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The Corner Society

Identity construction inside the gay- community in Shanghai

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Abstract

This master thesis, written by Magnus Lindström, deals with how gay identities are created and maintained in contemporary Shanghai – China. After the communist revolution (1949) homosexuality was said to be non-existing, however, much has happened since then; nowadays homosexuality is acknowledged by the state, moreover, it is no longer considered to be a mental disorder; nevertheless, this does not imply that homosexuality as such is embraced by the society. Contrary, gay people still have to act in the outskirts of the society, which the title – *The Corner Society* – is reference to. The study is based upon observations in the Shanghainese gay-bars and conversations with their clientele, where among others Judith Butler's concept of performativity, Michel Foucault's theory of power relation and micro politics, and Eve K. Sedgwick's concept of the closet are used to analyze the creation of these identities. The thesis is divided into two parts, the first part deals with the context and the second part deals with the scene. The first part – the context – focuses on the family institution – implications surrounding marriage, etc.; the state – the relation between communism, the emerging capitalism and identity construction, etc.; and the social (public) sphere – homosociality and heteronormativity, etc. The second part – the scene – draws upon Erving Goffman's theatrical analysis structure, which centers around the gay-bars – the architecture and design where the concept of queer space is used in the analysis; and the clientele – the off and on stage behavior and the clientele's representation of their own situation. Although the family still holds grip over the individual, its power has started to cease due to the introduction of market economy/capitalism, which has begun to create stratification both in society as a whole and inside the family, which has created some sort of diversity. Even so, there is another side to the introduction of market economy/capitalism as well, which creates a feeling of entrapment. This feeling has its roots in the ambiguity of having visible access to the world, whilst not having physical access to it, via traveling and so on. Nevertheless, these trends have called forth the window that expressions as the gay-bars have used.

Keywords

Identity, gay community, gay-bars, Shanghai, queer space, closet

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1. Introduction

This was never my intention.

I was going to write a completely different essay in a context where I could enjoy the security of a well known surrounding, instead I am sitting here on the 17th floor in my room overlooking a noisy, dusty and hectic intersection, enjoying the cool air from the air-conditioning, at the international dormitory building in the north part of Fudan University's campus in the outskirts of Shanghai, China. How did I end up here?

I applied for a Linnéus Palme (SIDA) scholarship at the Department of Sociology, Lund University, and ended up getting it. In the application letter, I wrote that I was going to study the queer community in Shanghai, for which I received scattered showers of encouragement and discouragement. All the people I spoke to found the subject interesting, however, some of them thought that my chances to succeed were little to none and some people were more careful, saying that I would probably manage the task I set out for. I started to think that maybe I was a bit naïve; however, I soon realized that I was not naïve when it came to the subject; it was the language barrier that I had underestimated.

Following the yellow markings in my map down to one of Shanghai's gay-bars, I came to the conclusion that 'I am not in the West anymore'. When I started to talk to people I realized that even though the knowledge of the English language was far better here than, for example, at stores or restaurants it still was not as good as I expected; however, when chatting with some of those in the clientele who spoke English I soon came to the conclusion, in accordance with Li Yinhe, that "[...] it is [not] difficult to make gays speak about their feelings and stories. Most of them [...] [are] willing to tell their experience and are very cooperative" (interview with Li Yinhe; *Women of China* 2001). However, if I have succeeded with the task, that is something that I leave to the reader to decide. Regardless, I managed to carry out the fieldwork and this report is the result.

The title of this essay – *The Corner Society* – might need an explanation. There is an intended reference to William Foote Whyte's study *Street Corner Society* (1943). Whilst I am not trying to compare my essay to that of Whyte's, both studies are conducted in a similar manner and concentrated on males. There is a further reason for the chosen title for this essay. Just after I arrived in Shanghai, I visited the Shanghai Reproduction and Sex Culture Center's exhibition for Chinese ancient sex cultures. In the exhibition concerned with homosexuality, the following description was placed:

[a]llthough homosexuality is not a sin, not a disease, But [sic!] under the unjust oppression of society, the homosexuals have to act in the corner (2004-02-14).

Upon returning to this description later in the study, I found it to be accurate of the contemporary situation rather than for the time it was intended for – the ancient times. Contrary to the description of the ancient times when “homosexuality acted as an integral part of society, complete with same-sex marriages for both men and women” (Hinsch 1992: 2), today’s homosexual people live and act in the corners of the society.

1.1. Purpose

The general purpose of this essay is to research how identities are constructed and maintained. I am doing this by looking at how the different gay-bars in Shanghai and their clientele construct both a collective and an individual identity and how these identities affect their representation of the rest of the Chinese/Shanghai society. The purpose is not to compare the contemporary situation in China with the ‘West’; however, sometimes I use this technique in order to deepen the understanding of my data.

So, why did I choose to study the queer community in particular? There are a number of reasons for that. Firstly, the community is moderately open and thus more accessible. Secondly, English is not commonly known in the contemporary Shanghai society, which will be further discussed below 1.2.1., however, inside the community, and especially the gay-bars, the knowledge and usage of English is more common.

Moreover, I found out there was not much written about the queer issues in China, the literature mostly concentrates on either Taiwan or Hong Kong. The few/rare studies conducted on mainland have mostly not been translated. In addition, during the last two decade mainland China has undergone major changes from planned economy to market economy – this study could not have taken place if this change had not come. Because of this, I found the changes in themselves, hold an interesting angle that could enrich the study.

1.2. Methodology

To give an objective view of the contemporary situation of the queer community in Shanghai is, according to me, impossible. I argue that this subject is best understood by getting involved in the community and collecting the ‘subjective’ views from the ‘members’ of this community (cp. Gubrium 1997: 28). Furthermore, my background,

Swedish middle class heterosexual male, will also influence the results of this study. If, for example, someone else, with a different background, used a similar starting-point, they might end up with different results (cp. Davis 2001: 34). Representation is always a question of interpretation, to find a neutral ‘truth’ is impossible because truth is not neutral “[t]ruth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which induces and which extend it” (Foucault 1980: 133). In accordance with Karen Davies, I argue that, “neutrality is a myth in the scientific project since the knower is always speaking from a particular location which in turn is embedded in various interests” (Davies 2001: 36). However, I am not deliberately altering the data or in any sense trying to mislead the readers. I merely argue that it is a matter of representing the ‘reality’ and thus my interpretations, which are affected by my background, has a vital affect on the results. However, by trying to have an open mind and question the foundation of my own way of thinking, I think that I have minimized these effects on the material (cp. Alasuutari 1995: 135).

1.2.1. Language barriers

In the Shanghainese society, English language is not common knowledge. In order to communicate, generally, one has to know Chinese, or rather Shanghainese. Thus, seeing that I do not speak any, or more correctly, not enough Chinese to be able to get around in the daily life, the field of study for me is limited to the English speaking ‘members’ of the community. Thus, this will have a large impact on the selection of informants.

I have the option to use a translator; though, one can argue that by using a translator there is more room for interpretations, meaning that the translator interprets the interviewee and I then make a second interpretation, which could alter the content in unforeseeable ways. On the other hand, the interviewees does not have English as their first language¹, which means that under certain circumstances it might be more accurate to use a translator. This is especially true when it comes to certain key figures² in the community, which under other circumstances would not be able to participate in an interview. When I, in fact, did use translators, I tried to use people that were close to the person that I was talking to, so that the interviewee felt more secure in the situation.

1.2.2. Observations and interviews

This field was more or less unknown to me before I came down to China; therefore it was hard to know how to make a selection. So to understand the field it was important for me

to understand how the subjects interact in a forthcoming environment. Therefore, frequent visits to the queer community's nightlife - in order to get in to, or maybe to get more acquainted with, the field - are the basis for my observations, all of which are participatory. This means that I interacted with the subjects, where the subjects may, or may not be aware of my intentions depending on the circumstances³. This is thus the basis of most of the interviews, which can be viewed as chats or informal conversations. Usually I sat at the bar and engaged or were engaged in conversation with the people around me about everything, not just things related to the topic. It was important for me in this situation to try to blend into the milieu as much as possible, and thus gaining their trust, therefore I did not rigidly talk about the topic during these conversations (cp. Davies 1999: 138ff). Moreover, I think this strategy strengthened my understanding of the field. After about a couple of weeks, I started to run into some of these people quite often and we started to keep in touch on a more regular basis. I soon found that I had five interviewees that are more regular; even though I concentrated on these five people⁴, I continued to talk to the other costumers at the bars. I conducted more formal unstructured interviews with one of the bar owners and with these five interviewees outside of the scene (community).

The focus on the male gay community came out of a methodological consideration, based upon an aspect of power when trying to obtain an equal relationship within the interview situation, which would be harder if I concentrated on the female gay community (cp. Alasuutari 1995: 88f). Further methodological discussion in endnote⁵.

1.2.3. Mapping out the field

The study deals with how the interviewees construct their identity both as individuals and as members of an outsider group. Therefore, the composition of the interviewees is of importance. Here I am here going to outline and briefly present the field and the interviewees. First, I am going to present what I am referring to as the field of study.

I refer to the field as the *community* or the *queer/gay community* due to the usefulness of the concept of community. The idea of that the importance of communities' raises together with the development of capitalism, which I find very helpful when understanding the current situation for gay people in contemporary Shanghai. I concur with Max Kirsch when he says that the role of the family as the primary source of socialization tends to be downplayed in a capitalistic society, and thus an opening is created for the community to play such a role (Kirsch 2000: 68f). Although, the

Shanghainese society, as a whole, does not really fit into this picture, still I argue that, for gays, the role of the community is precisely this, namely to socialize.

The queer community in Shanghai, which I am looking into, consists mostly of a middleclass⁶, seeing that the bars and clubs, where I am doing my research, are quite expensive compared with larger parts of the Shanghainese society. A drink or a beer in these places cost somewhere between RMB⁷ thirty – sixty, whereas at a 'local' bar the same costs RMB three to ten. Hence, this means that in order to blend-in in the queer community, and afford to participate in this milieu one must have a well-paid job, which in turn demands some sort of a higher education, thus, I argue, one must be a part of what could be seen as the middleclass⁸ (cp. Yatsko 2000: 7).

1.2.4. Method of analysis

The data does not speak for itself (cp. May 2001: 76; 21), thus theory and method of analysis are the framework that is needed in order to interpret the material. I am here going to map out the method of analysis.

The theoretical basis is queer (feminist) theory, which I am using to understand the different ways of how these identities are created. My choice of theoretical perspective comes partly from an interest in queer theory, but also because of an interest in seeing if these theories would apply to the Chinese/Shanghainese context. Moreover, queer theory acknowledges sexuality as a social issue rather than a personal; as Steven Seidman writes “[q]ueer perspectives approach coming out less as a process of revealing one’s true nature than a process of constructing or performatively enacting a sexual identity” (Seidman 1996: 21). Power is a central concept in the study; here I am using Foucault’s power relation theory to analyze the material. In addition to this, I also use other studies that deal with the subject, or closely related to the subject, by comparing their finds to my data.

My initial thought was to also use Jean Baudrillard and Pierre Bourdieu as theoretical frameworks; however, as the study progressed I found these theories to be problematic to use, which will be further develop in the endnote⁹.

In order to generalize the data I use concepts, such as power, closet, and (internalized) heteronormativity. These concepts are recurrent in my discussion and they are not a product of one criteria, but the product of the combination of different data (cp. Becker 1998: 128).

2. The Context

Sooner or later, happily or unhappily, almost everyone fails to control his or her sex life. Perhaps as compensation, almost everyone sooner or later also succumbs to the temptation to control someone else's sex life. Most people cannot quite rid themselves of the sense that controlling the sex of others, far from being unethical, is where morality begins (Warner 2000: 1).

I argue that what Michael Warner says in the excerpt above is that sexuality is not a preference, it is an orientation. Preference – selection of someone or something over another, meaning that you can prefer for example classical music to rock music, this person to that person. Orientate – to discover your position in relation to your surroundings; i.e. to make sense of yourself in relation to the surroundings. The surroundings, I argue, is neutral and thus not the same as context, meaning that surroundings represents the possibilities of orientation whereas the context positions the categorized possibilities of orientation into a hierarchy¹⁰. Thus, the surroundings are infinite while the context is finite. However, viewing the context as finite does not imply that it is static; it merely implies that it always is limited to the amount of categorized possibilities created in the surrounding¹¹. Thus, in order to justify a privileged orientation's (read heterosexuality's) position within the hierarchy the context can reduce unprivileged orientations to preferences, something that is preferred to heterosexuality. However, it does not exclude heterosexuality as a possibility. This is done in the context via norms and morality, which is a part of the context itself, hence, these factors changes between different contexts

The context, as I said, is not static, even though it is finite, it varies over time, space, and place¹², moreover, it is not a singular context that is affecting us; there are multitudes of contexts that both impede/facilitate the actor's actions, also they – the contexts – changes continuously – reacts upon the actions targeted against them. Therefore, the contexts, I argue, should be viewed as power relations. Power relations are, as Foucault describes it:

a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon actions (Foucault 2002a: 341).

Therefore, power relations can only exist in the context, even though power, in it self, derives from the surrounding (cp. Foucault 1980: 199f).

I argue that it is important not to reduce a social phenomenon to something one-dimensional; by conceptualizing connections between political (economic), social, and cultural dimensions of society – the contexts – the understanding of individual behavior becomes more clear (cp. Tierney 1997: 62). Therefore in this chapter, I am going to outline the power relations that I argue is relevant in order to understand the creation of identities. I am going to start with terminology, the name that is used as representation of oneself or the group and how the context views on key concepts of the *personal*. Thereafter, the family; how the family life in China creates a certain characteristic for the identity creation; followed by how communism, or maybe more correctly the specific type of modernity that can be seen as closely connected with communism, has shaped the sense of self. Then, moving on to the social sphere, by discussing the social interactions, the ‘opening up’ process, and the resistance that takes place in Shanghai and China.

2.1. Language and terminology

Language, the way of representing things through speech, cannot be isolated from the context(s). Different contexts can change the meaning of the words, give the word a different or another representation, make them condescending or empowering them, combining different words into new concepts.

Language can be used as a way of exercising power through the use of discourses, moreover, it can also be used as a strategy¹³ to undermine the power, because if there are no strategies to undermine the power, then power does not exist, for there is no need to exercise power over something that is obedient (cp. Foucault 2002a: 347). Therefore, the usage of language becomes an important component in the understanding of power relations.

