy Huang (2013) found that Taiwanese young people (up to age 24) and their parents anticipate a protracted transition to adulthood. Holding socioeconomic variables constant, parents are generally permissive about continuing to provide financial support during this life stage. Consistent with the historically-rooted value of education in Chinese and Taiwanese cultures, these parents view higher education as the primary pathway to their children’s financial security and eventual (heterosexual) family formation.

Rising unemployment among young people, an increasing need for higher education to secure even an entry level job, the proliferation of profit-generating cram schools and other privatized educational tools, as well as the soaring housing prices throughout Taiwan have contributed to a prolonged and also increasingly routinized and bureaucratized transition to adulthood (e.g., Shaw, 1994; Xenos et al., 2006). For LGBT people, this has also increased parental access, surveillance, and control over day-to-day activities. Most young adults in this research had parents who were actively monitoring their lives, to such an extent that many described themselves as being “forced out of the closet” (bī wǒ chā guì) in a manner that would have been unimaginable for earlier cohorts.
As a portrait of the new “coming out” discourse that has emerged at this historical moment, I will draw most heavily from the life histories of Bing, a gay man in his mid-thirties, and Skye, a T in her early twenties. Bing’s rationalization for “coming out” and Skye’s concerns about coming out are typical of their age cohorts. I also provide supplementary excerpts from other interviews and fieldwork with early midlife and young adult LGBTs and their families.

6.4.1 Bing (age 35): “A house without windows”

Bing describes himself as homosexual (tóngxìngliàn); born in 1977, he recently returned to graduate school after working in industry for several years, and lives with his parents in Beitou, the northernmost district of Taipei. He is the father of young twins whom he had with the help of a surrogate mother. As surrogacy is only available to married couples in Taiwan, and as the status of having children in wedlock remains important, Bing went through the marriage procedures with a Mainland Chinese woman introduced to him by a Taiwanese marriage agency (see Lu, 2005 for a description of such agencies as brokers of cross-border marriages). In response to my question about whether or not he is married, Bing said, “That depends on your definition of marriage.” He had never lived with the woman who bore these children (they used assisted reproductive technologies, not intercourse, to get pregnant) and at the time of interview they had separated completely and were not in touch at all. As per their transactional marriage agreement, Bing had compensated the woman financially for her reproductive labor and retained sole custody of the twins. Bing was an attentive father, more involved in his children’s daily lives than a majority of my informants recalled their fathers having been; his mother and sisters were also helping him to raise his two children.
Bing is unique among men his age in my sample, in that he had managed to find a way to father children without taking on the full trappings of heterosexual married life. His good economic situation as well as family support are largely what made these things possible. Just as LJ’s unique unmarried status highlights the limits of “coming out,” so Bing’s unique married status highlights the salience of “coming out” for my early midlife and young adult informants. That is, we might expect someone like Bing, who has been married and fathered children, to feel that “coming out” is not necessary for his life, since he is unlikely to receive marriage pressure from his parents in the future. But Bing spoke eloquently and at length about why “coming out” mattered to him. Describing life prior to “coming out,” Bing said,

You build a wall around yourself (nǐ zài zìjǐ shēnbǐān zhúle yīdào qiáng—here he is speaking of himself in the third person). You want to break the wall to see your family. You also want your family to come in, but you worry that if they come in and know this thing about you, they’ll feel sad and hurt (tāmen huì nánguò)... So you have to lock yourself behind the wall. In the end, I felt that it was not a wall anymore, it became a house without windows (biànchéngle yījiàn fángzi lián chuānghū dōu méiyǒu). My marriage plus the birth of my children put me under immense pressure. Yes. Very very strong emotional pressure (qíngxù shàng de yālǐ).

In Bing’s analogy, we clearly see the emerging discourse of self-revealing intimacy between parents and their children. We also see new forms of emotional pressure emerge alongside the normative pressure of being a filial son. Bing was very concerned about filiality. After “coming out,” he went home every day for a month and got down on his knees to beg his parents’ forgiveness for not giving them the life he felt he owed them: marriage, children, and a wife to serve them. He did fulfill the crucial imperative of continuing the paternal line, as one of his twins is a boy. But these normative obligations were not Bing’s sole concern. He also felt a very powerful emotional pressure (qíngxù shàng de yālǐ) connected to his sense of being unknown and thus closed off from his parents. He explained that he chose to “come out” because he didn’t want to “act in this play” any longer (wǒ bù yào zài yǎn zhè yī chǔ xi).
This is a new kind of language for talking about family relationships, very different from that used by Minxiong, LJ, J Mama, and other mid and later life lesbians and gays. Whereas for LJ and others of her cohort, silence could signal tacit acceptance or even support, for Bing silence represented separation. Silence meant that something was hidden, something that needed to come out in order for family connections to be restored. Thus the act of “coming out” lifted what Bing described as “distance” (jùlí), a “wall” (qiáng), and a “burden” (fùdān) that he had previously carried:

Bing: When I came out to my youngest sister, she said calmly, “I already know this is what you want to tell me.” (laughs) She had already guessed.

Amy: Did you feel any change in your relationship?

Bing: It got better, much better, because she knew what was on my heart (yǐnwèi tā huì zhīdào wǒ xīnlǐ de shíqíng). She would tell me what was on her heart too… (Before coming out) I would keep my distance from people because I didn’t want to be asked. But when I came out, the wall disappeared. (After coming out) You don’t carry the burden anymore. Then you become willing to share yourself with others (yuányì gèn tāmen fènxìàng) and others become willing to share themselves with you also.

Bing similarly described his relationship with his parents as growing closer after an initial difficult period that followed his “coming out” to them at age 30. He valued the ability to share this aspect of himself and his life with his parents and siblings. Not all early midlife and young adult LGBTs chose to “come out,” and many continued to use tacit negotiations as their primary mode of communication with parents, grandparents, and other intergenerational kin (with intragenerational kin such as siblings and cousins, they were much more likely to be fully “out” from adolescence—also a difference from mid and later life LGBTs). But those who did “come out” (about 1/3 of this sample, with another 1/3 planning to “come out” one day) did so for reasons similar to Bing, and reported having conversations or writing letters in which they detailed their inner thoughts and emotions as part of the coming out process. For example, Edward, a 26-year-old gay man who “came out” to his parents both verbally and then by writing a letter, said he hoped that in response, his father would “speak out
everything on his mind” (suǒyǒu xiǎngfǎ jiǎng chīlái) rather than hiding matters in his heart, because Edward saw this as potentially improving their relationship in the long run. In contrast, Minxiong, LJ, and J Mama did not evaluate the closeness or quality of their family relationships based on their ability to share “themselves” or what was on their minds and hearts with their family members; a family relationship could be understood as very close and mutually satisfying without this aspect.

For “coming out” to make sense, self-revelation must be both conceivable and desirable to at least one party in the exchange. This is not say that all young people desire to “come out,” and indeed, many were actively avoiding coming out and exchanging tips on how to do so. Parents were just as likely to be the ones who had forced the matter. For young adults who were living at home and financially dependent on their parents, this created a sort of “coming out crisis” in which the possibility of being outed tinged everyday interactions. Mid and later life LGBTs faced enormous pressures from their families, but they did not worry about (and none had experienced) direct confrontations about their sexuality. This sort of “coming out crisis” was evident for Skye Han, the young T introduced in the Parenting chapter as she and her mother argued about her polo shirt. Skye’s story shows how parental surveillance shapes “coming out” experiences, as well as how coming out itself is defined among the youngest of my informants.

6.4.2 Skye (age 22): “Of course you’ll remember when and where you came out”

Born in 1990, Skye is a self-identified T lesbian who divides her time between her college dormitory in Taichung and her parents’ home in Hualien. She is studying economics and occasionally helps out with the family business that her father will one day bequeath to her brother. In the course of the field period I got to know many of Skye’s family members, including her siblings, cousins, and parents, as well as two girlfriends whom she had
consecutively during those sixteen months. I have chosen to share Skye’s story because it is reflective of the kinds of worries about “coming out” that seemed to constantly surface for my younger informants, not only in their interviews, but also at various workshops and events and in day-to-day conversations.

I was buying a snack in the night market on a rainy evening in December when Skye phoned me to talk about her most recent experience going home. Her frustration was palpable through the phone line. “Last night I was eating dinner with my parents, and my mom kept asking me all these questions. She even asked me what kind of boys I like. Come on. I look like this, and you ask me what kind of boys I like?” Skye groaned—referring here to her cute boyish/androgynous appearance, which has won her many admirers at the same time that it has been the source of constant conflict with her mother.

