

THE CONCEPTION AND FORMATION OF FAMILIES AMONG NON-HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN (LALAS) IN URBAN CHINA

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## **BACKGROUND**

- ► Like many parts of Asia, heteronormative family discourses still prevail and non-heterosexuality remains socially stigmatized in urban China
- ► Little is known about *lalas'* (non-heterosexual women in Chinese terms) active processes of building their own same-sex families and defining what "family" means to them

## **OBJECTIVES**

- ► To investigate *lalas'* different ways of conceptualizing and doing family in Beijing
- ► To investigate the impact of socio-cultural, economic, and political constraints and opportunities on lalas' ways of conceptualizing and doing family as well as their coping strategies in Beijing

## **METHODS**

- ► Purposive sampling
- ► Inclusion criteria
  - ♦ Women self-identifying as lala
  - ♦ Aged 25 or above
  - ◆ Currently residing in Beijing
- ► Fieldwork in Beijing (July 2017 June 2018)
  - ◆ Semi-structured interviews with 35 lalas
  - ◆ Participant observation
  - ◆ Photovoice
- ► Thematic analysis

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

**Emerging Themes:** 

- a. Lala navigating the distance from the family of origin
- b. Excelling oneself as a lala and as a lala family
- c. Insecurity and uncertainty about their same-sex family lives
- d. Performance of and resistance against heterosexuality



Bo, 33 years old, married (with a gay man), cohabiting with same-sex partner

You have to believe from the bottom of your heart that you do not feel sorry for them [family of origin]...because you fail to showcase a normal wedding and a normal family in front of the friends of your parents and relatives...You definitely have to show your parents that you are living a decent life. You really have to!

these...and at the same time you cannot be too close to

your family of origin or else the whole lie will get

broken. These are huge problems.

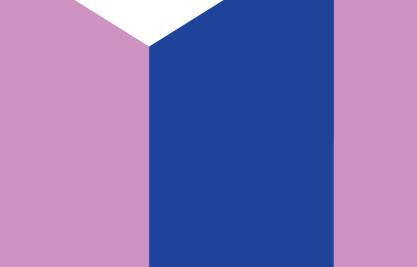
Ya, 34 years old, married (with same-sex partner in the U.S.), raising a child(conceived through assisted reproductive technology in the U.S.)

We have always been in a turmoil, in a turbulent and hidden state of life...um...because you cannot rely on your partner to give you a promise of the future. Since you are not granted any legal protection, your rights are not legally guaranteed and protected.

> Ting, 32 years old, married (with a gay man), cohabiting with same-sex partner

Perhaps in China...because of patriarchy...there is such a divide between "T" and "P." That is, there is a division between the stronger and the weaker...In fact, I think the ideal of real love between two lalas is to have no such differentiation...As a T, you have to be dominant, protective and responsible in order to be attractive enough for a P to fall in love with you. Because of the desire to be loved, we probably impose all these on ourselves.

Qian, 35 years old, single







■ No protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in the workplaces

Path to economic independence and solution to parental control

- Government \(\textcap{\textcap{1}}{2}\) Lala couples are not legally recognized as family units and thus not entitled to apply for family-related welfare benefits
  - Access to same-sex marriage and assisted reproductive technology in foreign countries where same-sex relationships are legally recognized