It should be noted that I am not an expert on the Chinese language; however, through my discussions with people inside and outside the scene a picture of the importance of the usage of the language emerged. The discussion below should be seen in this light.

2.1.1. Deconstruction terminology

Tóngxìngliàn – 同性恋 – the basic meaning is ‘homosexuality’, however, the meanings of the different parts of the word is as following, tóng – 同 – means ‘same’ or ‘homo’, xìng – 性 – means ‘sex’, ‘gender’ or ‘nature’, and liàn – 恋 – means ‘love’ or ‘to feel attached to’, which gives it a somewhat different feel to it, especially with the last character liàn. However, even though the literary meaning can be read as same-sex-love, the word still has a negative connotation to it, a medical/scientific connotation. This can be explained by how the concept of love is viewed in the Chinese language¹⁴. Hence, this term is not frequently used, at least not within the community. More popular within the community is the term tóngzhì – 同志 – when referring to lesbian, bisexuals, and gay people in contemporary China.

Tóngzhì has a very positive historical reference; it was originally the Chinese translation of the Soviet communist term ‘comrade’, which was a friendly way to address everyone in China. The meaning of the different parts of the word is as following, it has the same initial character as Tóngxìngliàn, namely tóng and the second part of the word zhì – 志 – means ‘goal’, ‘spirit’, or ‘orientation’. However, during the market reforms in the late 1970s the word, with the meaning ‘comrade’, lost its popularity and nowadays it is merely used in official documents and by people of older generations. Since the 1990s the meaning of the word has been changed to something along the line of queer (Chou 2000: 2); however, Chou Wah-shan argues that it is impossible to simply translate tóngzhì as queer, because queer is an “Anglo-Saxon [construct] with specific histories that fail to capture the indigenous features of Chinese same-sex relationships. The reappropriation is widely accepted by the community for its positive cultural references, gender neutrality, desexualization of the stigma of homosexuality, politics beyond the homo-hetero duality, and use as an indigenous cultural identity for integrating the sexual into the social” (Ibid.). I argue that the term queer, even though it may not be “widely accepted [...] for its positive cultural references”, still is gender neutral, it desexualizes the stigma of homosexuality – among other sexual orientations – and goes beyond the homo-hetero duality – or at least tries to do that – and is also being used as a way of integrating the sexual into the society. Moreover, when translating, or for that matter using synonyms, one always runs the risk of losing some of the words meanings¹⁵. Nevertheless, the usage of the word tóngzhì has become more and more associated with homosexuality and therefore in a sense lost at least part of its positive cultural reference.

The use of the word private and privacy also deserves an explanation. *Sī rén* – 私人 – is the Chinese word for private where character *sī* – 私 – means private; personal, selfish, secret; confidential, illicit(ly) and *rén* – 人 – means human being, a person, people, others. Similar to this the word for privacy *yīn sī* – 隱私 – also has the character *sī* – 私 – as the final character and *yīn* – 隱 – which means concealed; dormant or latent. The usage of the words has a general negative connotation, which especially can be seen in the different meanings of the character *sī*.

Moreover, *yīn sī* is not a common word to use; it started during the 1990s in the urban areas, and then it refers more to legal cases of privacy violations (cp. Yan 2003: 135, 254). Both concepts I argue are connected with the concept of the so-called ‘face’, to lose face – *diū liǎn* 丢脸, which means to be humiliated. In Chinese society, there has always been a certain degree of privacy to prohibit people from losing face (cp. Yan 135ff), however, losing face is not necessarily individualized, to cause others to lose face is seen as being rude and inconsiderate to people around you, especially in the case of parents (cp. Chou 2000: 253f), therefore some privacy is granted. This in turn I argue affects the view on being private and wanting privacy to be viewed as suspicious behavior.

2.2. The family

When I started to look in to this subject, most people that had some knowledge about the Chinese society and culture urged me not to overlook the role that the family plays. The role of the family is important in most societies; it can be viewed as the so-called private sphere or as a production unit, depending on which perspective is being used. Even though this all might be true, the potential power interweaved in this institution can differ quite a lot depending on when and where it is located. The power expressions that are most inherent in the family are the power of persuasion, guilt, and heritage.

There are big differences between how different subjects are affected by these powers. The family as an institution is difficult to analyze because it is so personal, which also is similar to sexuality. As I mentioned above, in order to have an exercise of power there has to be some sort of insubordination, otherwise there is no need for power relations to exist. Moreover, it is possible to establish general trends that are more likely to exist in a specific culture, even though it differs from subject to subject.

The discussion is going to concentrate on the core features of the family, namely reproduction, marriage, and individualism within the family. The two first features both deal with the creation of family units, while the last feature more deals with decentralization of the institution.

2.2.1. The single-child policy and the new fertility culture

The family's role in China can be viewed as rather traditional, however, it differs from other traditional cultures where the family also is considered to be of vital importance.

I argue that China has neither a traditional nor a modern family structure; usually the birth rate in a traditional family structure tends to far surpass the birth rate in a modern family structure. Due to the birth-planning program¹⁶, the birth rate has been kept to a minimum in China, which in turn affects the relationship within the traditional family structure. This, however, can be seen as a natural tendency when an institution is being restructured. During the interviews this pattern was not that obvious, some of the interviewees thought that the pressure was much harder for those who were a single-child. As Mike explained the difference between being the only child and having siblings, 'if you are an only child there is not much you could do but to get married, the pressure from the family is often too hard to handle'. On the other hand, the family pressure, as some of the interviewees said, cannot be reduced to the number of siblings. As Chang puts it, 'I do not think that it would matter if I was a single-child, the pressure that I feel could not be harder'. Other factors determine the amount of family pressure that targets the child. One factor that might be that differs between the interviewees in this particular topic is distance. Almost all of the interviewees that argued that the number of siblings indeed played a role had a somewhat detached relationship with their family, they moved to Shanghai by themselves, and none of them was a single-child. Furthermore, there is a generation aspect here as well; the age of the parents also play a role when it comes to the amount of pressure placed upon the child(ren) (cp. Yan 2003: 210; 214f). Still, even though it is hard to determine what effect it has had upon the children, one can at least say that the policy has not eased the pressure placed upon the child.

2.2.2. Marriage

Ever since 1950 the Chinese Marriage Law has granted free choice of the choice of spouse, however, family, and institutional restrictions limited this right in practice. "[T]he major

function of marriages was to produce offspring and to support the family members financially, [...] in which personal affections and psychological needs played little part; and it was the fact for decades that marriages submitted to politics” (Dezhi & Chunfeng 1995: 537f). According to Huang Dezhi and Feng Chunfeng and Yunxiang Yan this changed when the new Marriage Law was introduced in 1980, then it became more focused on feelings; it became the proper base for both marriage and divorce.

Farrer points out, in his study¹⁷, that dating indeed has become an important part of the process aiming towards marriage, at least in the bigger cities. The family’s influence over the dating process has decreased; the parental involvement in dating often has been reduced to disapproval of the choice of a particular partner. Although, the parents negotiation power should be seen as weak under these circumstances, nowadays the children frequently has a larger income than their parents, thus, the financial leverage that the parents once possessed no longer is a factor. Still, unmarried couples tend to live with their parents (Farrer 2002: 182f).

However, this does not imply that marriage, as a phenomenon, has become less important to the family. The primary constrain in the new dating culture are the social and familial pressure to marry and reproduce. The family, together with coworkers and friends, still acts as informal matchmakers (Farrer 2002: 151). Not getting married is rarely an option.

The pressures facing those who do not want to get married often are immense, some even think of leaving the country to avoid such pressure. In addition, homosexual men frequently get married against their will in order to avoid the pressures facing them. In one of my interviews with Chang he expressed a wish to get out of China¹⁸ so that he could live the life that he wanted, however, as he said, that was not likely to happen. This will be further discussed in 3.2.3. The possibility to postpone the marriage has largely increased due to the economic reforms. Nowadays people can argue that they have to devote themselves to their career before they get married, which offers them the possibility to postpone the marriage until they are in their mid-twenties or early thirties. In turn, this gives them the opportunity to engage in same-sex relationships before they get married, creating a foundation for future same-sex relationships. Though, in many cases this implies that they will be living at home with their parents until they get married (cp. Greyer 2002: 267). Conversely, the interviews showed that, as with the effects of the single child policy – see above, it is easier if one migrate to Shanghai and thereby distancing themselves from the family pressure. Consequently, they are going to live in

their own apartment; moreover, the ability to postpone the marriage can be seen as greater. Those who have their family in Shanghai tend not to move away from home until they get married. When living at home, the parents have insight in their child's life, as many of the informants pointed out. "[W]ithout housing of their own – and the privacy it would provide – gays are severely limited in their ability to develop same-sex relationships" (Greyer 2002: 267).

Still seeing marriage as a duty is not a new phenomenon in the Chinese society. During the Zhou dynasty¹⁹, it was merely the privileged few that "had the option of homosexual monogamy" (Hinsch 1992: 27). However, according to Bret Hinsch, in a similar manner as in the contemporary Chinese society, in ancient China it was not seen as a contradiction to both be married and have same-sex extramarital affairs.

[W]e see men who maintained a heterosexual marriage and a homosexual romance without apparently seeing any contradiction between the two. Since this seeming sexual dichotomy between duty and pleasure resulted from the kinship-based tradition, it would survive for as long as kinship continued to provide the foundation for social structure^[20] (Hinsch 1992: 19).

However, I think it is important to point out that the discourse does not differ that much from heterosexual extramarital affairs. The rhetoric surrounding extramarital affairs is on one side 'feelings' and 'friendship' with the lover and on the other side 'responsibility' to the family (cp. Farrer 2002: 196, 356; Zhongxin 2004-04-16). 'I have to have something to live for, something that makes me happy, that is something that I need', Eric explained to me during a dinner. Though, when it comes to same-sex extramarital affairs they tend to be short-term relationships, which are a common feature for the whole community (cp. Greyer 2002: 270f).

Moreover, in reference to the discussion in the beginning of this chapter, this type of practice reduces same-sex relationships to a preference, because the same-sex relationship is merely seen as something in addition or a transition to the heterosexual relationship.

'Homosexuality is a kind of intermediate or preparatory stage to heterosexuality; it is necessary for people to go through it.' The 'normally' developed person would 'transit' (guodu) through homosexuality, but some would 'get blocked' (zu'ai) or 'bogged down' (tingzhi) in what was described as a form of 'abnormal homosexuality' (bu putong de tongxing lian'ai)^[21] (Gui Zhiliang in Dikötter 1995: 140).

This excerpt more clearly shows the preference-ization of same-sex relationships that I was referring to before the excerpt. Even though Dikötter refers to a book published in

1936 in the excerpt above, I still think that it is important because these thoughts somewhat describes a frame of thinking that still exist, maybe not in such a radical way, but the essence of the statement still exist outside of the gay community, and in some cases even inside. In addition, as Hinsch mentions in the excerpt above, the division between duty and pleasure was a reoccurring topic during my interviews – compare Eric’s statement above – which reinforces the idea of homosexuality as a preference. One of the youngest interviewees, Pete, in this study ‘came-out’ to his mother by telling her that he had had sex with men, her response lingered between seeing it as a phase – thus making it a preference – and seeing it as he had been abused – thus placing the guilt on the other. I will further discuss the implications of short-term relationships and the preference-ization of same-sex relationships below, 3.2.1.

However, according to Farrer, divorce is always an option; it is considered less of a disgrace than never marrying (Farrer 2002: 158). In addition, Chou states that there is a ‘single-married-divorce-single’ strategy among gay males in order to get personal freedom (Chou 2000: 104). I do not entirely concur with Farrer’s and Chou’s conclusion, almost all of the participants in the study argued that divorce was not an option. During an interview with Chang, when I asked him if he considered divorce an option, he replied ‘no, even though it is legal, it is not possible, I would have to explain to my family why I wanted a divorce, and that explanation cannot be that I am gay, there are few explanations that would be accepted’. Almost all of the married gay people I talked to presented this line of thinking to me. The family control does not entirely cease when the child gets married, however, similar to the single-child policy, distance – geographically and emotionally – can create this window. The issue is more complex, I argue, than Farrer’s and Chou’s discussions.

2.2.3. Individualism within the family

When it comes to individualism within the Chinese family structure, the same goes as with the decreasing birth rate, namely, it is hard to determine if one should view it as traditional or modern. In a traditional family structure, the individual is synonymous with the personification of the family line, while in a modern family structure, the individual’s position is more autonomous. There has been a shift towards a more modern structure, with, among other things, a decline of ancestor worship (cp. Yan 2003: 185f, 218f); however, the family – as a collective – still plays a major role in society.

As explained above, 2.1.1., the word ‘private’ has a negative connotation; it implies that there is something wrong; that there is something illicit or selfish about the activity. However, in order to have individualism there has to be a certain degree of privacy. Mentally this does exist in most contexts – one can always be alone with one’s thoughts; however, to be physically private there has to be a space where the person can be alone. Therefore, one way of viewing individualism within the family is to see how the domestic space is planned; is there a space where the individual members of the family can have privacy? The private space that is common in western countries is the bedroom; therefore, the bedroom can be seen as a representative for the privacy for both the parents and the children where intimate life can exist in a larger degree. This, however, is a relatively new phenomenon in China. Together with the trend of transforming residential areas to ‘private’ enclaves, the transformation of the domestic spatiality creates possibility for private space for the individual family members (cp. Yan 2003: 128ff). All of the interviewees I visited, who were still living with their parents, had their own room. In addition to this, they also had internet access. Even though their parents have control over their child’s life, the child always has the option of closing the door and thereby creating private space. This is a change towards more individual recognition in the contemporary Shanghainese family.