These conversations are frustrating for Skye not only because they require her to make up answers, but also because she perceives an intentionality behind them, i.e., her mother’s insistence on pressing a sore topic. In our interview, Skye described herself as “not yet out” to her parents. But this does not mean that her gender and sexuality are unacknowledged at home; to the contrary, these have been the subjects of heated discussion among her family members. When Skye was in high school, her mother confronted her directly about having a same-sex relationship, even slapping her face as they argued about this—a story recounted to me by both Skye and her sister, who witnessed the argument and shed tears as she told me about her mother’s harsh words. The story recounted in chapter five, of Han Mama confronting Skye about wearing a men’s shirt, is another example of the very intense interactions the two of them have on a regular basis. Nevertheless Skye considers herself “not yet out” (hái méi chānguì) because her mother refuses to acknowledge her lesbian sexuality and continues to pester her about getting a boyfriend.
Both Skye and her brother, Tim, separately recalled a conversation in which their father asked Tim whether Skye likes girls. Caught off guard by this question, Tim replied “maybe,” which prompted Skye to exclaim (speaking English here): “Are you effing kidding me? You told dad maybe?? Cuz maybe is like, sure.” Skye’s father also mentioned to Skye’s aunt (his sister) that he would be ok with Skye being a lesbian because she can continue to help out with the family business if she remains unmarried. Recounting this to me, Skye said that her aunt “sort of educated him. She said, not all gay people don’t get married. In some other countries, they already have laws for same-sex marriage. So don’t think that she won’t have a family. And work for you forever.” Skye laughed ruefully as she added this last statement. At the time of our interview, she had already done enormous quantities of unpaid work for her father’s company, and handled some of his real estate business in another city, also unpaid. If Skye joined another family as someone’s wife, her labor would be appropriated by her marital family and Skye’s father would lose a valuable worker (pointing back to the material pressures faced by lesbians, brought up in chapter four). Upon hearing this story, I asked Skye a few questions about her aunt, leading us into the conversation below:

Skye: I thought I would tell my aunt when she came back (to Hualien) in November. But she said I told her last year. But if came out to her, of course I would know! It’s such a big thing!

Amy: But you don’t remember last year?

Skye: Yeah, so I don’t think…I think we only talked about some issues around it.

Amy: And she considered that coming out?

Skye: Maybe, yeah. But you know, if you’re coming out to one of your family members, of course you’ll remember when and where you came out to that person. So I was like, last year, what??

Amy: What did you talk about that made her think you came out?

Skye: I don’t know. I didn’t ask her. That’s just my guess. I really don’t know why she thinks this.
Skye’s tone and mannerisms throughout this conversation communicated incredulity about her aunt’s impression that Skye had already told her aunt that she likes girls. From this brief exchange, we learn a number of things about “coming out” as conceptualized by Skye, and by many others of her cohort: coming out is big and memorable; it occurs in a specific place and time, and potentially marks an important turning point in a relationship. Moreover, the intention to “come out” should be clearly understood by all parties, and conversations that only hint at the topic may not count as coming out. This is a significant departure from the family stories of mid and later life LGBTs in this research, for whom hints and implications are presented as defining moments in and of themselves. Thus for Skye’s aunt, who is in her fifties, talking about “some issues around it” may be the equivalent of Skye telling her aunt that she likes girls, whereas for Skye, this was merely a precursor to the more intentional and explicit “coming out” conversation that she planned to have later that year.

Not long after this conversation with Skye, I attended a presentation by Guo Mama, the founder of Loving Parents of LGBT Taiwan, for a queer student group at a university in Jhongli. Guo Mama urged the students to pick a good time and place to come out to their parents. To illustrate the importance of doing so, she told a story about someone who attempted to tell his mother that he is gay while she was engrossed in a television program. His mother absently said, “mmm, uh huh” and never mentioned the topic again. In Guo Mama’s rendition of this story, the gay son didn’t know what to do next. Was his mother deliberately avoiding the topic, or had she failed to hear him clearly? “Be sure to let your parents know that you have something important to tell them,” Guo Mama concluded. Her advice is consistent with Skye’s wish for “coming out” to be a planned conversation, not something that one accomplishes through inferences or talking around the issue.
At another forum on how to “come out,” sponsored by a different organization, the gay male host recommended using the book *Dear Mom and Dad, I’m Gay* (*Qīn’ài de Bà Mā, Wǒ Shì Tóngzhì*). “But don’t use this book to come out by just tossing it on your parents’ bed and then running away!” he quipped, and laughed together with the audience of mostly twenty-something LGBTs. I also chuckled while adding this to my fieldnotes, because by that point at least three different interviewees had “come out” in almost exactly this way. Many young people are still trying to “come out” through indirect methods, but increasingly, this is framed as less than ideal in the resources that are circulating in LGBT communities. The advice above is case in point: Better to have a planned conversation where you discuss the content of the book, than to run away and let the book speak for itself.

### 6.5 Beyond the Out/Closeted Dichotomy: Changing Expectations for Family

**Intimacy**

The excerpts I have shared from the life stories of Minxiong, LJ, J Mama, Bing, and Skye illustrate one of the most striking patterns in my fieldwork and interview data. Each of these informants felt confident about their gender and sexuality; they were not ashamed of or hiding this aspect of their lives. Like other midlife interviewees and later life informants, Minxiong, LJ, and J Mama have not discussed these things with their family members and do not anticipate wanting or needing to do so. “Coming out” is not a concern they spend time thinking about. In contrast, Bing felt strongly that he must disclose this part of his life in order to maintain a good relationship with his parents. Many of Skye’s family members have already discussed her sexuality amongst themselves, and Skye assumes that she will need to address this directly with each one of them at some point in the future. These generational
differences are a productive place to analyze how “coming out” is operating in Taiwan today, and why it resonates with some people more than others.

A majority of the research and thinking about “coming out” is done by counseling psychologists and social workers, often using a developmental psychology framework (e.g., Chow and Cheng, 2010; Floyd and Bakeman, 2006; LaSala, 2010). The developmental model of “coming out” has resonated with many people, and has aided social service providers in working with LGBT populations. But it has also contributed to the positioning of those who have not yet “come out” at a less mature stage of sexual identity development and integration—an assumption my data does not support in the context of Taiwan. While counseling psychology and social work perspectives are important for attending to immediate concerns of individuals and families, they do not address the larger historical and social context in which “coming out” takes place, and the social construction of coming out itself. Analyzing “coming out” as a social discourse rather than a psychological process raises new questions which connect LGBT family strategies to broader systemic family changes that are taking place in Taiwan.

As I compare the stories of LGBT people in early, mid, and later life, the emerging picture is not of generational differences in sexual identity development, but rather of generational differences in how people relate to one another within families, and to changing norms and expectations surrounding parent-child intimacy and communication. Mid and later life LGBTs are likely to be caring for (and often living with) elderly parents and in-laws. Those whose parents and in-laws have passed on are likely to have managed their end of life

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78 I use discourse as it is elucidated by Nancy Naples in *Feminism and Method* (2003), integrating a Foucaultian view of discourse as a set of “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p.49) with a materialist feminist focus on how these discourses both “express and conceal” actual people and practices (Dorothy Smith, 1987, p.213).
care and their funerals, and continue to venerate their memory on specified days. In many ways, the intimacy of these deep ties exceeds the more friendship-style intimacy of sharing personal information. But for early midlife and young adult LGBTs, these ties are complicated by a growing desire or, just as often, a growing pressure to share oneself with family members (and this requires a conceptualization of oneself as such). Desires of younger LGBT people for their parents to know them—and strong expressions of the same by many of the parents in my sample—simply didn’t come up in my fieldwork with LGBT people who were in their fifties and older. For example, the hope of one young T that she will be able to “move forward” in her relationship with her father by coming out—in her case, by writing him a detailed letter about the process of realizing that she is a lesbian—does not translate into the lexicon of her mid and later life counterparts, for whom positive father-daughter relationships do not require this level of self-revelation and emotional risk.

As drastically reduced family sizes, a prolonged transition to adulthood (and thus a longer period of economic dependence on one’s parents), and new ideas about self-referential intimacy and communication between parents and their children become more prevalent in Taiwan, so too do opportunities and pressures for young people to discuss their personal lives with their parents. Parent-child love, mutual sharing of thoughts and feelings, and frequent communication have been central themes in Guo Mama’s campaign for LGBT people to “come out” to their families, and in the personal narratives of parents who support their LGBT children because, they tell me, “we just want our children to be happy.” These ideas can be harnessed to create more space within families for gender and sexual differences. At the same time, this emphasis on parent-child love, closeness, communication, emotional fulfillment, and happiness can present LGBT children with new and different pressures. For example, most parents in this research described a “happy” life as one characterized by educational attainment, upward socioeconomic mobility, and a stable, long-term,
monogamous relationship. Parents worry about LGBT adult children who have not achieved these things and thus are not “happy” in the particular ways they hope. As much as “just” wanting someone to be happy has a supportive ring, the performance of happiness can become its own kind of emotional labor, and, by the same token, a child’s failure to be happy can become another source of parental disappointment.

In addition, increasing numbers of people describe themselves as being “forced out” of the closet by their parents’ invasive questions and by the extreme measures many parents take to find out what their children are up to, such as going to their school classrooms on the weekends and reading the letters in their school desks (an experience described to me by multiple young people in this research). This kind of intensive parental surveillance is possible for middle class families with one or two kids in ways it simply wasn’t for families with six or seven kids growing up in much leaner economic times.

Minxiong, LJ, and J Mama focused on issues of hard work and poverty when describing their childhoods to me, as did others of their generational cohorts, while a majority of LGBT young people in this research did not discuss poverty as a defining characteristic of family life. They had arguments with their parents about things like getting into the best possible school, in contrast to older LGBTs, whose parents often had to decide which child to send to school based on whether or not they needed that child to work to support the family. The impact of economic changes on these families has been complex: on the one hand, children and parents are less interdependent because poverty has been reduced and there are more educational and non-familial employment options, especially for girls; on the other hand, it is taking people much longer to complete their education and become settled in a career. As a result, the power dynamic between parents and children is shifting later in life, with monetary flows from child to parent (huíkui) often beginning in one’s late 30’s or 40’s
rather than 20’s or even teens. Shihan, a 29-year-old lesbian in this research, once complained that her mother “gives me money so that she can scold (mà) me.” While spoken somewhat tongue-in-cheek, Shihan’s statement captures an important aspect of the relationship between parents and adult children in contemporary Taiwan. Parents’ financial support is usually accompanied by continued authority and supervision of adult children’s lives, and a high degree of control over their daily activities and decisions.