Moreover, economic reforms have played a large role in the transformation of the family, as I mentioned above in relation to the marriage culture. “Capitalism creates divisions” (Kirsch 2000: 65); this I think is important to take into account in order to understand the creation of individualism. The economic reforms have created a stratification of the society, not only in the general society, but also in some degree in the family. Changes in the labor market favor the younger people, whose competence is often higher than the previous generations and their attitude towards the labor market resemble the current situation in the Western countries, namely higher mobility and a self-fulfillment discourse (cp. Hanser 2002: 194f). I am not saying that this is the situation for all young people, however, young people tend adjust easier to the new circumstances (cp. Hanser 2002: 198). In turn, this places them in a different position to their parents, they are no longer are financially dependent on their family, in contrary, their family might be dependent on them, which creates leverage – a strategy and means to fight the family power. As I mentioned above, 2.2.2., career is an often used excuse/explanation to why younger people do not get married, another strategy to distance themselves from the family power.

2.3. The state and modernity

Modernity had a large impact on the Chinese society, as it has had in all societies affected by it. Sexuality is not excluded from the impact of modernity; modernity is a project of totality, which does not mean that there merely is *one* modernity, “Chinese modernity is a translated ^[22] modernity” (Sang 2003: 9). Even though this ‘translated’ modernization project started in China before the communist revolution; what we see today has been largely colored by communist-modernity. However, communism or socialism and its relation to modernity, individualism, and identity are of importance when trying to understand the context, as Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrell view it as, in China, “state power and policies have been the creators, not the creations, of a transformed society” (Davis 1993: 5).

2.3.1. Modernity, Communism, and the creation of identity

Modernity is totalistic in its ambition to include everything – architecture, hygiene, politics, etc.; it created a new way of thinking about time – the ever new – and space. However, it is hard to talk about one *modernity*, rather should one talk about *modernities*. By using the plural form, it emphasizes the different reactions to modernity through the production of a series of different cultural frames (cp. Berman 1998: 23ff, et al.).

There is a close link between communism and modernity; when Karl Marx together with Friedrich Engels wrote Communist Manifesto (1848) their critique was not aimed at modernity, however, modernity created the need of an identity, a need of individualism²³, or at least the appearance of individuality, which can be hard to combine with the idea of collectivism. Still as Marx and Engels argues:

[i]n bourgeois society, capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality. And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! [...] The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at. By freedom is meant, under the present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying (Marx & Engels [1884] 1986: 31).

Even though I concur with Marx and Engels view of individuality, I still argue that communism in practice, contrary to the more theoretical version, tended to trade off the individuality for collectivism; capitalism, on the other hand, brought out individual identities, or more correctly, the appearance of individual identity. Moreover, identities, I

argue, has become a part of the capitalistic logic especially when you reduce identity to the concept of lifestyle²⁴.

What then is the difference between identity and lifestyle? First off, I would argue, in accordance with Judith Butler, that gender identity, and for that matter identities as such, are “performatively^[25] produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. [...] gender is always a doing, through not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed” (Butler 1999: 33). This, I claim, is true when it comes to identities and in some sense even when it comes to lifestyles. The origins of identities and lifestyles are also in a sense different. Identity performativity correlate with the norms and values, or to use Butler’s vocabulary, “a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler 1999: 43f). Nonetheless, identities, gender or other, still for the subject feels real, and not merely ‘a set of repeated acts’; therefore, it is important that it is acknowledged that performativity is not a question of choice or role, rather that “repetition marks the failure of subjectivation: what repeats in the subject is precisely that which is not yet mastered” (Butler 1997: 27). Thus, for the subject these identities are part of ‘reality’.

Lifestyle, on the other hand, I would argue correlates more with commerce, which cannot really be separated from societal norms and values, however, the appeal for the concept of lifestyle is to promote a certain demand for a certain product aimed at a certain group. Lifestyles are performative in the sense that commercial interests do not create them; they are merely recognized by commercial interests; moreover, when they become lifestyles they die, turn into a simplistic pattern of visible signs – a set of accessories. A lifestyle, thus, becomes a way of creating an identity through consumption products, a pre-composed style, which can be related to others that ‘share’ the same lifestyle. The argument here is that lifestyles are merely one part of the identity. “Lifestyles becomes choice, and status is integrated into making the right choice”, therefore, “[c]onsumer products encourage the achievement of identity through accessorized lifestyles” (Kirsch 2000: 74).

Shanghai has adjusted to the capitalistic order, it is a city much driven by commerce. However, seeing that lifestyles are performative, as I described above, the identities have to exist in order for the commercial interests to see any value or market for the ‘pink-dollar’. Therefore, there is no, and can be no, queer lifestyle in the Shanghainese society

until there is a visible queer identity; nevertheless, there is an emerging heterosexual lifestyle in Shanghai.

2.3.2. The development of same-sex discourses

Many scholars, often from North America or Europe, argue that the death of the tolerance towards same-sex eroticism in China came with the Western influence during the colonial era²⁶. As for example, Bert Hinsch states:

In importing Western sexual morality, however, the Chinese also imported Western intolerance of homosexuality. Stripped of the original religious language, these ideas became accepted by Chinese eager to emulate the West uncritically in every respect (Hinsch 1992: 167).

I think that Hinsch is a bit western-centric and simplistic in his view, it is not that I am trying to clear the ‘Western conscience’ I am merely saying that it is more complicated than that. There has never been any law forbidding homosexuality in China, even though it was viewed as a disease, as Frank Dikötter puts it, “similar to masturbation and chicken pox” (Dikötter 1995: 145), and seen as hooliganism – liú máng zuì 流氓罪. In addition, by saying that the ‘Chinese [were] eager to emulate the West uncritically in every respect’ he is implying that the Chinese society more or less is a mere carbon copy of the West, which not only I disagree with, but I argue that Hinsch himself also disagrees with. As he continues:

Only in the final centuries of the dynastic history did intolerance [towards homosexuality] begin to build as the result of a more stringent application of Neo-Confucian rhetoric regarding the family, imported Manchu^[27] concepts of sexuality, and a reaction against individualistic Ming permissiveness” (Hinsch 1992: 162).

Here I think that Hinsch is contradicting himself, what he is describing here, by focusing on the family, is a link between sexuality and reproduction, which I think leads to the conclusion that it was more a reaction against non-procreative sexuality, rather than homosexuality in itself, that brought intolerance towards homosexuality. I am not trying to imply that Western modernity did not affect China, which it did, I merely trying to put forth that the Chinese people did not completely submit themselves and their own way of thinking for what the Western colonialists brought.

According to Tze-lan D. Sang the same-sex discourse in Republican China and during the May Fourth²⁸ era drew much from the discourse during the last years of the dynasty era, meaning that there were more to it than merely condemning homosexuality as carnal or superficial, whether pathological or romantic. Moreover, contrary to the Western thinking, which at the time had a quintessential biologically determined view on homosexuality; many Chinese intellectuals had an understanding of same-sex relationships as relational and situational. The discourse did not characterize same-sex relations as perversions, thus it did not create *the homosexual* (Sang 2003: 122f). In *The history of sexuality* Foucault stresses that the uses of the label of *perversions* created a new specification of the individual, moreover, through the creation of the label *homosexual* it became parted from the act of sodomy and thus seen as, what Foucault calls, the hermaphroditism of the soul (Foucault 1990: 42f). Sexual variations were not seen as human diversity, rather it was seen as the ‘uncivilized other’, therefore it did not need to be catalogued and investigated; thus no need for individualizing it. However, as I mentioned above, the modernizing elite of China were inspired by Western thinkers, still it was an interpretation of them, not a mere implementation of them (cp. Dikötter 1995: 143ff).

However, with the communist takeover, same-sex discourses seemed to disappear. During the years just after the takeover, homosexuality was considered not to exist in the new liberated China – the term *tóngxingliàn* became unmentionable, therefore there was no need to discuss it (cp. Sang 2003: 163f). The sexual discourse became even more focused on reproduction, and, as Chou writes, “Western capitalist influences were seen as corrupting Chinese culture; sexual wildness in Shanghai and other big cities was seen as proof of such ‘Western contamination’” (Chou 2000: 54). Therefore, they were grouped together with rich peasants, landlords, counterrevolutionaries, and rightists as the people who did not receive defense from abuse or attacks (Geyer 2002: 263); hence the classification as hooliganism.

The reemergence of the same-sex discourse more or less coincided with the economic reforms. The redeveloping of the market economy has ‘re-sexualized’ the Chinese society and culture, much through popular science. Together with the threat of HIV/AIDS that also brought up homosexuality on the agenda, acknowledging gay men as a high-risk group (cp. Geyer 2002: 264). Homosexuality has also become a part of the academia, at Fudan University’s medical department arranged a lecture entitled homosexual health sociology held by an openly gay scholar (eastday.com reference internet #1)²⁹.

Moreover, the police interference with the gay-bars in Shanghai is not common nowadays³⁰. Robert Geyer speculates that this is because “the Party is less concerned about gay activity than more serious threats to its control, such as political dissent or religious movements” (Geyer 2002: 268). Male prostitution, the so-called money-boys, are legally treated the same as female prostitution³¹.

2.4. The social sphere

The social sphere is an important component when creating an identity. It is possible to create an identity that is withheld, or disconnected, from the rest of society, however, usually this is more due to that the identity then does not correlate with the norms and values in society, then that the individual wants to keep his or hers identity concealed. As mentioned above, 2.1.1., the concept of losing face is in some way connected with the idea of private and privacy, which in turn effects the introduction of ‘uncomfortable’ identities. The idea of losing face does not merely apply to the individual, but also to the people around the individual; one can make others lose face as well³².

2.4.1. Public interaction and the public show of affection

One Friday night I was standing on the 537 bus taking me from Fudan University, where I live, to downtown Shanghai – People’s Square.

I ended up next to what seemed to be a young couple, he was standing next to me, and she was sitting almost in front of me. The couple chatted with each other, however, not enthusiastically, but still they talked. After about five minutes of tossing and turning between my fellow travelers, the bus stopped at a scheduled stop.

The people that got on the bus at this stop were all young Asian males, and apparently friends of the young man standing next to me. As they entered, he left his place next to me, went over to his friends, and started talking. Two of them sat down, and another two sat down in their laps, while the first two gently put their hands around their friend sitting in their lap. The conversation between the guys were intense and very physical, with laughter, gesturing and gentle touches. This continued until we reached People’s Square, where I together with the group of guys and the girl got off.

I followed the group for a couple of blocks to see how they interacted outside the bus. The couple, which I mentioned above, was walking side by side, and the guy was holding his arm around the girl a bit awkwardly, while constantly gazing at the other guys that were walking just in front of them (field note 2004-03-26).

Why is this field note important? This is not a haphazard event in the Shanghainese society; on the contrary, physical male interaction is a quite common feature. To theorize it one can say that in the Shanghainese society homosociality is not just accepted behavior, it is seen as a crucial source of emotional comfort, thus a 'natural' part of society (cp. Chou 2000: 24). Therefore, it is not a threat to the heterosexual patriarchal society. As Judith Butler puts it:

For inner and outer worlds to remain utterly distinct, the entire surface of the body would have to achieve an impossible impermeability. This sealing of its surface would constitute the seamless boundary of the subject; but this enclosure would invariably be exploded by precisely that excremental filth that it fears (Butler 1999: 170).

The homosociality then becomes the safety valve for, what Butler calls, the heterosexual matrix³³, i.e. society. This, I thought, would create a window for public interaction between gay lovers, however, all of my interviewees argued that this was not possible; they all said 'they would know', meaning that people around them would notice that they were gay, therefore they restrained from holding hands, or anything the like. At first I wrote this off by explaining it as internalized homophobia³⁴ or fear of losing face, which includes making others lose face. However, I realized that my initial thought was based upon my inability to see any difference between public homosociality and public interaction between gay lovers; hence, I experienced cultural blindness.

The point here is not merely to show how difficult it can be to understand a culture one is not a part of, even though that in itself also is important; but also to point out that this can become a source for homophobia when the gay community becomes more verbal and more a part of society.

The link between homosociality and homophobia is that the behaviors between homosociality and homosexuality are similar, even though they differ in some extent. Homophobia can be described as "the paranoid disavowal of any 'homosexual' connotation and practice" (Turner 2000: 129), meaning that a 'real man' (read heterosexual) must avoid any hints of homosexuality when participating in homosociality. Therefore, the sexual identity has to serve as a guard of the gender boundaries – gender roles (Ibid.). Hence, there must be a clear differentiation between homosociality and homosexuality both targeted inwards, to the individuals own sexual identity, and outwards, to display the sexual identity to others. Thus, in order to preserve the male homosociality

as a ‘natural’ way of male bonding homosexuality must be repressed. One way to accomplish this is to turn to homophobic values.

However, if the homophobia is internalized it serves the same purpose as self-regulatory censorship, meaning that there is nothing for homophobia to react against, because homosexuality is not a part of the everyday social ‘reality’ – it hides in the corner. This, I argue, is an explanation why homophobia is not a vital part of the Chinese society and not because Chinese culture is essentially different, as for example Wah-shan Chou argues (see Chou 2000: 42ff, 136ff).

2.4.2. Mobilizing resistance and raising awareness

There is, as I implied earlier, little space for gay people in the Shanghainese society, most people do not think that they have ever come across any gay people (cp. Chou 2000:131). During a conversation with one of the professors at Fudan University, he explained to me that ‘you must understand Magnus, you can’t see if someone is gay, you could be gay and I would not know, I could be gay and you would not know; that is China’.

In contemporary China there is a strict control of freedom of expression and association, which means that even if a LesBiGay organization would be allowed to exist there would probably not be that many members wanting to sign up because that would mean that they would register themselves as LesBiGay. Hence, Chou argues, China lacks the homophobic expressions to uphold confrontational politics; in addition, China has no homo – hetero duality that generates separatist sexual identity politics (cp. Chou 2000: 136). First off, as I discussed above, the lack of homophobia in China could very well be the product of the lack of confrontational politics; secondly, the lack of homo – hetero duality can, contrary to the previous argument, be seen as the product of too much homophobia, meaning that the lack of this discourse, I argue, is due to internalized homophobia.

I have used the concept of internalized homophobia above; however, this concept needs to be elaborated. When I am referring to internalized homophobia I am not arguing that it is a matter of self-loathing it is rather a strategy to prevent confrontation with potential homophobia combined with the concept of losing face, what Butler calls the internalization of taboos (Butler 1999: 80ff); therefore, I think it is more accurate to describe it as internalized heteronormativity, which means that the person acts in accordance with the rule set by the heterosexual norm, because there is a risk of losing face when crossing the norm; if we return to Butler’s vocabulary it could be called the

product of the heterosexual matrix. Moreover, homophobia is not a visible part of the society, even though I argue it exists, it rather the heteronormativity that makes people restrict their ways of behaving in public. As Samuel A. Chambers says, “I wish to locate the problem of homophobia out there in political and cultural institutions and practices” (Chambers 2003: 26), because homophobia is a part of heteronormativity rather than the reversed.

However, even though this picture might seem somber, there have been positive political break-throughs for the community, among others, the demedicalization³⁵ homosexuality, the redefinition of *hooliganism* that excluded homosexuality, the establishment of the *Chinese Society for the Study of Sexual Minorities*³⁶ (CSSSM) etc. In addition, the introduction of the internet has served the purpose of both organizing and raising awareness inwards. This brings me into what I think is the main trend in the gay community in Shanghai, namely raising awareness inside the community.

Much is happening to raise awareness inside the community, especially with a focus on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD). The magazine *Friend Exchange*³⁷ gives the reader articles about what is happening for the *tóngzhì* community in China, education on AIDS/STD, articles dealing with creating an understanding of homosexuality, and so on. Moreover, they also provide a forum where the readers can debate.

During the last year *tóngzhì*-hotlines and AIDS information hotlines³⁸ – aimed at the LesBiGay community – has opened up in thirteen cities in China – Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, etc. Volunteers that share the same experiences maintain the hotline. The *tóngzhì*-hotline serves the purpose to help the callers to come to grip with their situation, also just to let the callers talk (people.com.cn 2003-06-28 reference internet #3). Connected to the hotlines are information campaigns handing out condoms and information pamphlets at different gay-bars. One of the gay-bars in Shanghai – Eddy’s Bar also plays an important role in raising awareness inside the community, which I am going to elaborate on in the following chapter.

There are many things happening in Shanghai – China. However, the stage that the community is in right now is more focused on raising acceptance and awareness inside the community. Seeing this as a direct strategy to undermine the power relations is maybe to overstate the situation, as Foucault puts it, “most important is the relationship between power relations and confrontation strategies” (Foucault 2002a: 346).

3. The scene

The last chapter discussed the contexts in the Chinese/Shanghai society; this chapter is going to look closer into the gay-bars in Shanghai and their clientele. In a sense, this chapter is going to discuss the escapism, or the vehicle for it, of the last chapter, meaning the place where people that break the rigid line of normalcy *can* see themselves as ‘normal’; however, as with most escapism, it falls short – you never really leave the contexts you feel constrained by. Heterosexuality in itself is not a guarantor of normalcy, as Michael Warner says, it “is where morality begins” (Warner 2000: 1). In the Chinese/Shanghai context heterosexuality without marriage is not seen as ‘normal’ – as in so many other contexts; therefore, it is not merely the sexuality that is a factor here, it is the social conditions surrounding the sexuality – the heterosexuality – that determines whether it can be viewed as ‘normal’ (cp. Foucault 2002b: 217).

This chapter deals with the construction of identity and community, which is not mutually excludable; “The construction of a positive identity requires a community that supports that identity” (Phelan 1989: 59). In this sense the positive identity is an identity that the individuals not only can identify with, but also an identity that can help them to come to terms with themselves and thus support each other, i.e. how to create oneself as ‘normal’, and help others. However, “[b]uilding such a community requires both a withdrawal of support or belief in the values and structures of the prior community or culture and the creation of new values and structure” (Phelan 1989: 59). It is here, in the construction of ‘new’ values and structures, that, I argue, the community currently is located.

We are now ready to enter the scene. When creating the ‘theatrical’ analysis structure in this chapter I was inspired by Erving Goffman’s concepts front- and backstage, and his way of using the theatre as an analogy for social interactions. The scene consists of the stage – meaning the bars – and the actors – meaning the clientele – playing/improvising their parts in the accordance to how the back-story/frame-story – the social context – impedes and facilitates them. This creates the manuscript I am working with in this chapter.

The bars are definitely not the only stage existing in Shanghai³⁹; however, this does not mean that they are not of any interest. “While subtle signifiers or public cruising can construct temporary and invisible networks of queer space on the heterosexual street, the

creation of explicitly gay places has been an important part of the evolution of the gay community in the West” (Rushbrook 2002: 190); they become a institutionalized scene – the ‘public’ scene. Let us now look closer at the stage, and the different aspects of it.

3.1. The stage

When I first came to Shanghai, I unfolded my map and started to work out where the bars I knew about were located. I soon realized that the stage was unfocused, meaning that contrary to a more general phenomenon, when it comes to bars and clubs, they were spread out over more or less the whole city center, see appendix 1. This, in turn, means that if one wants to ‘bar hop’ between the different bars, one almost has to take a taxi; if half an hour, at least, is a too long walk.

Why is this of importance, is it merely a question of convenience? Most areas in Shanghai follow a similar logic, namely logic of clustering. If you spend a day walking around the city you will see that in one block they sell power-tools, in the next block they sell building material, and so on. There are areas where the concentration of bars are relatively high, namely Julu Lu – 巨鹿路 –, Maoming Nan Lu – 茂名南路, et al. see appendix 1. In these districts, the bars are located next to each other.

Why then are the gay-bars breaking this logic? It should be said that there certainly are bars located outside of these bar districts, however, my argument here is that seeing that there are quite a few gay-bars in Shanghai, one could think that they would try to locate in one or maybe two districts, or at least have a higher degree of concentration. However, in some cases, as with Home & Bar, it is located near other bars/clubs; it is about a two minutes walk to Park 97⁴⁰. Moreover, most of the bars⁴¹ are located in the area known as the French Concession, which means that they are located near other bars, even though they are not directly placed in a bar area like Julu Lu and Maoming Nan Lu.

It feels like there is a willingness to hide, which manifests itself in other ways as well. Is it a conscious decision to lock oneself in the *closet* and thereby not being forced to deal with the rest of society? If one compares it to gay-bars in western cities, for example Berlin, Toronto, etc., there the gay-bars tend to cluster. This could be seen in the terms that the western gay-communities choose to create a space for themselves where the focus is manifest their presence and thus creating security through both mass and visibility, rather than trying to blend into the society without creating any racket thus creating

security through invisibility (cp. Rushbrook 2002: 195), which adds the closetness of the gay-bars in Shanghai.

3.1.1. In the social context

Chou Wah-shan does not really go deep into the phenomenon of gay-bars in China, in his book 'Tongzhi: politics of same-sex eroticism in Chinese societies', however, under the title "Commercial Absorption of the Political" (Chou 2000: 128) he devotes about a page on the topic of gay-bars under a Chinese context; still I feel that it is important to discuss his views on the topic.

Chou points out that most of these bars do not have a Chinese name, or more correctly, the Chinese name is not on the sign outside of the bar, in most cases it is only the English name. Chou interprets this, as one factor⁴², as the gay-bars are excluding themselves from the rest of the society by denying their cultural heritage (see Chou 2000: 130f; 303); however, yet again most of the 'hip' bars in Shanghai, like Windows, Blue Frog, Face, Cotton Club, etc., also shares this phenomenon. In addition, this, I argue, fits into the bigger picture, namely that the bars closet themselves by excluding parts of the society, and not so much the cultural heritage.

Moreover, his observation about the gay-bars in Beijing seems to be similar to Shanghai, though, they do not really fit into the Shanghainese context.

It is a specific time (night), a specific language (English – Mandarin mixed codes), a specific racial combination (a high ratio of Caucasian clientele), a specific class (middle-class and freelance workers and artists), specific music (Westernized, trendy music and MTV), specific drinks (Western drinks and beer), specific dress (casual wear and trendy Western attire), specific gender (predominantly male), and a specific topic (sexuality) (Chou 2000: 130).

The gay-bar scene in Shanghai, as I said, could be described in a similar manner, however, I argue that in Shanghai, depending on which bar you go into, there is not 'a high ratio of Caucasian clientele', there is not even a high ratio of Western clientele, which by the way includes more people. By estimation, when comparing the gay-bars in Shanghai to other 'trendy' bars, on for example Maoming Nan Lu, the ratio of the Western clientele is a third or even less. The bars have a language that is a mix between English and Mandarin; however, this mix varies quite much between the different bars. Fore example, during my observations at KM Bar, Hunter Bar and Saladan Eighty Percent the amount of English being spoken was quite limited, therefore, it was hard for me to speak with both the

clientele and the staff. Then again, at places as Eddy's Bar and Home & Bar, it is definitely easier to get by on just English.

Chou's conclusion of the specific trend that he described in the excerpt above is that:

[m]any mainland Chinese see *tongxinglian* as a product of modern capitalism in which a new generation of young people has been corrupted by Western decadence [...]. "Gay" becomes a symbol of Western bourgeois urban sexual adventure [...]. [...] [T]hese bars and discos become cultural and class markers that differentiate themselves not only from the general population, but also a certain class of PEPS^[43] – urban, middle class, English speaking, trendy, young – from the majority of PEPS. These venues serve as a "qualifier" for being *gay* and *tongzhi* (Chou 2000: 130f).

First of, this is not a isolated trend in the gay community, Chou's description of the gay-bars in Beijing could just as well been a description of any bar on Maoming Nan Lu or elsewhere in Shanghai, if one just excluded the gender argument. Therefore, heterosexual behaviors outside of the societal norm, in accordance with the behaviors in the gay-bars, are equally seen as Western decadence. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, during the communist era 'sexual wildness' was seen as a Western import, and I argue that that way of thinking still lingers in the Shanghainese society, at least in the older generations (cp. Hinsch 1992: 170). As Deng Xiaoping stated, "[w]hen you open the door, a few flies are bound to enter"⁴⁴ (quoted in Farrer 2002: 26).

I think that it is clear that Chou really do not like the gay-bar trend, because why else would he pose them as the 'qualifier' for being *gay* or *tóngzhì*. Either Shanghai is inherently different from Beijing, meaning that the variety in Shanghai is larger, or the last four to five years, after Chou made his study, has brought the scene so much further. Either way, the variety in Shanghai stretches from, what Chou calls, *urban, middle class, English speaking, trendy, young* that like to hang-out in a 'Western' environment to, places where nothing but three of the nine criteria's fit – see the first excerpt, namely time, gender and topic. I will further discuss the composition of the bars and the clientele below.

3.1.1.1. The Closet and the Political

[T]he political significance of the problem of sex is due to the fact that sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population (Foucault 2002a: 125).

Is it possible to see the phenomenon of gay-bars in Shanghai as something political? Maybe the bars in themselves are not political, however, in the Shanghainese context their existence should, I argue, be seen as something political. All the different phenomena⁴⁵ that gather people with same-sex desires in some sort of organized way should be considered political in Shanghai; or as Robert Geyer puts it, “where same-sex relationships can germinate” (Geyer 2002: 268); it is important to recognize them in this light. Chou is not a supporter of *confrontational politics* and the discourse of *coming out*⁴⁶, neither does he consider the *closet* as an accurate way of viewing the same-sex status in the Chinese context.

The dangers of segregational identity politics is that it suspends the social, as if all PEPS shared an essential core of *gayness* irrespective of and uninfluenced by gender, culture, class, and the social context (Chou 2000: 283).

First off, if you put any of the three other categories – culture, class, gender – in sexualities (gayness) place this would be equally true, in addition, ethnicity, I argue, should also be included here as a category. This problem is not a new problem, and not something exclusive for sexual identity politics. Just as the class struggle’s problem with incorporating gender, culture, sexuality, ethnicity; and the women’s movement problems with including culture, class, sexuality, ethnicity; the problem also is evident when it comes to sexual identity politics. Does this mean that one should exclude identity politics because of this?

I argue that Chou does not acknowledge the different abstractions in the use of identity politics, meaning that he always ends up in an individualized discussion when it comes to identity politics. One must differentiate between what Marx called ‘class in itself and class for itself’. The identity politics serves as the creator of the ‘class for itself’, i.e. a collective awareness of one’s situation, which in this case is based on sexuality. This already exists for the concept of heterosexuality – represented by heteronormativity, and this is exactly why there is a need for a ‘*sexuality for itself*’ when it comes to ‘homosexuality’, because it is the heteronormativity that creates and maintains what Sedgwick refers to as *the closet*.

The development of a discrete *gay* culture is double-edged – it is empowering to *gay*-identified people, but simultaneously it may provoke a homo – hetero duality and homophobic consciousness that has never been prevailed in China (Chou 2000: 131).

Chou's referral to 'the development of a discrete gay culture' should be understood as that the community has not *come out* – in the sense of having defined itself in any substantial way towards the rest of society – yet. Hence, in lack of other concepts describing this situation, *the closet* seems to capture the state of the community.

The provocation, which Chou refers to, is very interesting and needs to be further discussed. Can one person provoke another person, individually or collectively, into developing an attitude that does not already exist, latently or not, in that person? I argue that that is not possible. In order to be provoked one must have an opinion about the subject or at least an opinion about what is considered to be, in this case sexuality, within the frame of normality, otherwise there would be no cause for the provocation. Therefore, to say that homo – hetero duality and the homophobic consciousness never prevailed in China should, in the context, be seen as a contradiction. The homo – hetero duality and homophobia, like *the closet*, are the creations of heteronormativity; “[b]eing in the closet is not simply a choice one makes, since heteronormativity continually pushes gays toward the closet” (Chambers 2003: 36). In this context, it should be seen as using the *don't ask, don't tell* strategy in order to keep the closet tightly concealed; or as Foucault writes in the first volume of *History of sexuality*:

to ensure that one did not speak of sex, merely through the interplay of prohibitions that referred back to one another: in stances of muteness which, by dint of saying nothing, imposed silence (Foucault 1990: 17).

3.1.1.2. Magazine bar guides

Most cities nowadays has some sort of a magazine(s) that keeps people updated with what is going on in the city – arts, music, restaurants, bars & clubs, etc.; Shanghai is no exception. There are a number of these kinds of magazines, *That's Shanghai*, *Shanghai Talk*, *City Weekend*⁴⁷, to name a few⁴⁸. The bar listings in *That's Shanghai* also contain short descriptions of the characteristics of the bar, contrary to the other two magazines mentioned above. The excerpt below is taken from the *That's Shanghai* magazines bar listings.