In my fieldwork, I often heard Taiwanese parents advise LGBT youth to “let your parents get to know you” as part of the coming out process. Some people used this approach successfully, while others found that letting their parents “know” them (or being “known” whether they wanted to or not!) resulted in more family pressure and conflict, and impeded on their ability to embody their gender and conduct their relationships as they desired. I was often struck by the lack of space in this discourse for adult children who did not wish to be close to or known by their parents. In contrast, Minxiong, LJ, J Mama, and their cohort members did not report being asked questions about their sexuality by their kin. In fact, such questions were impossible, LJ and Minxiong said, because their family members had no idea what T or tóngzhì is. As cultural knowledge about LGBT people spreads and LGBT visibility increases in Taiwanese society, so too do suspicions that one’s child or sibling may be LGBT, as does the need to actively “protect the secret” (bǎohù mìmì—a phrase that came up frequently among younger LGBTs and heterosexual siblings who were often enlisted into this task) and take measures to prevent others from confirming these suspicions.

Most mid and later life LGBT people experienced strong marriage pressure in their 20’s and 30’s, or felt that they were forced to get married, and handled this in a variety of ways, but they did not necessarily connect these pressures to family members’ views about their gender and sexuality. Younger people tend to interpret family members’ questions about
marriage as also being about sexuality, and fret over how to answer, feeling that they are “hiding” or being dishonest if they “pretend” to be heterosexual. In fact, younger people in this research who have entered heterosexual marriages are no less likely to “come out” than those who haven’t. Bing is typical in that he “came out” to his parents because he “didn’t feel like acting in this play anymore.” These issues of hiding, acting, and pretending did not come up in my interviews with mid and later life LGBTs. Those who were heterosexually married in a period characterized by higher rates of arranged marriages rather than “love matches” were more likely to recognize their non-love based marriages as legitimate, rather than as “acting” or as “fake marriage” (jià jiēhūn—a term applied to non-love based marital arrangements, especially marriages between gay men and lesbians, which simultaneously naturalizes heterosexual romantic love marriages). Characterizing such a person as closeted on the basis of their heterosexual marriage obscures the historical context in which that marriage took place and the meanings attached to it.

The generational differences in LGBT family stories that I have described in this chapter push us beyond developmental models of “coming out” and the out/closeted dichotomy, toward a more social and historical approach to coming out as a discourse that is gaining resonance in contemporary Taiwan. As I have shown, the trend toward “coming out” cannot be reduced to a process of sexual identity development, as many people with robust sexual identities, some of whom are very active in LGBT politics, still do not consider coming out to their family members. Instead, I found “coming out” to be closely tied to the changing conditions of family life, including a new emphasis on interpersonal sharing as a component of familial relationships. This sheds light on an aspect of intergenerational support that is particularly significant for LGBT people, while also relevant to broader understandings of parent-child relationships in Taiwan.
The generation gap I have described in this chapter is vividly evident both in LGBT circles and individual families. That is, family norms, expectations, aspirations, and ways of “doing family” vary among family members by generation and gender. Interpretations of the same interaction often differ significantly for people who occupy different family roles, as we saw in the case of Skye Han and her aunt. Having introduced family change as a significant social force in this research, I will conclude the dissertation by looking forward, asking what my informants desire for their own families and for LGBT family life more generally. In doing so, I will emphasize how generation and gender continue to matter, not only in how people are currently organizing their families, but also in how they construct their hopes for the future.
7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Bridging Fields, Expanding Horizons

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined changes and continuities in Taiwanese LGBT family of origin relationships, with a focus on how these family processes vary by gender and generation. My analysis bridges LGBT family studies and East Asian queer studies with the literature on demographic and family change, fields that have remained largely segregated despite their clear conceptual overlaps. The individuals and families in this study have been underrepresented in each of these fields. Existing literature on LGBT families of origin focuses almost entirely on Western and primarily white families. As a result, we know little about the majority of gender and sexually nonconforming people and their families in the world today. Over one-fifth of the world’s families live in East Asia, and researchers have long noted the distinctiveness of family structures and processes in this region. It is theoretically disadvantageous, as well as methodologically and politically questionable, to omit this population of families from the literature on LGBT family issues. Scholars working in the area of East Asian queer studies have made critical interventions into this void, but these interventions have yet to encompass the perspectives of families of origin themselves. While a small number of works explore family issues through the life stories of lesbian and gay people, the bulk of this scholarship derives its analyses from literature, films, media, and other cultural representations, paying more limited attention to the material aspects of day-to-day family life. At the same time, the literature on demographic and family change in East Asia generally and Taiwan specifically includes virtually no examination of sexuality as a subject position or an analytic category. Through opening this three part conversation, my dissertation advances each field in specific directions, while also providing a portrait of LGBT families of origin in Taiwan where none existed previously.
One of the most important contributions of this dissertation is its focus on how family of origin relationships intersect with larger systems of power and inequality. In particular, I have pointed to women’s continued subordination within families as a central and significant LGBT family issue. This issue became increasingly visible as I followed Antonia Yen-ning Chao (2002) in emphasizing the relational-materialistic dimensions of LGBT life in Taiwan. By analyzing the distribution of family resources, labor, and power, I was able to show how patrilineal reproduction is materially anchored and embodied by my informants, and how women’s cumulative disadvantages as daughters(-in-law), wives, and mothers centrally shape LGBT family of origin relationships. I showed how family-based sex and gender oppression matters not only for LGBT individuals in these families, but also for their parents and other normatively gendered, heterosexual family members. These findings are anchored in the specificity of Taiwan’s kinship and family system, but bring up issues that are generalizable to other societies as well. Specifically, the connections I have drawn between family-based sex and gender oppression and LGBT family of origin relationships may be observed and are important to analyze in many different cultural and social contexts.

As I noted in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I have a sense of caution in calling for renewed attention to family-based sex and gender oppression through this research. This caution stems from my awareness that Western-based social science has a long history of constructing Asian cultures and societies as distinctively oppressive to women (as famously and incisively critiqued by Mohanty, 1988, 2003 and Said, 1978, 1985, among others). It is crucial to bear in mind that the systematic subordination of women has been endemic to kinship and family systems throughout the world; thus my critique, while specific to Taiwan, has broad applicability. I hope that it will stimulate more careful attention to the gendered distribution of family resources, labor, and power among those who are broadly
interested in LGBT family of origin issues, wherever those interests may be rooted geographically.

Previous work on LGBT families of origin has focused more narrowly on pathways to familial acceptance of a lesbian or gay family member, usually following a defined “coming out” moment. Bertone and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2014) are pointed in their critique of the lack of depth in the study of LGBT families of origin compared to other areas of lesbian and gay family life. Some of their concerns echo Robert-Jay Green’s (2000) earlier critique of the prevailing clinical wisdom about lesbian and gay family of origin relationships, particularly the uncritical endorsement of “coming out” as a dominant and superior framework, for its overgeneralization of findings from studies of white, North American, upper income lesbians and gays. The fourteen-year gap between these two articles is an indication of the slowness of change in this area, and the continued overrepresentation of a small segment of LGBT families of origin as the basis of theory and practice. It is beyond time to expand these horizons through more globally inclusive research, and through more socially and historically rigorous frameworks. As much as this fills a lacuna in LGBT family studies, it also positions research on LGBT families of origin to contribute meaningfully to other fields.

To this end, another central contribution of this dissertation is the challenge it poses to assumptions of heterosexuality and gender normativity embedded in the family change literature. Even as scholars analyze such topics as changing norms and practices surrounding sex, love, marriage, pregnancy, and family formation in Taiwan, heterosexuality has remained the de facto framework through which these changes are theorized. Beginning from a standpoint outside the normative heterosexual frame is advantageous in several ways. It can reveal how this frame is co-constructed with patrilineality and patriarchy and how these systems may be mutually transformed. It can also bring a sharpened focus to cultural and
material family changes of relevance to the whole population. For example, changing parenting discourses and practices matter for people of all sexual orientations, but for LGBT young adults and their parents, the outcomes of these changes may be heightened and thus more readily visible to researchers. As I argued in the chapter on Social and Sexual Contexts, LGBT populations in Taiwan and elsewhere are experiencing a hyper-compressed modernity compared to other groups. Hence LGBT family stories can help to illuminate how the various features of compressed modernity (Chang, 1999, 2010) are evolving, and what new family structures and processes may emerge as a result. In another example, my LGBT informants are already thinking about how to arrange for later life and afterlife care outside the structure of the traditional patrilineal household; as increasing numbers of heterosexuals also delay or forego marriage, in an era of “lowest low” fertility and prolonged life expectancy, these arrangements may soon become relevant to larger numbers of people irrespective of sexual orientation. Importantly, LGBT family issues do not matter because of their relevance to non-LGBTs; they matter in and of themselves, and in this dissertation, the outcomes for LGBT people and their families are my principle concern. I point out these areas of overlap not to increase the significance of LGBT issues, but rather to show how these issues are intricately interwoven with the processes of social and family change that many scholars are working to understand.