(1) Take a dip into the downstairs Dream Star, a hot and steamy bar/pool for those who swim in underground circles. [...] (2) Squeeze yourself into a herd of pulsating males camping it up to uplifting tunes. Tight white t-shirt optional. [...] (3) Draws a friendly group of guys camped at the bar. The few girls who do drop by usually cluster in the corner (That's Shanghai April 2004).

The excerpt contains descriptions of three bars in the downtown area; the common denominator is that they all are gay-bars; the bars names are (1) Dream Star, (2) Home & Bar, and (3) Eddy's Bar. What is interesting here I think is the way that the descriptions, without mentioning it directly, informs the reader that it in fact is gay-bars that are being described here.

I will start with discussing these descriptions, how one can view them in the context, also how the text and picture, in the case that there is a picture connected to the text, supplement and strengthen each other.

(1) Dream Star

Dream Star is not only featured in the bar guide, it is also featured in the *What's New Bars & Clubs* section of the April issue of *That's Shanghai*. "If you love the jockstrap snap of the locker room rapport, enter the steamy confines of the Dream Star bar for a hot wet surprise" (p. 63). Below this text, you can see a picture. The picture in itself is interesting, and I will come back to that later; however, let us start with the context the picture was taken from. Dream Star together with five other bars/clubs was introduced in the April issue of *That's Shanghai*, see in appendix 2. The introduction consisted of a text and a picture connected to the text. If we look closer at the pictures of the different bars/clubs, we see that they differ in the composition; however, there is a pattern that can be found in five of the six pictures, namely, what I would call diversity and motion. With the exception of the picture taken at Dream Star, all of the other pictures have a larger diversity of colors, objects, perspective, and motion, which singles out Dream Star.

The picture representing Dream Star, in the article, should be seen as a portrait focuses on the male in the foreground, see the picture to the right; he is glancing at something that is happening outside of the cameras range that craves his attention. The nonchalant facial expression could be interpreted as shyness. Both these signs can be decoded as there is something that cannot be shown, something that can be seen as 'provocative'.



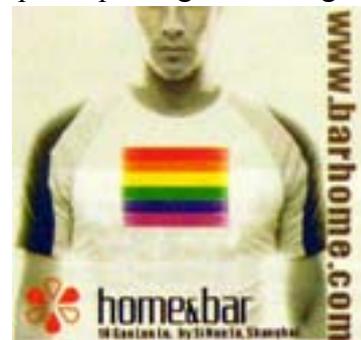
There are a lot of signs in the picture that can be interpreted as queer, such as for example the poster of the muscular male in bathing-trunks, and the lip-gloss and the

earrings on the male in the foreground. All these signs create the sense of the outsider, the one that does not fit into the rest of society.

The signs from the picture corresponds with the text, and the two different expressions enhance each other. The sentence “[i]f you love the jockstrap snap of the locker room rapport” and “those who swim in underground circles”, becomes very clear when combined with the picture. The background of the picture resembles a locker room; however, the poster in the top left corner gives of the impression that this should have been a female locker room, still by having a male in the picture leaves little room for misinterpretation. If there still are doubts about this interpretation then the ending sentence, in the *What’s new...* article, probably will erase them; “[c]ome to Dream Star for a dip in the pool and experience all your bathhouse fantasies” (p. 63). “As is now common knowledge, bathhouse in the U.S. [and the Western World] have functioned as spaces for men to engage in same-sex activities” (Tattelman 2000: 222), therefore the referral to the bathhouse fantasies could, I argue, be deconstructed as gay fantasies.

(2) Home & Bar

‘Squeeze yourself into a herd of pulsating males camping it up to uplifting tunes. Tight white t-shirt optional’ is the description of Home & Bar in *That’s Shanghai*, however, below the description there is an advertisement for the bar, see the picture to the right, in which the rainbow flag is the center of attention, which makes it quite clear what kind of bar it is; I argue that the advertisement in itself is quite bald. The man in the advertisement is anonymous to us in a similar way that people are anonymized on television – by not showing their eyes, which under these circumstances could be a way of sending a message of discretion. By using the rainbow flag I assume that it is not a well known LesBiGay symbol in the Chinese context, and therefore have the power to both attract the target group and not having any significant meaning to the people outside of this group.



Similar to the description of Eddy’s Bar, the magazine uses the word *camp* to describe the population in the two bars, and it is only used in these two bar descriptions⁴⁹, which makes it seem as that the word in itself has a particular meaning.

Camp is a problematic concept; Susan Sontag defines camp, in her influential essay *Notes on Camp* (1964), as such:

[n]ot only is there a Camp vision, a Camp way of looking at things. Camp is as well a quality discoverable in objects and the behavior of persons. There are "campy" movies, clothes, furniture, popular songs, novels, people, buildings. . . . This distinction is important. True, the Camp eye has the power to transform experience. But not everything can be seen as Camp. It's not *all* in the eye of the beholder (Sontag 1964).

Mark Booth definition on the concept of camp differs from Sontag's:

to be camp is to present oneself as being committed to the marginal with a commitment greater than the marginal merits (quoted in Ross 1989: 146).

He argues that camp "belongs to the history of the 'self-presentation' of arriviste groups" (Ross 1989: 146). Thus, using it as a parody, or as Booth himself writes, "a self-mocking abdication of any pretensions to power" (quoted in Ross 1989: 146); hence, camp can be used as an empowerment strategy.

The connection to homosexuality is visible in both definitions, though camp does not equal homosexuality⁵⁰. As Richard C. Cante puts it, "[f]or gay men, camp, along with the performativity^[51] that produces it, is nothing less than a technique for (social and/or physical) survival (Cante 2000: 146f). Therefore, camp is, contrary to what Susan Sontag wrote in *Notes on Camp*⁵², a political struggle where the naturalness of the gender roles is being questioned (cp. Ross 1989: 161).

The referral to camp in the magazine – 'camping it up' and 'camped at the bar' – shows, with this knowledge, that there was a specific intention behind the usage without creating a definite and clear connection between homosexuality and the bars.

(3) Eddy's Bar

Eddy's Bar is the one that 'draws a friendly group of guys camped at the bar' does not have any picture featured in the magazine. As I argued above, with the usage of the word *camp*, it is clear that the writer wants to imply that it is a gay-bar, by ending the description with "[t]he few girls who drop by usually cluster in the corner" reaffirms what is meant to be implied, however, this is not necessarily true. Eddy's Bar indeed has relatively large amount female costumers, even though not nearly as many as the male costumers, and it is also considered a lesbian bar. Nevertheless, in such a short description, this would confuse the message that the author wanted to send.

These descriptions are targeted against people that speak English rather than the ones that have Chinese as their mother tongue; however, *That's Shanghai* has a high rate of

Shanghai readers (cp. Vaide 2003: 11f). Therefore, these descriptions, even though they do not originate from the community itself, are a part of the opening up process; there are actions taken here that, as Chou pointed out, can create a (re)surfacing of a homophobic consciousness, i.e. provoke actions against these actions (cp. Foucault 2002a: 340). Contrary to other practices, these actions are aimed outwards to the ‘general’ public rather than inwards as so many other actions. Nevertheless, this should still be considered a secure course of action, because most of the Chinese people that know English well enough to read *That’s Shanghai* often are well educated, which in itself does not guarantee that they have a more positive attitude towards the gay-community; however, it probably indicates that they are more aware about the situation in the Western countries.

3.1.2. Decor

The apparently international ubiquity of queer space exemplifies the expression of identity under capitalism, though there is no evidence for the common claim that queer culture is more commercial than other forms of identity (Reed 1996).

As any stage, the decor plays an important role; irrespective of, if there were any specific idea behind the decor or not. The importance here is how the different bars want to present themselves, which I think is where the decor plays a vital part, moreover, “architecture has the ability to create ‘the space – the stage – where human subjectivity is enacted and preformed’” (Tattelman 2000: 223). Therefore, “[s]tatus is embedded in the spatial arrangements, so that changing space potentially changes the status hierarchy and changing status potentially changes spatial institutions” (Spain 1992: 233). It can be a process of interaction between the subjects and the space, as for example when a regular bar or restaurant is taken over by gay people and thus ‘queering the mainstream’. Nevertheless, as Foucault describes it, “[t]he spatialising decription of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power” (Foucault 1980: 70f).

Queer space is a concept that is highly controversial, by many theorists. For example George Chauncey argue that “[t]here is no queer space; there are only spaces used by queers or put to queer use” (Chauncey 1996: 224). Queerness, thus, is rather seen as a strategy and that it lies in the eye of the (queer) beholder (cp. Reed 1996); however, this does not mean that it cannot be a part of design and architecture. What then is ‘Queer space’? Ira Tattelman defines it as something that:

involves the construction of a parallel world, one filled with possibility and pleasure, while functioning simultaneously as an intervention in the world of the dominant culture, [...] queer space provides an alternative means of worldly inhabitation, makes visible the already-in-place hierarchies, and embraces the reciprocity of space and sexual identity. In its space of opportunity, we are free to construct ourselves in flexible, unspecified, and unpredictable ways (Tattelman 2000: 223f).

Queer space is not the same as a sex space, a sex club does not necessarily contain queer space; however, I concur with Christopher Reed in the notion that “no space is totally queer or completely unqueerable, but some spaces are queerer than others” (Reed 1996). I tried to apply the ideas of queer space on the different gay-bars in Shanghai to see how it could help in the analysis of the decor; I also used a more general understanding of the usage of space and design.

The idea here is not to make a semiological analysis of (urban) space as such, that is a too extensive and complicated task; as Roland Barthes puts it, “to sketch a semiotics of the city [one] must be at once a semiologist (a specialist in signs), a geographer, an historian, an urbanist, an architect, and probably a psychoanalyst” (Barthes 1994: 191), which I am not.

3.1.2.1. Exterior decor

When approaching one of these bars it is often hard to be certain if it in fact is a gay-bar,



and in some cases it can be difficult to be certain if there is a bar at all. For example, Home & Bar’s exterior, see the picture to the left, could have been any type of bar judging from the exterior; there is nothing that indicates that this indeed is a gay-bar. As was discussed above in connection

with their advertisement about the usage of the rainbow flag; if this symbol indeed did not have any symbolic meaning outside the community, then it would not be any problem to use it as a part of the sign. In comparison with the advertisement in *That’s Shanghai*, it strikes as quite vapid. Similar to Gianni and Weir study of the American suburbs one can here argue that there is an invisible queerness; “‘difference is accommodated as long as it is kept out of sight’” (quoted in Reed 1996), the design is “‘breaching the social contract of community consensus’” (Ibid.); a way for the bar to come off as ‘straight’. This is not queer in itself; however, it can be related to the concept of the closet (cp. Reed 1996). By making the exterior look ‘straight’ in the same manner as the other ‘Western-like’ bars

look they never have to be confronted by the question if it is a gay-bar, because queer space, if expressed clearly enough, can be subjected to homophobic attacks, for the notion of queerness is threatening (cp. Reed 1996).

This is something that not is unique for Home & Bar, quite the contrary; most bars look anonymous (uninviting) from the street (with an exception of Eddy's Bar [see picture to the left], which also stands out in other aspects), if one is able to see them at all. For example, Hunter Bar and Dream Star are hard to spot from the street. The picture below is taken outside of Hunter Bar, which is located inside the courtyard beyond the green gate. I have marked the different signs of the bar with arrows; there is a neon sign with a deer head and the name of the bar, Hunter Bar in Chinese (猎人), in the top left corner of the picture and a sign on the wall in both Chinese and English, on the right side of the picture. As one can see there are also many things that take away the attention from these signs; hence, one must know what to look for, it is by knowledge that one finds the place not by chance. This can quite possibly be an intention; instead of making oneself look 'straight', i.e. making people aware of one's existence but still hiding large parts of one's identity by appearing 'normal', they have tried to disappear, thus, wanting to be unnoticed (cp. Tattelman 2000: 234).



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Why is there a need to be unnoticed (look 'straight'), to disappear? The easiest answer is that they know that what they are doing is considered wrong; hence, what is not seen does not exist. By using this strategy the community avoid that actions are taken upon their actions, consequently, they only have to deal with actions that are taken upon their future actions and not the their present actions, at least in with this phenomenon (cp. Foucault 2002a: 340).

On the other hand, it could be viewed as a strategy as well. Creating an own way of being seen in public, which for an untrained eye 'looks like' not being seen. As Joel Sanders argue "[c]onstantly subject to the threat of public (and even private) surveillance, gay men have invented strategies for remaining invisible to the public at large while at the same time, and in the same spaces, becoming visible or readily identifiable to one another" (Sanders 1996: 23).

3.1.2.2. Interior decor

If the exterior decor, at the different bars, represents similarity, the interior decor represents diversity. Most of the bars have features that can be found in another bar, namely having a bar that serves drinks, etc. to the costumers; but if we exclude the commercial purpose there is no main thread that connects them all. These connections sort of go hand in hand with the atmosphere, that is going to be discussed below. However, this does not mean that they are uninteresting.

When you open the door to Eddy's Bar you are greeted by either Eddy himself or one of his staff into the red light atmosphere of the bar. The staff is dressed in traditional clothing in black and red, which blends in with the pleasant yet strict design that mixes dark concrete colored walls with traditional Chinese woodcarvings accompanied by soft world music coming out of the speakers. The interior follows the postmodern logic by mixing the old with the new, the hard forms with the soft forms, the Chinese with the non-Chinese.

This space is a queer space in different ways, first of the dimmed red light creates a sexual atmosphere – see picture to the left – or as Michael – Eddy's boyfriend – put it



“everyone looks better in the gleam of the red light”. Secondly, the openness in the room makes it easy for the costumers to ‘check-out’ all the other costumers – the bar staff as well – in hopes to find someone special. Similar to this, overlooking the dance floor at Home &

Bar there is an elevated row of red bench couches with a clear view of what is happening on the dance floor, and behind these couches the wall is covered with mirrors, where one can catch a glimpse of oneself when dancing. These areas of narcissism and (sub)objectification (Tattelman 2000: 245); breaks down the “architecture that makes possible a mind-over-mind-type of power” (Foucault 2002: 58). Through this spectatorship “one identifies and desires what one sees, as one in turn is being seen by others” (Tattelman 2000: 248), creating the power of the gaze⁵³. Holding the “obvious metaphors of knocking down barriers and opening up closets [that] are clearly relevant to queer identity” (Reed 1996); thus replacing the individual closet with the outer perimeter of the bar that becomes the temporary closet.

Some bars are hard to differentiate from any local bar, meaning there is no specific signifier that informs the costumer of that it is a gay-bar – as with K.M. Bar, Saladan Eighty Percent and Hunter Bar. Such a decor supports the clientele in a way that they do

not have to deal with the complicated questions about identity that could arise. This creation can be seen as a queer ‘pocket’, a space where needs can be met without questioning, in a sense it correlates more with places as People’s Square/Park and the Bund⁵⁴ because it appears as following the societal norms and values, however, hidden in the shadows, metaphorically speaking, is the sexual shame. As Michael Warner puts it, “[t]here is a catch-22 of sexual shame: you don’t think of yourself as repressed until after you’ve made a break with repression” (Warner 2000: 8). Without being forced to break with the repression from heteronormativity, there is no need to deal with the repression aimed at one’s identity. Therefore, these places can in this context be seen as the one’s that facilitate the maintenance of this catch-22, more than the other gay-bars. These bars can be seen as an act to “minimize the implications of the experiences by making them easy to isolate from the rest of their lives and identity” (Chauncey 1996: 253).

The nakedness or rawness in the interior decor at Dream Star makes the space unwritten. Here, more than the other places, the possibilities are more or less endless; the swimming pool and the gym that are at the disposal for the clientele creates, what I mentioned in the discussion of Dream Star above, the clandestine feeling that bathhouse possessed prior in the West (cp. Tattelman 2000: 222). This nakedness and rawness transforms into sexuality, where the body is at the center stage, offering both planned and unplanned events. The space represents the clearest materialization of queer space, among the gay-bars in Shanghai, because the possibilities of the performance of differences (cp. Tattelman 2000: 253ff).

3.1.3. Atmosphere

There are many different *closets*; coming out is not a definite state of indefinite being. One can come out and go back into the closet; also one can come out in one context and still be closeted in another context; as Sedgwick puts it, “there are remarkably few of even the most openly gay people who are not deliberately in the closet with someone personally or economically or institutionally important to them” (Sedgwick 1990: 68f). This is quite evident in the Shanghainese society. By viewing the closet as contextually dependent the usage becomes clearer for both the community and the individuals.

The atmosphere reflects the closet in many different ways; in some of the bars the atmosphere reflects the lack of the closet – or maybe the contrast of the lack of closet in those places with the rest of society – while in other places the closet is a part of the

atmosphere. For example, Eddy's Bar and Vogue in Kevin's, Home & Bar and Dream Star, have an open atmosphere that encourage the costumers to 'be themselves', in a sense they become a sanctuary where one does not have to hide or be ashamed, however, this differs quite a lot between these places; still the common denominator is the feeling of security and openness.

The bars, generally, are places where people 'hang-out', meet people and have fun; the idea of building a community through them are not a commonly put fourth; however, in some of these bars there are some idea of creating social awareness. Eddy's Bar stands out when it comes to trying to create social awareness. The picture to the right is a flyer from the special event at Eddy's Bar in May, 2004, which centered on AIDS; even though the focus was on AIDS and related problems, from my perspective, in this context, the creation of a sense of physical community is maybe even more crucial (cp. Seidman 1996: 10). This sense of community will provide a source for both comfort, which probably will serve as a foundation when the community outs itself to the rest of society. Moreover, Kevin's organizes many different arrangements for their clientele, for example volleyball tournaments and the like. These events are not especially political in a traditional meaning, however, the help to build a community feeling.



The difference between particularly Eddy's Bar and Vogue in Kevin's and the other bars are that Eddy's and Kevin's and their clientele, I argue, is more, with lack of a better word, 'understanding' of the attitudes of the rest of society, meaning that they see the gay identity according to the 'minority model'⁵⁵ (cp. Jagose 1996: 59), and maybe more importantly there is an opening for the political. Here sexuality becomes both political and personal; the blend that is understood as sophistication and maturity in the Western movement (cp Warner 2000: 41ff). However, this also demands that the sexual has to be toned down, or as Warner puts it "the first thing that has to go is sex" (Warner 2000: 42), in order to create an atmosphere that can blend into the rest of society, i.e. normalizing homosexuality; the atmosphere that aspires to mediate, when the 'time is right', with the dominant culture. I was talking to a couple of my younger interviewees, ranging from 21 – 24, their comments on Eddy's and Kevin's showed what I would describe as this maturity and sophistication. Their descriptions of the places always contained words as being 'too slow', 'too old', 'too reserved' in connection to sexuality, and sometimes even 'too

snobbish'; they all were regular visitors of Home & Bar, which was more or less the only place they went to (cp. Cante 2000: 138f).

This represents a big difference when compared with the other bars. At Home & Bar and Dream Star sexuality plays a vital and visible role, which I argue serves as a form of escapism. Here sexuality is seen as more personal than political; in addition, the person becomes the manifestation of sexuality. The atmosphere at these places I think is best captured by using Erving Goffman's concept of stigmaphile.

Goffman places both the stigmaphile and the stigmaphobe outside of the stigmatized community, "a cult of the stigmatized can occur, the stigmaphobic response of the normal being countered by the stigmaphile response of the wise (Goffman 1990: 44). The response of the *wise*, as I interpret it, comes from what Goffman calls "[p]ersons with a courtesy stigma" whom provides "a model of 'normalization'" (ibid.). Here in lies an important differentiation between normalization and normification where the later is according to Goffman "the effort on the part of a stigmatized individual to present himself as an ordinary person, although not necessarily making a secret of his failing" (Ibid.), while normalization is "how far normals could go in treating the stigmatized person as if he didn't have a stigma" (Ibid.). When I use these concepts I place them inside the community; thus, to understand the concept of stigmaphile and stigmaphobe one has to understand the connection to normalization. When talking about the stigmaphile atmosphere, a subject created atmosphere that is testing the boundaries, but never trying to present itself as ordinary and thus covering-up its failings. Contrary, the concept of stigmaphobe atmosphere, a subject created atmosphere that is not testing boundaries, but trying to present itself as ordinary and thus feeling (metaphorically) the weight of the failings.

At the other three places – Hunter Bar, KM Bar, and Saladan Eighty Percent – sexuality also play a vital role. The visibility of the sexual is quite different from the previous two, meaning that the manifestation of sexuality is evident, even though people are more reserved and distancing; what I would call a stigmaphobe atmosphere.

3.2. The actors

The actors that inhabit these stages are predominantly male and Asian, even though other people also visit these establishments in varying degrees depending on which bar one visit. This essay concentrates on the bars, the clientele and the activities that take place there;

however, I still feel that it is necessary to reflect upon the differences between the actors behavior off and on the stage, which is evident. This is connected with the concepts I discussed in the previous chapter, namely face, private and privacy. These factors do not merely affect the behavior off stage; they also affect the behavior on stage. I am going to start with discussing with looking at the off stage behavior, which is followed by a discussion on the on stage behavior and for that matter also the interaction that takes place there.

Another important aspect is the representation of both of the stage and of the rest of society. When forming an identity representation shapes this identity, in accordance with many of the so-called postmodern theorists I argue that 'reality' as some sort of 'naked truth' does not exist, instead this is created by our personal and collective representation. Moreover, when two cultures meet this representation can become a problem, therefore it is interesting to see how this affects the community when it takes in other cultures and extends itself into other cultures. Therefore I am going to discuss how non-Asians (foreigners) are represented is shaped. Furthermore, the representation of one's own situation can affect the representation of what I mentioned above; therefore, it is important not to foresee this question.

3.2.1. Off stage behavior

I meet some of my interviewees outside of the stage during the daytime at a Starbucks or some similar places, the location was there request, it might be because they felt more secure in this environment or maybe they thought that I would feel more 'at home' there or that it would be easier for me to find, however, which ever way it is I am not going to analyze this further.

Above, 2.4.1., I talked about how gay people, although being part of a physical culture, they found it hard to show affection in public, as most of the interviewees told me – 'they would know'. During one of my meetings over a coupe of coffee at Starbucks I asked Chang what exactly it was that 'gave them away'. 'Pierced ears are considered to be a gay feature here', he told me; moreover, 'it's more the way that we touch each other that gives us away'. The conclusion that most of the gay people and all of my interviewees drew was that it is better not to tempt faith and therefore they withheld from showing affection in public. Although I could not tell the difference in their behavior from other homosocial behavior that took place in public, I assumed that it was as they told me. Nevertheless, by

accepting this they internalize the restriction of this convention. This is a reoccurring feature in the community; the acceptance of these conventions restrict the communities actions, which contributes to what the professor at Fudan University told me that one can not see if someone is gay; which in turn could be seen as a lack of confrontational strategies.

After one of my meeting downtown, the interviewee, Eric, and I took the bus back home, we both lived along the way of same bus route. While standing on the crowded bus I used the time to practice my mandarin, I asked Eric if *tóngzhì* could be translated as *queer*? He started to laugh and explained that my pronunciation was really terrible; so I asked, how then should it be pronounced? Eric hesitated and said that it was not suitable to practice that kind of vocabulary on the bus; ‘they would know what we are talking about if I said that word’ he replied while looking around the bus. Even though we both were strangers to everyone onboard the bus, Eric still hesitated to even mention the word; was this a fear of losing face or maybe a fear of making the passengers on the bus lose face. Albeit Chou argues that the historical use of the word *tóngzhì* gave it a positive cultural reference, however, Eric did not trust this positive cultural reference, which could mean that the positive reference has been rewritten or that he considered mentioning the word to an insubordination that could lead to a rewriting of the of the reference (cp. Butler 1999: 171ff).

Generally amongst those in the scene I had contact with was that they seldom had any form of long term sexual relationship, only one of the interviewees, Mike, had an long term relationship, he was living with his boyfriend. I have briefly touched on the subject of internalized heteronormativity in the gay scene in Shanghai; here I will go deeper into this discussion because there seems to be a link between these two phenomenons.

When outside the scene I got the feeling that the actors constantly obliging themselves to perform a role in accordance with heteronormativity, thereby denying the gay identity to act out, which also can be connected to the way the power relations work; most people in the scene are deep in the closet. This, I argue, can create a self-marginalization where marginalization can become an identity in itself (cp. Kirsch 2000: 92), which generates a milieu where more long-term sexual relationships seem hard to achieve. When asking the interviewees if short-term sexual relationships were preferred to long term more or less everyone disagreed. I detected a romanticized picture of relationships in there answers, however, there explanation to why there where such a lack of long-term sexual relationships lead the contradictory answer that ‘no one is interested in having one’. I

argue that this behavior can be seen as a product of the marginalization that I mentioned above; that in turn can be seen as created by viewing themselves thru heteronormativity.

Moreover, one of my Western friends, Russell, in China engaged in a relationship with an Asian guy, Vic, during our stay. Vic is from the Philippines, however, before he moved to China he had not come out, so his ‘reality’ of being gay did not differ that much from the Chinese born people in the community. When Russell and I talked about their relationship he complained that it was hard to get under Vic’s skin, so to speak, there was too little substance in their relationship he argued; when he brought up this issue with Vic, Russell soon realized that this was not something that was unique for their relationship, Vic’s relationship with his friends shared the same characteristics.

After hearing the story I started to ask my interviewees how they would describe their relationships with friends and lovers, what kind of knowledge did they share and what was left out?

One of my interviewees, Ted, answer when I asked this question was that ‘I knew sides of him that his friends and lovers didn’t; the personal discussions never really seem to come up.’ He told me ‘there is a tendency that points towards more casual sex and one-night-stands, a more carefree living’. This can be described as a way of endorsing superficiality, which is connected to the stigmaphobic atmosphere, as strategy in order to not break with the moral values surrounding the family institution (cp. Seidman 1996: 20). Nevertheless, to stop this trend the individuals as well as the community has to allow themselves to be both seen and heard, however, this would probably, to use Chou’s words “provoke a homo – hetero duality and homophobic consciousness” (Chou 2000: 131). Even so, without these actions the preference-ization of homosexuality might continue to haunt the community.

3.2.2. On stage behavior

Contrary to off stage, when people are on stage they can be very open, it seems as they act out what they normally cannot do, namely act upon the stereotypes; however, this all depends on at which stage they are.

There are certain stages where the individual actor’s seem to have accepted the heteronormativity in the society. The concept stigmaphobe, as mentioned above, describes the behavior at these bars. The clientele often sit by themselves and glancing around the room, or occasionally there are pairs sitting and quietly chatting at the tables. The time

that the people spend at these places were rather short compared to the other gay-bars. However, it was at these places that I had a difficult time trying to communicate with the clientele, which could imply that I have misinterpreted their behavior. Nevertheless, these bars do not seem to offer the sanctuary of taking over the individual closet. The difference to the more public stages, for example People's Park/Square or The Bund, could be viewed according to Chauncey's description of the gay scene in New York in the 1920s, "[t]he purchase of a beer at a bar legitimized behavior involved in cruising that might have appeared more suspicious on the street" (Chauncey 1996: 246).

While keeping this in mind, when walking in to Eddy's or Kevin's is like entering a different kind of play. The sense of maturity that I mentioned above is quite evident; here people socialize, meaning that they sit in groups and pairs chatting in a relaxed and comfortable manner; the decor, which I discussed above, seems to assist this behavior. Moreover, this behavior also tones down the direct impact of the sexual; it is there, however, it is not something that is put on display. In addition there are not so much the tendency to act on the stereotypes at these two places – for that matter that is also true at the places that I categorized as stigmaphobe, however, this is based on completely different reasons – which I argue is connected to the downplay of the sexual. This downplay is not so much connected to a denial of the queer identity, it is rather a way of displaying maturity (cp. Warner 2000: 42). Here the 'political' reinforces the sense of maturity that enables the actors to not see oneself as a deviant.

The playful acting on stereotypes, however, is something that can categorize what I described as the stigmaphile bars; consequentially the sexual here is on display. I see this sexual presence as a reaction against the heteronormativity that the society is built upon. Even though the 'political' is far from evident amongst the actors on this stage, the embracement of the stereotypes has a similar function to politicization, it reinforces the positive identity amongst the actors. As Michael Warner writes when he discusses the positive values that can come out of absence of ethics "[i]n these scenes people try to imagine living without the sacrifices that dignity by 'community standards' commonly entails" (Warner 2000: 34), which I see as the essence of what I call stigmaphile behavior.