The dissertation also draws on unique methodological strategies that have made larger theoretical innovations possible. I have gathered a uniquely diverse sample, including individuals and family members who are not embedded in LGBT social networks or involved in Taiwan’s sex rights movement. The sample includes first person accounts from normatively gendered, heterosexual family members who vary in their levels of support for homosexuality and transgenderism. Usually unsupportive parents are only portrayed through the eyes of their LGBT children, and the conclusions we draw about their experiences and
perspectives are bounded by these third person accounts. Hearing from these parents directly enriches our understanding of how they too are socially and structurally located, and working to fashion their lives in inventive ways with the discourses and resources available to them. I hope that this work will inspire more research on diverse parents and families, and interviews with multiple family members as I have included here. This will require commitment on the part of researchers, not to overly rely on LGBT organizations and other convenient networks, but instead to invest the time that is needed to reach less visible populations.

Another methodological contribution of the dissertation is its use of ethnographic and life history interview methods to learn about family change in Taiwan. Ethnographic fieldwork, such as that conducted by Arthur and Marjory Wolf (1968, 1972), Myron Cohen (1976), and Susan Greenhalgh (1988) was a staple of the field from the mid 20th century through the 1980s. But in the years that followed, research on demographic and family change in Taiwan came to rely primarily on large-scale survey data. This was not coincidental, as methods of quantifying and categorizing families were commissioned and funded by State and international bodies—including Japanese and Nationalist Chinese colonial regimes, and US foreign policymakers—with a goal of engineering Taiwanese family life in various ways throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. These island-wide surveys aimed for representativeness and generalizability, and are useful today in mapping the larger contours of family change, as well as examining more critically and reflexively the State engineering I have mentioned. However, these data are unable to illuminate family processes and interactions, and the meanings embedded in many of the trends observed. Further qualitative and interpretive work is needed to begin connecting family changes across units of analysis. For example, the trend showing up in multiple surveys, toward a greater valuation of “emotional support” among Taiwanese parents and their children, raises questions about what emotional support means for mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters, and
how it is incorporated into daily distributions of family labor. These are questions my work can speak to, while these data sources provide valuable context for some of my findings. Too often, theoretical conversations occur primarily among methodologically similar studies. Thus in this dissertation, I have endeavored to build methodological as well as disciplinary bridges by extending analyses of large-scale trends through the richness of more interpretive data.

7.2 LGBT Families of Origin in Taiwan Today

Family of origin issues are increasingly moving onto the stage of LGBT politics in Taiwan. This is due in a large part to the dedicated and tireless work of individuals and families who have devoted themselves to a radically personal politics, one that dares to challenge normativity in the family sphere. I hope that this dissertation has, in a small way, recognized and honored their hard work. As a result, family members’ stories are ever more evident in media coverage of LGBT issues, and growing numbers of family members are present at LGBT-themed events throughout Taiwan. At my first Taipei pride parade in 2011, I paid close attention to the family members who came to watch and participate, some of whom I also interviewed. At my second Taipei pride parade in 2012, I attended together with my partner’s mom and dad, who had come up from Changhua in central Taiwan for the event. In contrast to my parent interviewees, with whom I mostly formed more temporary relationships, these parents would remain in my life permanently, eventually becoming my own parents-in-law. After the march, the four of us met my partner’s cousin for lunch at a nearby mall, and made plans for a family trip later that year. I remember feeling anxious about missing an opportunity for data collection at several pride events that same evening—and then recognizing the irony of “missing” an opportunity to learn about LGBT families of
origin by choosing to spend time with my partner’s parents while they were in town. My “dilemma” (which was not really a dilemma at all!) is a good example of how one’s personal family life is often defined as separate from or even antithetical to LGBT social and political organizing and academic knowledge production. Yet the personal realm of the home and family is arguably one of the most political spaces for LGBT people in Taiwan today, as it is for LGBTs throughout much of the world.

While doing this fieldwork in Taiwan, I observed that the focus and energy that some people put into thinking about and dealing with their families was not usually viewed as political (or critical, or radically “queer”) by more seasoned activists and scholars. Deconstructing family on a discursive level is fashionable in queer theory; learning how to live within an actual family is less so. In response to this view, I contend that we must recognize families of origin as an important site of political work and LGBT organizing in Taiwan today. This work runs against the grain of a public/private split, or the notion that a politics of transformation is best put aside when going home to see mom and dad. It takes tremendous courage to integrate the public and private in this way, and I admire the increasing numbers of Taiwanese LGBT people who are doing so. It is equally important to recognize that a focus on the family will materialize in different ways and carry different risks for people in different social locations, and that it is not reducible to a politics of “coming out.” To draw three illustrations from this dissertation, Yijun’s integration of her girlfriend into her marital home, Minxiong’s purchase of columbarium niches for himself, his boyfriend, and his mother, and J Mama’s deflection of potential suitors for LJ in the 1970s, are all radical interventions into normative family life not predicted on sexual disclosure. “Coming out” is also a form of intervention (what is problematic is not “coming out” itself, but rather the assumption that “coming out” is a necessary part of queer maturation), and younger people who walk this path are not unreflexively mimicking Western lesbians and
gays, as some literature has suggested, but rather responding creatively and agentially to the shifting conditions of their own family lives.

The family issues I have raised in this dissertation hold relevance for other areas of LGBT politics and organizing as well. One area worth noting, given its monopolization of LGBT politics in the United States and rapid export globally, is the question of same-sex marriage or the marriage equality movement, and its implication for families. So far, Taiwanese LGBT activists have managed to resist the tide of this movement in order to maintain a more diverse agenda, presenting the family diversity bill as just one small part of a much larger fight for political, cultural, and social space for gender and sexual autonomy and diversity. However, as Western media increasingly frame LGBT struggles everywhere through the lens of same-sex marriage, and marriage has become a measure (if not the measure) of LGBT progress in public discourse, it is also increasingly important to critically assess the problems and limitations inherent in this frame (as many, many queer scholars and cultural critics are already doing). My focus in this dissertation on family-based sex and gender oppression has implications for the notion of “marriage equality” as it is disseminated globally.

I do not believe that marriage and family equality can be achieved for Taiwan’s LGBT population through the sole or primary engine of legalizing same-sex marriage. Nor do I believe legalizing same-sex marriage in Taiwan will make it easier for people to integrate their same-sex relationships with their families of origin (and with this my informants agreed—none had broached the possibility of same-sex marriage with their parents, and those who had considered marriage worried about the confusion this would cause rather than the legitimacy it would afford in their families of origin) or that a majority of LGBT people in Taiwan will flock to marry if this becomes legally available. This does
not mean that legalization of same-sex marriage is unimportant. But it is just one of many family issues, and family equality for LGBT people will require change across multiple dimensions of the marriage and family system. In Taiwan, marriage remains the major instrument of patrilineal reproduction, accomplished through stratification by sex and generation, with elder males occupying the positions of authority in the family. Simply extending the legal benefits of marriage to same-sex couples does not address these core family issues. This was vividly evident in my interviews with gay men who said it would be very “complicated” to have children with a male partner because, in that case, which partner would enter the other’s family? Whose family name would be passed on, and whose ancestors venerated by these descendants? It was enough to deter some men from pursuing this path to family formation even in their imaginations (and made transactional or cooperative marriage more attractive, for reasons beyond the legal barriers). Gender-neutral activism, as the same-sex marriage movement has become in the West, cannot address these issues satisfactorily.

Once again, my above argument is both specific to Taiwan and generalizable to other societies. There is obvious relevance for the numerous patrilineal and patrilocal societies throughout Asia, the Middle East, and other parts of the world. But this principle is also applicable to non-patrilineal (or less openly patrilineal) societies, including the US, where marriage and family equality need to be conceptualized in wider and more transformative ways. The US marriage equality movement has almost completely sidestepped a conversation about marriage as an inherently stratified and gendered institution. Avoidance of this may help to explain why social attitudes toward same-sex marriage have transformed so rapidly while, for example, rights for women have been under attack in many areas (e.g., pushback on abortion rights; criminalization of pregnant women for fetal harm) and gender-based violence in schools has remained steady or even gone up. Through taking the pulse of a range
of issues, we can see how marriage equality has been largely estranged from the notion of gender equality and other efforts for social change. Taiwanese LGBT activists have provided a template for addressing a more diverse range of social, cultural, and family issues, and while this will be important to maintain (against the mounting pressure from transnational LGBT organizations to make legal marriage a central emphasis of the movement), it is also a template that the LGBT movement in the United States might learn from.

However, this dissertation has not focused primarily on movement goals. Thus while I have made some suggestions above, these do not represent the scope of what I hope this dissertation can accomplish. Even more than movement goals, the dissertation has captured family-centered goals, as people make decisions about what they want for their own personal and family lives, and how to best arrange their family relationships with respect to sex, gender, and sexuality. Many of these arrangements will take place out of sight of the larger movement or LGBT community context, and important questions remain about how to support families in the more day-to-day decisions and obstacles that they will encounter.

7.2.1 Divergent Desires

When I opened this work, I promised to conclude with a simple question: What do people desire from and for their families? I hope that by now, it is clear to my readers that the answer to this question is not a destination, a place where we’ve arrived, but a journey that takes us in many directions. “Family” (one’s jiā or jiātíng) is a powerful site of belonging and also of inequality.

Just as the families in this study took different forms, so the different members of these families held divergent and often conflicting desires for the future. Some desired greater closeness and access to one another’s lives, while others desired greater autonomy and privacy. Some desired an emotional connection, while others prioritized instrumental
support. Some longed for a life that is “as normal as possible” (to borrow language from Ching’s 2010 anthology) and pursued this by entering a heterosexual marriage or forming a marriage-like relationship with a same-sex partner, while others wanted to “query the marriage-family continuum” (to borrow language from Liu and Ding’s 2011 anthology) by creating a life outside of these hierarchal institutions. Indeed, it is impossible to convey the full breadth of diversity in the kinds of futures my informants imagined. For this reason, it would be reductive and misleading to recommend one particular pathway—such as “coming out,” tacit negotiation, cooperative heterosexual marriage, marriage resistance, or another of the myriad of pathways described—to strengthening and supporting LGBT family of origin relationships in Taiwan. Going a step further, we must also recognize that some people may not want their family of origin relationships to be strengthened, and for them, the best future may be one where family of origin relationships become less socially necessary. These perspectives may be the least recognized of all in LGBT family of origin literature, perhaps because those of us who pursue this field of study are often people for whom these relationships have mattered a lot, and so we easily impose this value system on our informants. Ultimately, the production of knowledge about LGBT families of origin will be richest (and most closely tied to the empirical world) when we acknowledge the ambivalence that often surrounds family relationships, and the vast variation not only in how families actually look, but also in what people wish they looked like.

At the same time, divergence in this research manifested in some specific and meaningful patterns. By recognizing these patterns, we become better equipped to understand and respond to the diverse needs of communities and families, while diminishing the likelihood that some voices will crowd out others. These patterns also reveal important ways that other social locations, such as gender and generation, shape family desires as well as actual family practices among LGBT families of origin in Taiwan.
I first followed the patterns of divergence surrounding family pressure to “continue the paternal line.” Conventional wisdom held that gay men faced more pressure than did lesbians and predicted that lesbians would have an easier time with their families as a result. In contrast, my data show that family pressures faced by women are different but not diminished in comparison to what men face. Many lesbians’ conflicts with their families, and desires for change, revolve around their cumulative material disadvantages as much as or more than the validation of their lesbian identities and relationships. Reduced heterosexual marriage pressure is certainly desired by many. But only reducing marriage pressure, without redistributing family resources, will continue to disadvantage women who live their lives apart from men. Trans perspectives also introduce threads of divergence and the ambiguity mentioned above, as trans people who are actively fashioning new family genders (as Zhixiong did at his uncle’s funeral and in other ways) may or may not choose to embrace all of the components of these new gender locations (as evidenced by Zhixiong’s hesitation to marry because of what this would mean for his girlfriend). In these and other ways I have shown, gender differences complicate the notion of “family pressure” and reveal the unique types of patrilineally-based family pressures that are imposed on differently gendered bodies.

Another strand of divergence appeared in my analysis of parenthood, as I showed how mothers’ disproportionate childrearing, emotion work, and accountability for child outcomes shaped their responses to gender and sexual non-normativity in their children. Both mothers and fathers expressed desires to change their children and also to understand and know their children (a desire shared by some children but not others). However, their pathways to understanding diverged as fathers worked to understand homosexuality as a social and scientific concept, while mothers worked to understand themselves and their own roles in their children’s lives, and to reorient themselves in relation to their own suffering and happiness. My findings clearly show that support for parents of LGBT children is not “gender
neutral.” New parenting discourses map onto existing gender schemas to produced deeply
gendered results. At its core, this part of the dissertation advances my argument that it is
crucial to take gender inequality into account for parents of LGBT children as much as for
LGBT people themselves.

A final but no less central pattern of “divergent desires” presented in this dissertation
emerges from the generation gap surrounding “coming out.” While a majority of younger
LGBTs in this research brought up the issue of “coming out” and spent large quantities of
time and energy planning for it, worrying about it, or actively avoiding it, mid and later life
LGBTs did not raise this as a meaningful family concern or a source of family pressure,
focusing instead on how to effectively balance their various family roles and responsibilities.
Their desires for their families did not center around being “known” interpersonally by their
family members as some younger LGBTs discussed, but around more structural
interdependency. In analyzing these differences, I emphasized the problems of the
out/closeted dichotomy in two aspects: first, the assumption that older LGBTs are “closeted”
simply because they are not “out” is shown to be patently false; second, “coming out” has not
replaced more tacit communication about gender and sexuality, but instead co-exists,
particularly in cross-generational exchanges within the family. I also emphasized the
importance of analyzing “coming out” not as a developmental model (an approach shown to
be inappropriate for my informants) but as a social discourse, shaping and shaped by the
context of accelerated family change in Taiwan.

There is a larger message here. The study of LGBT family of origin relationships
must move beyond its overemphasis on sexual identity and sexual disclosure, to investigate a
fuller range of issues that matter to individuals and families in different social and structural
locations. My work is certainly not the first to make such an argument. Rather, it joins a
small but growing body of research that is changing the field in this important way, by pointing to the diversity of issues at stake and the social and cultural variation in LGBT family of origin relationships.

7.2.2 Divergent Desires for this Research: Informants Weigh In

Throughout the field period, the people who lent their time and their stories to this project often shared their hopes for what the project would accomplish. As with all of the desires I have managed to describe, these varied widely. I want to give my informants a “last word” in this text by sharing a small number of their hopes in the final pages. In doing so, I want to emphasize again the diversity of their voices, while also acknowledging and honoring some of my informants’ reasons for participating in a study like this one. In some cases, the research spoke to the concerns raised; in other cases, I was not able to answer questions in the way my informants hoped. Thus these direct requests may also inspire future research endeavors, by pointing out wells that my work has left untapped.

Once we answer (our relatives’ questions about our daughter’s sexuality), a war will break out within our family. But I don’t know how long I can bear this. Over time we feel more and more pressure. Coming out and staying in are both unacceptable. I hope your research can tell us how to deal with this problem. – Shu Baba, father of a T lesbian daughter

I don’t know if my story is valuable to you. Some people say I am not moral. When Y.M. asked me whether she can introduce me to you, I did not hesitate. Because I want to tell my story. It feels good. It feels more comfortable after saying it… Last week, I mentioned to my son that I wanted to write out my story, write it into a book. My son supported me. I don’t know where to start, how to start. But I am trying. – Yijun, a T lesbian in her fifties

So, I am under a great pressure. My parents told me, ‘If you know something we don’t know (about your brother), and you’re not telling us, you are in the wrong.’ I think it’s better if my brother can wait until after my parents have gone (passed away) to come out. But that is such a long time from now, with many difficulties in between… So I want to know, how do other families handle such problems? – Rose, sister of a younger gay brother
Actually I am not so interested in academic research. I am interested in making a connection, in touching someone with my story. This is why I agreed to participate… I hope that my story has touched you in some way. – Junyu, a bù fēn lesbian in her twenties

Together with Shu Baba, Yijun, Rose, and Junyu, I hope that we can continue to learn more about LGBT family issues in Taiwan; that we can share these stories with one another in ways that honor the storytellers, build connections, and create knowledge that is useful for addressing the problems that individuals and families themselves find most urgent; and that even as we build academic theories, we also allow these stories to touch us in a lasting and personal way. Perhaps most of all, I hope that those who, like Yijun, desire to speak out about their lives can be heard.
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Ching, Y., ed.: As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in China and Hong Kong. Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2010.


Tan, C.K.K.: Go home, gay boy! Or, why do Singaporean gay men prefer to “go home” and not “come out”? *Journal of Homosexuality* 58:865-882, 2011.