3.2.3. Representation

There is a lot written about queer representation, however, this is mostly in connection to how queer communities and individuals in these communities are represented in movies,

fiction, theater and other public places⁵⁶. I am reversing this view by asking the question how the society, which by the way includes their own community, is represented inside the queer community. To understand why phenomena as heterosexual marriage is not seen as unnatural inside the community and how the non-Asian people, who also exist on these stages, are viewed. Because, few people in the scene see these contradictions as unnatural, they are too familiar with their situation; moreover, I argue that they have developed a sense of security with their situation.

Most of the people that I spoke to had a complicated representation of China; on one hand China represented the motherland – which they are immensely proud of, or to an *oriental* view of China – that China is outside of time, the place that does not change, the place of intolerance that almost seemed claustrophobic. Quite naturally there is a wish for changes; however, such change, even though not utopian, is seen as impossible in the Chinese context. There is obsequiousness towards the societal norms and values, which is connected to this lack of future prospects, however, I noticed a certain difference when it came to the age of the people I talked to, the ones born in the 1980s tended to be more positive about the future. Even though their vision still did not predict any revolutionary change; however, few of the people that I spoke to saw it as plausible that they would get the chance to move away from China.

During these conversations, about moving away from China, I detected what I categorize as a contradictory relationship between physical and representational proximity, which are concepts that I have borrowed from John Tomlinson. Proximity means here time-space compression, meaning that globalization and technical inventions – television, air travel, internet, etc. – have shortened the distance between places; basically created a shrinking world. Tomlinson divides this concept into physical – for example, air travel – and representational – for example, television, and internet – proximity (Tomlinson 1999: 3). Nowadays representational proximity is available more or less to everyone in Shanghai – not merely through television and internet, also through non-Asians visiting or living (expatriate) in Shanghai; however, few people are in the position to enjoy physical proximity – due to either political or financial reasons. Therefore, this contradictory relationship, I argue, creates a sense of claustrophobia were the individual can see the different possibilities that they cannot take part in. This can explain the *oriental* representation of China that most of the people I talked to had. Following this logic, the idea of the new and also consumption becomes quite naturally the desirable, what the

people strive for because it represents freedom of choice, everything that ‘old’ China did not represent (cp. Farrer 2002: 16).

When race and ethnicity becomes commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, gender, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other (hooks 1992: 23).

Non-Asian actors’ status in the scene can be seen as visitors. Even though expatriates might be seen as visitors that are more permanent and therefore playing a different role, most of them still are seen as visitors. The people I talked to often saw them as a bit overbearing and passive, as Eric put it ‘they linger at the bar and brows the place waiting for us to approach them’.

However, there is still an attraction towards the non-Asians, which can be seen as a personal preference; however, this could also be connected to the *oriental* view representation and that most of the non-Asians have, in comparison to the Shanghainese, ‘big-money’. Pete, one of the interviewees, constantly talked about how he wanted to meet some good-looking westerner and move abroad. I asked him why it was so important to meet westerner he replied that ‘opposites attract’. When we talked about his previous relationships with westerners there was a sense of him feeling used; ‘he told me that he loved me and that I was special, but when I visited him in his house in Guangzhou he had another boyfriend there as well – foreigners often lie’. Nonetheless, he still was looking the special one amongst westerners. Another way of seeing this complex issue is that this can be a way of getting more ‘worldly’ without leaving China.

This situation does not differ that much from the heterosexual situation, there are many non-Asians that engage in similar types of relationships with Shanghainese women (cp. Farrer 2002: 323f). Nonetheless, if this is the result of ‘the ticket out’, ‘the money’, or just ‘the experience’ I argue that the climate that comes from this contradictory relationship between physical and representational proximity creates what I would describe as a new form of colonialism. Because, even though the visiting actor makes themselves “vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that [...] [they] relinquish forever [...] [their] mainstream positionality” (hooks 1992: 23).

4. Concluding discussion

You won't find a gay pride event in China, though. Shanghai is not Bangkok, my dear! For that matter, Beijing is not, either. Neither is Guangzhou, Chengdu, Xian or even Hong Kong – you get the picture. Different cultures, different values, different social mores (www.eddys-bar.com).

The quotation above gives a quite accurate description on the contemporary situation for both gay community and the gay people in China. There are many ways to approach identity construction in the gay community in Shanghai, and the rest of China for that matter; I have merely scratched the surface in a field where the possibilities are almost endless. Nevertheless, there are some important conclusions to be drawn from this thesis.

The community is at the moment rather quiet, almost as if they are waiting for the internal identity to grow in order to make this identity public. However, as Judith Butler argues, there is no doer behind the deeds, the doer is assigned to the deed; “[t]he foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political actions to be taken” (Butler 1999: 181). Therefore, the construction of identity could be connected with a political (identity) struggle; however, the political climate does not work in favor of such activity. There is a problem in creating official interest group – such groups are controlled by the state, which reduces these activities to limited spaces such as the bars and internet. There is a lack of the confrontational, which should, I think, be connected to the contextual impediments like the strong family values and one party system - as discussed in 2.2 and 2.3, rather than some an essential difference in the culture (cp. Sang 2003: 10f).

It could be seen as a matter of introducing diversity in the Chinese society, which actually already has begun with the introduction of the market economy. I not saying that diversity in commodities is directly connected with value diversity in the society, however, the window that the gay-bars used to establish themselves would probably never had opened without this change. Therefore, the transition to market economy, which in some sense can be connected to globalization, has created some diversity. However, even though globalization can be seen in some degree as a creator of diversity, it also can intensify the subjective feeling of totality, which I discussed above, 3.2.3.

Diversity as a concept is problematic. Within the academia and especially within queer theory diversity has become the remedy for intolerance; however, this also includes the tendency to ‘normalize’ diversity, Max Kirsch writes:

While the need for community enhances the drive for conformity, the realization of the generalized non-accepting and “otherness” of the queerness fuels arguments for difference while it excites the desire to “normalize” and consume, evoking courses of action that often result in the buying of uniforms rather than the celebrating of difference (Kirsch 2000: 76f).

This becomes especially true if consumption is seen as the progressive part of society, as in Shanghai where (sexual) liberation is so closely connected to the commercial markets. Consequently, by focusing on gay-bars I myself have also highlighted this connection. Nevertheless, political diversity, or political pluralism, is not as common as the diversity created by the market forces.

According to Sedgwick “for many gay people it [the closet] is still the fundamental feature of social life” (Sedgwick 1990: 68), which is both true for the community and the individuals in Shanghai. All of the people partaking in this study had come out to someone that is not gay themselves in their surroundings; however, it was mostly friends, but on some occasion it was fellow-workers, teachers and also parents; however, this was not common. As Tze-lan D Sang points out “[t]he everlasting secret battle against parents is especially poignant characteristic of the homosexual in the Chinese context” (Sang 2003: 220).

There are many aspects of this subject that remain unknown to the research community; as mentioned above, this thesis has merely scratched the surface of the subject; though, hopefully it has contributed to new information, which can further the discussion on the topic. The purpose of this thesis was to establish an understanding of the creation of gay identities in Shanghai, which I have done by focusing on the gay-bars and their clientele. I am aware that there are many other sides to these identities and also other theoretical perspectives to use in order to understand the phenomenon, however, to give an complete description would be a too extensive task, if even possible. Nevertheless, there is a need to further study the area.

Endnotes

1. Introduction

¹ Therefore, to conduct a discursive analysis would not be fair; neither to the interviewee's nor to the study; therefore I am concentrating on what is being said rather than how they say it.

² By key figures, I mean the people that have been involved in the community over a long period.

³ When visiting the bars I did not inform all of the costumers of my project. Also on some occasions when I had conversations with costumers the conversation ended before I had a chance to explain my purpose, however, if I in these cases got hold of useful information I did not discard it just because the subject was not aware of the purpose of the conversation.

⁴ These five people that I had a closer relationship was between twenty-one and thirty-five – the majority of people hanging out at gay-bars are in this age range – and four of them had an collage/university degree and the fifth was in the process of getting his. Two out of these five interviewees were Shanghainese while the other three had moved there later as adults, the ones that were born in Shanghai still lived with there parents, while two of the others lived alone and one lived with his boyfriend.

⁵ The strength of the methods used in this study – informal conversations in the different bars, participatory observations and the more formal unstructured interviews – was that I could collect information from a large number of people, combining these conversations with what I found out during the observations and also have the ability to return to certain questions with the same interviewees over a longer period of time and thus represent the subject's world as faithful as possible (Gubrium 1997:36). Moreover, the informal conversations also have strength when it comes to the relation between researcher and subject that can be seen as a subject – subject relationship (cp. Alasuutari 1995: 89), because to them I was merely another costumer at the bar, at least initially.

Using recording equipment I view as a sensitive question. One can argue that it will alter the situation, i.e. make it less natural, on the other hand, the situation in itself can be seen as altered because the researcher is asking questions and encouraging the subjects to answer and discuss a specific topic (cp. Alasuutari 1995: 94), however, such equipment can also make the situation more relaxed because then the interviewer can concentrate on the situation instead of taking notes. Nevertheless, when it comes to using recording equipment for this subject – queer identities – in this specific context – Shanghainese/Chinese – the interviewees might not be comfortable with discussing the topic while being recorded (cp. Liedholm 1999:177); therefore, I decided not to use such equipment during interviews. Moreover, seeing that most of my interviews took place at the different bars or at other public places with high background noise, using recording equipment could be difficult and the sound quality would probably be poor, i.e. it would probably be hard to hear what was being said on the tapes. Therefore, there are no direct quotations in the essay, seeing that I only made notes during and/or after the conversations/interviews.

⁶ When it comes to queer theory, the concept of class is not commonly used (cp. Kirsch 2000:38f), however, to understand the community's relation with the rest of society I think that it is important to understand the vastly different social 'realities' available in the Shanghainese society. Moreover, when I here use the concept of class it refers to the financial and educational aspect primarily.

⁷ One RMB is about 0.12068 US Dollar; one US Dollar is about 8.28650 RMBs (01.11.2004). Renminbi (RMB) is the national currency of the People's Republic of China. Originally, the word renminbi comes from the Chinese word rénminbi, from rénmin 'people' + bi 'currency' (The Concise Oxford Dictionary 2001).

⁸ Though it is hard to talk about a middleclass as such in China; there is an emerging group of people that are starting to take the position of a middleclass – in accordance with sociological use of the concept – that I think correlates with, among others, the people inhabit this scene.

⁹ I started out with using Baudrillard's theory of power – Seduction – in the essay, but I soon found it to be problematic, because of its relation between the individuals/community and the society. The core problem when applying the theory was its relation to the 'real', meaning that it is merely found as an appearance.

A key component in this theory is that "[w]hen one talks so much about power, it's because it can no longer be found anywhere" (Baudrillard 1987: 60). This implies that *the power* is not a part of the 'real', thus places itself in the sphere of symbolism; or as he himself puts it, "[s]eduction lies in the transformation of things into pure appearances" (Baudrillard 1990: 117); although, the subject has little or no control over this transformation. In addition, the power that comes from seduction is the power of persuasive; "[t]o be seduced is to be turned from one's truth" (Baudrillard 1990: 81). Furthermore, seeing seduction as a political strategy to be used against 'power' is not unproblematic. As Baudrillard writes, "[t]he secret maintains its

power only at the price of remaining unspoken, just as seduction operates only because never spoken nor intended (Baudrillard 1990: 79). Here a strategy would be the annulment of the signs, by acknowledging them as symbolic actions and thus undermining the seductive power.

In comparison with Foucault's power relations theory, seduction is subtle, it loses its power when its secret is revealed; while Foucault's theory identifies the relational aspect of power, by defining it as actions upon actions, thus rendering no one without the opportunity to resist and oppose power targeted against oneself, no one is left helpless (cp. Tierney 1997: 169). Contrary to seduction, it is also a part of production, not only an appearance.

What I would describe as a strategy against the families structural power, for example trying to postpone marriage, would thus not be included as a way of resisting power because it is part of the production rather than an appearance; however, there is a symbolic resistance as well, which is linked to the appearance side. By undermining the symbolism of the marriage institution the sign of marriage is questioned. Although, by merely acknowledging this side of the resistance the window that is created for the subject gets lost, the annulment of the sign becomes the one and only important factor. I think that this way of viewing it deducts the subjects' intentions. This does not imply that 'reality' is not questioned; it can be viewed inside the idea of simulation, where both the marriage and the resistance is a part of the discursive simulation.

On the other hand, the work of Pierre Bourdieu offers a theoretical perspective on the formation of communities and subcultures. The idea of cultural capital as the determiner of social struggle both between and within groups is a fruitful perspective when trying to locate identity-creating processes. By applying the concepts *field*, *habitus*, and *praxis* in this context the power structures that creates the cultural capital would be unveiled (Bourdieu 1986:101); however, due to the detachment of the community and the individuals towards the rest of society I thought this could end up being a problematic way to analyze the situation. Even though one can see hiding one's sexual identity as a way creating cultural capital, then this capital would apply only to the world outside the community. Therefore, by using Sedgwick's concept of the *closet*, among other queer theories, I tried to avoid ending up in this dilemma.

Nevertheless, both Baudrillard and Bourdieu have inspired my way of thinking about the subject both during my fieldwork and during the analysis/writing process.

2. The Context

¹⁰ As the heterosexual matrix, the heterosexual matrix is "hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (Butler 1999:194).

¹¹ I am drawing upon George H. Mead theory of the self being the composition of *I* and *me*, where metaphorically *I* – the unwritten – can be seen as similar to surroundings and *me* – the written – similar to context. It should be pointed out that the surroundings are not responding by themselves, this is something that can only be done by the individuals within the social (cp. Mead 1976: 132ff).

¹² Although, it is also important not to overstate the differences, or let the differences paralyze the discussion by seeing them as essentially different, I argue that it is a matter of socially created differences.

¹³ There is no exact distinction between power and strategy in Foucault's *power relations theory*; power relations cannot exist without strategy – seeing that power relations is defined as actions upon actions, where the actions it targets upon is in fact strategy – which I argue is the strength of the theory.