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### APPENDIX A

**Characters Corresponding with Pinyin Romanization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Romanization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ài</td>
<td>愛</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bàba</td>
<td>爸爸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bàibài</td>
<td>拜拜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Báisè kōngbù</td>
<td>白色恐怖</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bài zǔxiàn</td>
<td>拜祖先</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bānjiā</td>
<td>搬家</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bǎohù mìmì</td>
<td>保護秘密</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Běnshēngrén</td>
<td>本省人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Běntǔ</td>
<td>本土</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biàntài</td>
<td>變態</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bī wǒ chā guì</td>
<td>�拶我出櫃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bù fēn</td>
<td>不分</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bù huì nàme xīnì shì</td>
<td>不會那麼細膩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bù huì qù xiǎng tài duō</td>
<td>不會去想太多</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bù nán bù nǚ</td>
<td>不男不女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùjié</td>
<td>不潔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bù tài huì gōngkāi jiǎng</td>
<td>不太會公開講</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bù xiào yǒu sān, wú hòu wéi dà</td>
<td>不孝有三， 無後為大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bǔxībān</td>
<td>補習班</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bù yǒyàng</td>
<td>不一樣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cǎihóng Shùníán Bāshì</td>
<td>彩虹熟年巴士</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuántōng</td>
<td>傳統</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuán zōng jiē dài</td>
<td>傳宗接代</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dānxīn de jiāzhǎng  擔心的家長
Dàodǐ wèishéme yīgè nǚrén yào rúc xīnkā  到底為什麼一個女人要如此辛苦
Dōu méiyǒu ziwǒ  都沒有自我
Duōyuán jiātíng fā’àn  多元家庭法案
Fàngkāi xīnxiōng  放開心胸
Fēng gòng wēiyè  豐功偉業
Fùdān  負擔
Fùmǔ yě xiàyao zhīchí lái miàn duì zhè zhōng yǎnlǐ  父母也需要支持來面對這種壓力
Fù yào zi wáng, zi bù néng bù wáng  父要子亡，子不能不亡
Gànjué  感覺
Gàn ma zhǎo nǚ tóngzhì lái xīshēng  幹嘛找女同志來犧牲
Gěi tā yīgè jiāodài  給他一個交代
Gēn tóngxìng jiāowǎngguò  跟同性交往過
Gānniáng miào  姑娘廟
Gōng  公
Hái méi chā guì  還沒出櫃
Hěn tèbié  很特別
Huí jiā  回家
Huíkuì  回饋
Huò shì shuō, shì bùshì wǒ nǐ de yíchuán yīnsù?  或是說，是不是因為你的遺傳因素？
Jiǎ jiéhūn  假結婚
Jiātíng héxié  家庭和諧
Jiātíng yàlǐ  家庭壓力
Jiēshòu  接受
Jíbìng  疾病
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>原文</th>
<th>翻译</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>進入戰場</td>
<td>Jìn’rù zhànchǎng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>距離</td>
<td>Jùlí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>開放</td>
<td>Kāifàng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>跨性別</td>
<td>Kuà xìngbié</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>拉拉</td>
<td>Lālā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>拉子</td>
<td>Lāzǐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>禮儀師</td>
<td>Lǐyí shī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>老年同志小組</td>
<td>Lǎonián Tóngzhì Xiǎozǔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>拉子媽媽</td>
<td>Lāzǐ māmā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>罵</td>
<td>Mā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>媽媽沒有把小孩教好</td>
<td>Māmā méiyǒu bǎ xiǎohái jiào hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>媽媽辛苦了（比較辛苦）</td>
<td>Māmā xīnkǔ (bǐjiào xīnkǔ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>馬上會引來鄰居的閒言閒語</td>
<td>Mǎshàng huì yǐn lái línjū de xián yán xián yǔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>沒有特別</td>
<td>Méiyǒu tèbié</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>面子</td>
<td>Miànzǐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>默默陪著我</td>
<td>Mòmò péizhe wǒ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>拿石頭砸自己的腳</td>
<td>Ná shítóu zá zìjǐ de jiǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>男</td>
<td>Nán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>男性的樣子</td>
<td>Nánxìng de yàngzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你跟誰住在一起?</td>
<td>Nǐ gēn shéi zhù zài yīqǐ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>妹還沒進我家門</td>
<td>Nǐ hái méi jìn wǒ jiā mén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你會變成一個家庭</td>
<td>Nǐ huì biànhéng yīgè jiātíng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你會不會拜拜?</td>
<td>Nǐ huì bù huì bàibiǎi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你沒有資格管這件事</td>
<td>Nǐ méiyǒu zīgé guǎn zhè jiàn shì</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
你應刻長大，長大結婚生小孩子，
我這輩子就守著你

你有沒有宗教信仰？

女兒太霸氣了，要全部不行
女兒無法異性成家那又怎樣
婆

去廟裡拜拜
讓他很失望
人類的現象
認識
帥

所有想法講出來
他經濟還不穩定
胎教

台灣同志諮詢熱線協會
她們不會問
他們也不問我發現什麼事
Tāmen yě méiyǒu nà zhǒng... nà zhǒng zhīshì ba

Tāmen zhī jiān de qiáoliàng

Tóngxìngliàn duōshǎo shì kěyǐ gǎibiàn de

Tóngzhì

Tóngzhì Fùmǔ Àixin Xiéhui

Tóngzhì tiāntáng

Wàiguórén

Wàishěngrén

Wèile zhèxiē shìqíng mènmènbùlè, nà wǒ yě bù huì kuàilè

Wèi xià yīdài xìngfú

Wēnróu

Wǒ bù yào zài yán zhè yī chāxì

Wǒ de shìqíng

Wǒ gèn wǒ mā yībèizi dōu bù kuàilè

Wǒ nà shíhou juédé wǒ mìng hǎo kǔ

Wǒ rénshēng zuì cǎn de yīduàn shíjiān

Wǒ xiànrù liǎngnán

Wǒ yě huì bǐjiào kuàilè

Wǒ zhīdào wǒ zhèyàng hěn zāogāo

Wǒ zuòguī yě huì lái zhāo nǐ

Wǔ lún

Xiàngshàng de, bùshì xiàng xià de

Xiàoshùn

Xiǎo tí dài zuò
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>喜欢男生</td>
<td>Xīhuan nánshēng</td>
<td>Xīhuan nūshēng</td>
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<tr>
<td>喜欢女生</td>
<td>Xīhuan nánshēng</td>
<td>Xīhuan nūshēng</td>
</tr>
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<td>辛苦</td>
<td>Xīnkǔ</td>
<td>Xīnkǔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>性别教育</td>
<td>Xìngbié jiàoyù</td>
<td>Xìngbié jiàoyù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>性向</td>
<td>Xìngxiàng</td>
<td>Xìngxiàng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>希望很高</td>
<td>Xiànggāi shì wǒ māmā gēn wǒ yīqǐ zhù</td>
<td>Xiànggāi shì wǒ māmā gēn wǒ yīqǐ zhù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>因为她知道我心裡的事情</td>
<td>Yīnwèi tā huì zhīdào wǒ xīnlǐ de shìqíng</td>
<td>Yīnwèi tā huì zhīdào wǒ xīnlǐ de shìqíng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>希望很高</td>
<td>Xīhēng jiù huāile</td>
<td>Xīhēng jiù huāile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>压力</td>
<td>Yālì</td>
<td>Yālì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>研究</td>
<td>Yánjiū</td>
<td>Yánjiū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>壓迫</td>
<td>Yāpò</td>
<td>Yāpò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>應該是我媽媽跟我一起住</td>
<td>Yīnggāi shì wǒ māmā gēn wǒ yīqǐ zhù</td>
<td>Yīnggāi shì wǒ māmā gēn wǒ yīqǐ zhù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>因為她會知道我心裡的事情</td>
<td>Yīnwèi tā huì zhīdào wǒ xīnlǐ de shìqíng</td>
<td>Yīnwèi tā huì zhīdào wǒ xīnlǐ de shìqíng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一生就毀了</td>
<td>Yīshēng jiù huāile</td>
<td>Yīshēng jiù huāile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>異性廁</td>
<td>Yìxìng liàn</td>
<td>Yìxìng liàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>異性廁婚姻與女同志</td>
<td>Yìxìng liàn Hùnyīn Yǔ Nǚ Tóngzhì</td>
<td>Yìxìng liàn Hùnyīn Yǔ Nǚ Tóngzhì</td>
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<tr>
<td>願意跟他們分享</td>
<td>Yuànyì gēn tāmen fēnxiǎng</td>
<td>Yuànyì gēn tāmen fēnxiǎng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有禮</td>
<td>Yǒu lǐ</td>
<td>Yǒu lǐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這個幫忙是一輩子的痛苦</td>
<td>Zhège bāngmáng shì yībèizi de tòngkǔ</td>
<td>Zhège bāngmáng shì yībèizi de tòngkǔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這個媽媽很辛苦</td>
<td>Zhège māmā hěn xīnkǔ</td>
<td>Zhège māmā hěn xīnkǔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這個小孩子不太一樣</td>
<td>Zhège xiǎo háizi bù tài yíyàng</td>
<td>Zhège xiǎo háizi bù tài yíyàng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>正常的人</td>
<td>Zhèngcháng de</td>
<td>Zhèngcháng de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這樣的人</td>
<td>Zhèhèng de rén</td>
<td>Zhèhèng de rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>正常的人</td>
<td>Zhèngcháng de</td>
<td>Zhèngcháng de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這樣的人</td>
<td>Zhèngcháng de</td>
<td>Zhèngcháng de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>重男輕女</td>
<td>Zhòng nán qīng nǚ</td>
<td>Zhòng nán qīng nǚ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>怎麼會這樣</td>
<td>Zěnmé huì zhèyàng</td>
<td>Zěnmé huì zhèyàng</td>
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<tr>
<td>怎麼會這樣</td>
<td>Zěnmé huì zhèyàng</td>
<td>Zěnmé huì zhèyàng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>怎麼教育小孩/教育得這樣子</td>
<td>Zěnmé jiàoyù xiǎohái / jiàoyù de zhèyàng zì</td>
<td>Zěnmé jiàoyù xiǎohái / jiàoyù de zhèyàng zì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>走出埃及</td>
<td>Zhǒuchū Ājí</td>
<td>Zhǒuchū Ājí</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B

## TABLE I

INTERVIEWEES WITH MULTIPLE FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family group</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current Residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chen</td>
<td>Chen Mama</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>High school, Retired from clerical position</td>
<td>Qishan, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Xi’huān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colt Chen</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Vocational school, Sales</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Yī bān de (normal)</td>
<td>Gay older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fang</td>
<td>Tiencai Fang</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>College, Journalist</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yulan Fang</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>College, Director of NGO</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Yǐ xīng liàn (hetero)</td>
<td>Gay younger brother (Tiencai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Adele Gao</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>College, Nurse</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Xi’huān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Older T sister (Bubble) and younger T sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bubble Gao</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Master’s student</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Taipei</td>
<td>Niáng T (soft butch)</td>
<td>Younger T sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>Pearl Han</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Hualien, Hualien</td>
<td>Xi’huān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>T older sister (Skye)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skye Han</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Hualien, Taichung</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tim Han</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>College, Intern at dad’s company</td>
<td>Hualien, Hualien</td>
<td>Yǐ xīng liàn (hetero)</td>
<td>T younger sister (Skye)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B (continued)

TABLE I (continued)

INTERVIEWEES WITH MULTIPLE FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family group</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current Residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huang</td>
<td>Huang Mama</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>High school, Housewife</td>
<td>Yunlin, New Taipei City</td>
<td>Yì xìng liàn (hetero)</td>
<td>Lesbian daughter (Shihan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Astro Huang</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>College, Computer game designer</td>
<td>New Taipei City, New Taipei City</td>
<td>Yì xìng liàn (hetero)</td>
<td>Lesbian younger sister (Shihan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shihan Huang</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>College, Social worker</td>
<td>New Taipei City, New Taipei City</td>
<td>Bù fēn lesbian (neither T nor pò)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hu</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High school, Hair dresser</td>
<td>Miaoli, Miaoli</td>
<td>Shuāng xìng liàn (bi)</td>
<td>Bisexual twin sister (Yixuan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yixuan Hu</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High school, Works at mall kiosk</td>
<td>Miaoli, Taichung</td>
<td>T, Shuāng xìng liàn (bi)</td>
<td>Bisexual twin sister (Pea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>College, Works at a bank</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Xīhuān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Gay younger brother (Bat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bat Li</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>College, Between jobs</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Nán (male)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te</td>
<td>Liang Mama</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>High school, Housewife</td>
<td>Yunlin, Taoyuan</td>
<td>Zhèngcháng de (normal)</td>
<td>Bisexual son(^79) (Henry)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^79\) Like most bisexual informants in this research, Henry has chosen to tell his family that he is gay (rather than bi) because he anticipates that they will find this less confusing and be more likely to accept his same-sex partner. As a result, Liang Mama and Summer described Henry as a gay man.
### APPENDIX B (continued)

#### TABLE I (continued)

**INTERVIEWEES WITH MULTIPLE FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family group</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current Residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liang</td>
<td>Henry Liang</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>College, Works for LGBT organization</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taipei</td>
<td>Shuāng xìng liàn (bi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer Liang</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>College, Midwife</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taipei</td>
<td>Nánshēng (guys)</td>
<td>Gay older brother (Henry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>Lin Baba</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>College, Retired teacher</td>
<td>Taitung, Taitung</td>
<td>Yì xìng (hetero)</td>
<td>Gay son (Danny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lin Mama</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>College, Retired teacher</td>
<td>Pingtung, Taitung</td>
<td>Nǚ (female)</td>
<td>Gay son (Danny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danny Lin</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>College, Nurse</td>
<td>Taitung, Hualien</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dream Lin</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>College, Flight attendant</td>
<td>Taitung, Luzhu</td>
<td>Bǐjiào xíhuān nánshēng (likes guys a bit more)</td>
<td>Gay older brother (Danny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>Fanyu Lu</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>High school, Housewife, Helping out with family business</td>
<td>Pingtung, Pingtung</td>
<td>Jiēhūn (married)</td>
<td>Trans older sibling (Coral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coral Lu</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>High school, Helping out with family business</td>
<td>Pingtung, Pingtung</td>
<td>Alternates nánxìng / nǚxìng de yàngzǐ (masculine / feminine appearance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B (continued)

TABLE I (continued)

INTERVIEWEES WITH MULTIPLE FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family group</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current Residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tan</td>
<td>Tan Baba</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>PhD, Professor</td>
<td>Rural area in central Taiwan, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Jiēhān (married)</td>
<td>T daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Mama</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>College, English teacher</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Very female (in English)</td>
<td>T daughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiyu Tan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Master’s, Engineer</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Melbourne</td>
<td>Straight (in English)</td>
<td>T younger sister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tao</td>
<td>Scottie Tao</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>College, Works in a lab</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Xīhuān nǚshēng (likes girls), Female gender assignment, male presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blossom Tao</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Vocational school, Receptionist</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Xīhuān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Trans older sibling (Scottie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsai</td>
<td>Tsai Baba</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Master’s, Businessman</td>
<td>Hualien county, Hualien city</td>
<td>Yì xìng liàn (hetero)</td>
<td>Gay son (Wenchen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenchen Tsai</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Master’s student</td>
<td>Hualien, London</td>
<td>Gay (in English)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>Wu Baba</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>PhD, Professor</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Xīhuān nǚ (likes women)</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Mama</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>High school, Volunteer work</td>
<td>Tainan, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Méiyōu tèbié (nothing special)</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE I (continued)

**INTERVIEWEES WITH MULTIPLE FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family group</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current Residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>Yenting Wu</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Master’s student</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Yì xìng (hetero)</td>
<td>Gay older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huijuan (married into Wu family)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>College, Works at a bank</td>
<td>Penghu, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>Xīhuān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Gay brother-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>College, Civil servant</td>
<td>Changhua, Changhua</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Trans daughter-to-son (Kris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Changhua, Taichung</td>
<td>Nǚ kuà nán (FTM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris Yang</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>College, retired teacher</td>
<td>Taichung, Taichung</td>
<td>Xīhuān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Trans partner (Kris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Changhua, Changhua</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnie</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Vocational school student</td>
<td>Taichung, Taichung</td>
<td>Xīhuān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ye</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>College, Homemaker (husband is a ship captain)</td>
<td>Yilan, Luodong</td>
<td>Yì xìng liàn (hetero)</td>
<td>T daughter and pó daughter (DuoDuo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>High school, Homemaker (husband is a ship captain)</td>
<td>Yilan, Luodong</td>
<td>Yì xìng liàn (hetero)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuoDuo Ye</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>College, Works for publishing company</td>
<td>Luodong, Luodong</td>
<td>Pó (femme)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zheng</td>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>College, retired teacher</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taoyuan</td>
<td>Nàn xìng (male)</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zheng Baba</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>College, retired teacher</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taoyuan</td>
<td>Nàn xìng (male)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zheng Mama</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>College, retired teacher</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taoyuan</td>
<td>Nǜ xìng (female)</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APPENDIX B (continued)**
**APPENDIX B (continued)**

**TABLE II**

INTerviewees with NO FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Vocational school, Small business owner</td>
<td>Yilan, Taipei</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Master’s student</td>
<td>Changhua, Jhongli</td>
<td>Androgynous (says this word in English after extended discussion about having both masculine and feminine qualities)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bebe</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>College, Writer</td>
<td>Hualien, Hualien</td>
<td>Pó (femme)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bing</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>PhD student</td>
<td>Beitou, Beitou</td>
<td>Nán tong xíng liàn (male homosexual)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>College, Sign language interpreter</td>
<td>Chiayi, Taipei</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chunjao</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>High school, Makes and sells jewelry</td>
<td>Taichung, Taichung</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>College, Nurse</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taichung</td>
<td>Xǐhuān nánshēng (likes guys), currently in a same-sex relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Master’s student</td>
<td>Jhongli, Jhongli (but moved around a lot as a kid)</td>
<td>Bù nán bù nǚ (neither male nor female)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX B (continued)

#### TABLE II (continued)

**INTERVIEWEES WITH NO FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Master’s student</td>
<td>Penghu, Taipei</td>
<td>Xihuan nānshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honwei</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Vocational school, Mechanic</td>
<td>Chiayi, Banqiao</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huiling</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>High school, Helping with family business</td>
<td>Tainan, Tainan</td>
<td>No sexual orientation, currently in a same-sex relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiafan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>College, Between jobs</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Niáng T (soft butch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinwan</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>College, Retired teacher</td>
<td>Hualien, Taipei</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junyu</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Heping, Taipei</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Some college, Retired horticulturalist</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Xindian</td>
<td>Xiànzài wǒ juédé wǒ ài nǔshēng (right now, I think I love girls/women)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Planning to attend college, Works at the train station</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung</td>
<td>No sexual orientation, currently in a same-sex relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LJ</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Some college, Retired painter</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B (continued)

TABLE II (continued)

INTERVIEWEES WITH NO FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education, Occupation</th>
<th>Hometown, Current residence</th>
<th>Self-description of sexuality</th>
<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>High school, Runs a café</td>
<td>Taichung, Taichung</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minxiong</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>High school, Runs his own business</td>
<td>Keelung, Keelung</td>
<td>Yīgè gēi (gay, a gay man)</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liangwen</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taipei</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peishan</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>High school, Operates a night market stand</td>
<td>Miaoli, Taichung</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>College, Retired from working for an electronics company</td>
<td>Zhongshan, Xizhi</td>
<td>In response to my sexuality question, Pete told a story about being married and then falling in love with his boyfriend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Pingtung, Hualien</td>
<td>Xīhuān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Gay younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Master’s, teacher</td>
<td>Kaohsiung, Taichung</td>
<td>Xīhuān nánshēng (likes guys)</td>
<td>Pó younger sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shu Baba</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Master’s, Engineer</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Xīhuān nāshēng (likes girls/women)</td>
<td>T daughter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B (continued)

TABLE II (continued)

INTERVIEWEES WITH NO FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<th>Education, Occupation</th>
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<th>Known LGBT children or siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shufen</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>High school, Runs a small diner</td>
<td>Pingtung county, Pingtung city</td>
<td>Nǚ tóngzhì (lesbian), formerly more T but now leaning toward pó</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Zhudong, Taipei</td>
<td>Меиyoу гудин (not stable—male gender assignment, feminine presentation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Mama</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>College, Businesswoman</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei (parents immigrated to Taiwan from Shanghai)</td>
<td>Jiēhūn (heterosexually married)</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddy</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>College, Nurse</td>
<td>Nantou, Taichung</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tong Mama</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>College, Retired teacher</td>
<td>Taoyuan county, Jhongli</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingting</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Sanchong, Sanchong</td>
<td>Shuāng xìng liàn (bi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>College, Sales</td>
<td>Hsinchu, Hsinchu</td>
<td>Yì xìng liàn (hetero), currently in a same-sex relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Mama</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>College, Retired teacher</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B (continued)

TABLE II (continued)

INTERVIEWEES WITH NO FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yenhao</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Vocational school, Repairman</td>
<td>Taoyuan, Taoyuan</td>
<td>Xiuhān nǚ (likes women)</td>
<td>T younger sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yijun</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>High school, Between jobs</td>
<td>Xinying, Tainan</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Gay son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuli</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Vocational school, Small business owner</td>
<td>Taitung, Taitung</td>
<td>Nán tóngzhì (gay)</td>
<td>Gay twin brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhixiong</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>College, Warehouse manager</td>
<td>Taipei, Taipei</td>
<td>Nán (male), identified as T prior to gender transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approval Notice

Initial Review (Response to Modifications)

July 7, 2011

Amy Brainer, MA
Sociology
1007 W Harrison St
4118 BSB, M/C 312
Chicago, IL 60607
Phone: (312) 731-7977

RE: Protocol # 2011-0310
“Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan”

Dear Ms. Brainer:

Your Initial Review (Response to Modifications) was reviewed and approved by the Expedited review process on July 1, 2011. You may now begin your research.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: July 1, 2011 - June 29, 2012
Approved Subject Enrollment #: 80
Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors: These determinations have not been made for this study since it has not been approved for enrollment of minors.
Performance Sites: UIC, Center for the Study of Sexualities - Taiwan
Sponsor: Chancellor's Supplemental Graduate Research Fellowship
PAF#: Not available
Grant/Contract No: Not available
Grant/Contract Title: Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan

Research Protocol(s):

a) Research Protocol: Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan; Version 2; 06/15/2011
b) IRB Protocol #2010-0310, Dissertation Proposal: Same Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan

Recruitment Material(s):

a) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Flyer (English and Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
b) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Flyer (Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011

Informed Consent(s):

a) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent (English and Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
b) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent (Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
c) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent for Follow-up Interview (English and Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
d) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent for Follow-up Interview (Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
e) Alteration of Informed Consent granted as subjects may sign with a pseudonym

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:
(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes. (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

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<th>Submission Type</th>
<th>Review Process</th>
<th>Review Date</th>
<th>Review Action</th>
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<td>Initial Review</td>
<td>Expedited</td>
<td>04/17/2011</td>
<td>Modifications Required</td>
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<td>06/15/2011</td>
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<td>Response to Modifications</td>
<td>Expedited</td>
<td>07/01/2011</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2011-0310) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure, "UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-9299. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Marissa Benni-Weis, M.S.
IRB Coordinator, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosure(s):

1. **UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects**
2. **Informed Consent Document(s):**
   a) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent (English and Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
   b) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent (Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
   c) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent for Follow-up Interview (English and Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
   d) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Informed Consent for Follow-up Interview (Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
3. **Recruiting Material(s):**
   a) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Flyer (English and Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011
   b) Same-Sexuality and Family Relations in Taiwan, Flyer (Chinese); Version 2; 06/15/2011

cc: Barbara Risman, Sociology, M/C 312
VITA

AMY BRAINER

Phone: 312-218-8837 • E-Mail: amybrainer@gmail.com • Website: http://amybrainer.com

Academic Appointment

2014 Assistant Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Sociology
University of Michigan-Dearborn

Education

PhD 2014, University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology
Dissertation: Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Kinship in Taiwan: Generational Changes and Continuities
Committee: Barbara Risman (Chair), Richard Barrett, Antonia Yen-ning Chao (Tunghai University), Lorena García, Mignon Moore (UCLA)

MA 2009, University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology
Thesis: “Being straight is not a choice”: Essentialism and identity de/construction among heterosexual siblings of gay, lesbian, and bisexual young adults
Committee: Lorena García (Chair), Barbara Risman

BA 2005, North Park University, Sociology
Senior thesis: Sexuality and social distance on a Christian university campus

Research Fellowships

• Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research Dissertation Fieldwork Grant, $20,000 (2012-2013)
• Chancellor’s Graduate Research Fellowship to support multidisciplinary scholarship, University of Illinois at Chicago, $8,000 (2011-2012)

Awards

• American Sociological Association travel grant to attend the ISA World Congress in Yokohama, Japan, $1500 (2014)
• Alice J. Dan Dissertation Research Award, Center for Research on Women and Gender, University of Illinois at Chicago, $500 (2013)
• SAGE Teaching Innovations & Professional Development Award, American Sociological Association Section on Teaching and Learning, $500 (2013)
• Selected for funded participation in the International Sociological Association 11th International Laboratory for PhD Students in Sociology, “Sociology in an Unequal World,” Taipei, Taiwan (2012)
• Jessie Bernard Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship Paper Award, Feminism and Family Studies Section, National Council on Family Relations (2009)
• Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities Division Graduate Student Paper Award, Society for the Study of Social Problems (2009)
• Chancellor’s Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues Graduate Student Paper Award, University of Illinois at Chicago, $500 (2009)
• David P. Street Master’s Paper Prize, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago (2009)

Publications

Manuscripts in Preparation or Under Review
• Brainer, A.: Gender and parenting discourses in Taiwan: Implications for mothers of lesbian, gay, and transgender children.
• Brainer, A.: Lesbian daughters-in-law, transgender descendants: Contemporary meanings of patrilineal kinship in Taiwan.

Other Writing

Teaching Appointments

University of Michigan-Dearborn

• Global Sexualities
• Perspectives in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies
• Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies

DePaul University, Chicago, IL

• Diversity in American Families

University of Illinois at Chicago

• Marriage and Family
• Sociology of Gender
• Sexualities
• Senior Research Experience: Making Alternative and Minority Families Visible
• Gender and Society

Independent Study Supervision

• Designed and supervised an independent study on East Asian lesbian and gay family issues for an undergraduate student at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
Trained two undergraduate research assistants in ethnographic and qualitative interview methods and supervised these students as they assisted with field research in Taiwan (positions paid through Wenner-Gren Fieldwork Grant, not for credit).

Selected Conference Presentations

- Sexuality and family relations in Taiwan. Paper presented at the ISA 11th International Laboratory for PhD Students in Sociology, Taipei, Taiwan, 2012.
Invited Lectures
(Chinese titles denote Chinese language lectures)

- Trans* Taiwan: Bodies, families, politics, histories. Presented to the University of Illinois at Chicago Gender Umbrella Society, Chicago, IL, 2013.
- Social and historical perspectives on siblings and parents of tóngzhì 「從社會與歷史的角度來探討同志父母與手足」. Presented to the Taiwan Tóngzhì Hotline Association Family Working Group, Taipei, Taiwan, 2012.
- Generational changes in Taiwan tóngzhì family relations. Presented to the Department of Education, National Dong Hwa University, Hualien, Taiwan, 2012.
- Intimate research: Doing ethnography and oral history interviews in communities we care about. Presented to the Center for the Study of Sexualities, National Central University, Jhongli, Taiwan, 2012.
- Generational changes in Taiwan tóngzhì family relations 「不同時代的同志與家庭關係」. Presented to the Taiwan Tóngzhì Hotline Association LGBT Elders Working Group, Taipei, Taiwan, 2012.
- International perspectives on contemporary families 「現代家庭的國際觀點」. Presented to the Department of English, Lee-Ming Institute of Technology, Taipei, Taiwan, 2012.
- Cross generational perspectives on LGBT lives—body, family, emotions, work 「20 、30、40、50 跨世代同志生命分享—身體、家庭、感情、職場」. Panelist for the Taiwan Tóngzhì Hotline Association LGBT Elders Working Group, Hualien, Taiwan, 2012.
- Sexing up family studies: Why queer desires and sexual politics are important for understanding Taiwanese family change. Presented to the Center for the Study of Sexualities, National Central University, Jhongli, Taiwan, 2012.
- “If your sister’s a lesbian, you might be a lesbian too”: Growing up with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual sibling 「『如果妳姊姊是個拉子，那妳也有可能是個拉子』：跟同志兄弟姐妹一起長大」. Presented to the Queer Student Group of National Central University, Jhongli, Taiwan, 2011.

Additional Professional Experience

- Visiting Scholar, Center for the Study of Sexualities, Department of English, National Central University, Jhongli, Taiwan (2011—2013)
- Graduate assistant to the Council on Contemporary Families, a multidisciplinary professional organization of family scholars and practitioners (2008—2010)
- Research assistant to Barbara J. Risman, Professor and Head of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago (2009)
- Research assistant to Lorena García, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago (2008—2009)

Service

- ASA Section on Family elected student representative (2013—2015)
- ASA Section on Sexualities elected student representative (2013—2014)
- Taiwan Tóngzhì Hotline Association LGBT Elders Working Group (2011—2012)
• UIC Chancellor’s Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues, member of the Transgender Task Force (2009—2011)
• Graduate Student Association Steering Committee co-coordinator, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago (2008—2009)
• Brown Bag Lecture Series student representative, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago (2007—2008)

Professional Affiliations

American Anthropological Association; American Sociological Association; Association for Asian Studies; International Sociological Association; National Women’s Studies Association; Sociologists for Women in Society

References

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