¹⁴ The idea of love has not been an important part of the Chinese way of thinking, one of the interviewees in James Farrer's study expressed his views on the concept of love like this "[i]t is not that we were embarrassed [to use the concept of love]. These kinds of words are stupid and hallow" (Farrer 2002: 201). However, younger people who are dating have a more positive attitude to the use of the concept of love (cp. Ibid.). Still it is a new phenomenon and even amongst them who use it, according to Chou Wah-shan, the word love often is used in English (Chou 2000:15f).

¹⁵ The point I am trying to make in this chapter is that one cannot simply translate a word without discussing the meanings it has in the context and/or the culture where it is used.

¹⁶ The birth planning program started in late 1977 with mainly propaganda and educational meetings, however, in the 1980 the government implemented the single-child policy, first in the cities and then later on in the rural areas, which proportionally high finds in comparison with income levels (cp. Yan 2003: 193).

¹⁷ This study deals with the changes in the youth sex culture in Shanghai

¹⁸ This is a quite common view among the interviewees in this study, still this does not imply that they are unpatriotic, it is more complicated than that. Usually when my interviewees referred to China they referred either to the motherland, which they are immensely proud of, or to an *oriental* view of China, that China is outside of time, the place that does not change.

¹⁹ 1122 – 256 B.C.

²⁰ The same-sex relations tradition that Hinsch is talking about is, as he puts it, “dead and virtually unknown, even among the educated” (Hinsch 1992: 163), however, there is, I argue, an unconscious knowledge lingering in platonic relationships, which I am going to discuss in 2.4.2. *Public interaction and the public show of affection*.

²¹ Gui Zhiliang’s book *Nüren zhi yisheng* 女人之一生 (A woman’s life) Beijing: Zhengzhong shuju, 1936.

²² Translated in the sense of local reconfiguration, however, filtered through the colonial, imperial, transnational, global etc. presence (Sang 2003:9).

²³ The Enlightenment theories views on representation centers around the individual ‘taking control’ over the representation in their own minds, thus creating a need to make sense of self, which in turn created the need for identities (cp. Kirsch 2000: 19f).

²⁴ The usage of the concept of lifestyles here refers to the idea of lifestyle thinking in advertising.

²⁵ The creation of identity through acts that is “constituting the identity is purported to be” (Butler 1999: 33).

²⁶ Bert Hinsch, Stephen Likosky, H.J. Lethbridge, etc.

²⁷ Manchu is a people living mainly in north-eastern China, which conquered the Ming dynasty and formed the Qing dynasty (cp. Nationalencyklopedin 1998: Manchu and the Manchu dynasty).

²⁸ The period between the mid-1910s and the mid-1920s is considered to be a time of cultural and intellectual renewal named after the May Fourth Movement (五四运动 Wǔ-sì Yùndòng) of 1919 (cp. Sang 2003: 299), an anti-foreign movement in China that by some scholars are called *the Chinese Enlightenment*.

²⁹ Information about this event was hard to find, even though I was connected to this university, when I started to ask people about this event they often did not know what I was talking about. The information that I got was from on-line newspapers.

³⁰ Even though police interference is common these days it seems like the police consider prostitution at gay-bars as a more severe crime than at straight bars; though I do not have any empirical proof for this.

³¹ The case against Li Ning, a bar owner in Nanjing who hired young boys as ‘public relations clerks’ – i.e. male prostitutes, defined that both male and female prostitution could be tried with the same law. The defense lawyer claimed that the law was not gender neutral, however, “[t]he case was reported to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, China’s top lawmaking body, and its legal affairs committee ruled in October [2003] that Li should be prosecuted, because all mercenary sex acts, between homosexuals or heterosexuals, were against the law” (China Daily 2004-02-19 reference internet #2).

³² There is an interesting aspect here that could be developed further; losing face, I argue, could be connected to the concept of shame in more general terms. Discrepancy between shame and guilt could hold interesting answers to the understanding of the social sphere, because even though guilt and shame are both negative emotional experiences they affect the individual in different manners. While guilt is likely to promote reparative action with a temporary loss in state of self-esteem, shame is likely to promote a desire to hide what is believed to be a defective self with a sense of being small, unworthy, and powerless. Based on these negative self-perceptions with shame the individuals themselves are often the harshest critics, evaluating themselves even more negatively than they believe others do (Thompson etc. 2004: 614). However, it should be noticed that I am not saying that all Chinese people are suffering from the shame-related effects, only that there are certain more general effects of shame in the Chinese culture; however, this discussion needs to be further developed, which I am not going to do here.

³³ A hegemonic discursive model of distinctive genders that presupposes that bodies and are rooted in a static sex, which are defined through their differences and hierarcally organized by the compulsory heterosexuality. The two categories of sex and heterosexuality are thus not something voluntary but something obligatory (Butler 1999: 155, et al.)

³⁴ Which does exist in the Shanghainese society and I will discuss it further in the next chapter.

³⁵ Chou’s definition of the political is quite narrow; he argues that the struggle for demedicalization homosexuality was not a political struggle (Chou 2000: 138).

³⁶ In 1997, Chinese gay students and scholars formed the organization in North America (Chou 2000: 135) that works with raising awareness both inside the Chinese communities in North America and in China. <http://www.csssm.org/English/>

³⁷ The magazine is in Chinese; however, the index is translated to English. The magazine gets founding from The Ford Foundation.

³⁸ The hotlines are connected to both the Chi Cheng Foundation and the Barry & Martin’s Trust.

3. The Scene

³⁹ The Bund, People’s Square/Park, parks, public toilets, bathhouses (saunas), etc. are examples other stages in Shanghai.

⁴⁰ Park 97 is a nightclub, often referred to as a mixed place meaning that it is considered friendly towards gay and lesbians. However, when visiting this place with two of my gay friends we did not experience this kind of tolerance.

⁴¹ Eddy's Bar, Dream Star – it is located just on the south 'border' of the French Concession – and Home & Bar

⁴² Other factors that he points out here is the celebration of holidays as Christmas, Halloween, etc. (Chou 2000: 130).

⁴³ People who are Erotically attracted to People of the Same sex

⁴⁴ Compare this with "Western capitalist influences were seen as corrupting Chinese culture; sexual wildness in Shanghai and other big cities was seen as proof of such 'Western contamination'" (Chou 2000: 54).

⁴⁵ This includes the gay-hotline, AIDS-hotline, etc.

⁴⁶ According to Chou "[c]oming out is a race, class, and gender category" (Chou 2000: 258), this conclusion is probably based upon the fact that it is possible to hide your sexuality, however, then the same logic would apply to class. On the other hand, the need for a coming out phase when it comes to gender is in the contemporary society not an urgent need, because "gender is inscribed on the body" (Davies 2001: 21).

⁴⁷ *Shanghai Talk* do not mention any of the gay-bars in their bar/club directory; in issue 12 (Vol. 5; June/July 2004) of *City Weekend*, Eddy's Bar was introduced in the bar/club directory, though it refers to the place as Eddy's Bar 1924, which was the name of the place when it was located on People's Square in 2001, from April 2002 it moved to Huaihai Zhong Lu and became simply Eddy's Bar; moreover, they do not write any descriptions of the different bars, they just supply the address.

⁴⁸ There are several such magazines both English and Chinese, however, the ones mentioned above are all in English.

⁴⁹ There are about hundred fifty bar descriptions in *That's Shanghai*

⁵⁰ Tough camp can be used in a lesbian context as well; it is often the male gay culture that *camp* as a concept is used (Ross 1989: 158).

⁵¹ I interpret Cante's use of performativity here as the knowledge of *performativity*, meaning using performativity as a strategy to undermine or blur gender roles.

⁵² "2. To emphasize style is to slight content, or to introduce an attitude which is neutral with respect to content. It goes without saying that the Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized - or at least apolitical" (Sontag 1964).

⁵³ The power of the gaze is connected to Foucault's power relation, and also much of his other works as for example panopticism. bell hooks argues in her essay *The oppositional gaze* that, "[i]n resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating 'awareness' politicizes 'looking' relations – one learns to look a certain way in order to resist" (hooks 1992: 116). Even though this oppositional gaze mostly exists and has a larger impact outside of the bars, where the potential of this gaze as a political act is more relevant, I think that it is a part of the idea of queer space as well, due to its ability to both make visible and demolish or fracture the already-in-place hierarchies.

⁵⁴ The Bund is a famous waterfront and regarded as the symbol of Shanghai for hundreds of years; in 2003 steps were taken to register the Bund with UNESCO as a World Heritage Site (Harris 2004: 22). The Bund has dozens of historical European colonial buildings that once housed numerous banks from Britain, France, USA, Russia, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands and Belgium. At the end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century, the Bund was a major financial hub of East Asia. Today the Bund is one of Shanghai's biggest tourist attractions.

⁵⁵ The early gay movement in the West was that "only radical change to society could bring about genuine acceptance of homosexuality" (Altman 1982: 211), however, the movement changed toward the idea of fighting for civil rights similar to other minority groups.

⁵⁶ See for example Richard Dyer's (2002) *The culture of the queers* (Routledge)

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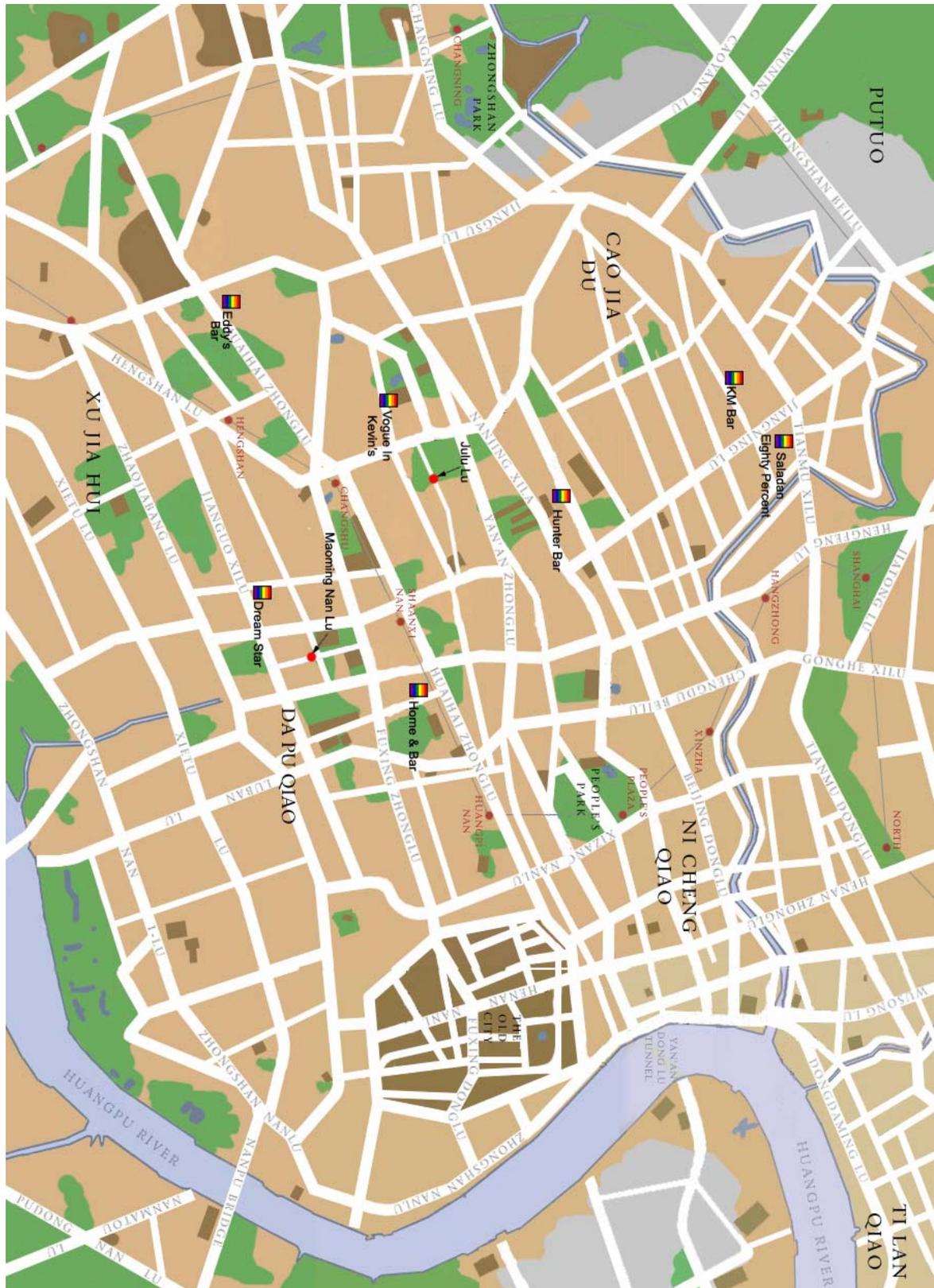
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Appendix 1

Downtown Shanghai



Dream Star – 307 Shan Xi Nan Lu, near Jian Guo Xi Lu

Eddy's Bar – 1877 Huaihai Zhong Lu, near Tian Ping Lu (<http://www.eddys-bar.com>)

Home & Bar – 18 Gao Lan Lu, near Si Nan Lu (<http://www.barhome.com>)

Hunter Bar – 86 Nan Yang Lu, near Xi-kang Lu (<http://www.h5.dion.ne.jp/~pizzi5/hunter-bar.html>)

KM Bar – 513 Hai-fang Lu, by Xi-kang Lu

Saladan Eighty Percent – 376 Xin Feng Lu, by Xi Kang Lu

Vogue In Kevin's – 4946 Chang Le Lu, near Urum Qi Lu

Appendix 2

What's New Bars & Clubs

► Zenzibar

Zenzibar incorporates several decades of design into one schizophrenic, L-shaped room. '70s black and white floral seats inhabit one corner, '80s tan leather chairs make up the bulk of the bar, and '90s patterned white plastic walls run throughout. In the midst of the confusion is a bartender who's moving that martini shaker like nobody's business. The drink list is extensive and the concoctions are strong (peach champagne cocktail, RMB 68). But the loud music hardly fits the loungey look and lights don't dim till 9pm, as the space doubles as part of Zen restaurant. Zenzibar is a potential place to wait for your dinner table, but not exactly the ideal space for chillin' with your buds.

Daily 10pm-2am. All cards. House 2, South Block Xintiandi, Lane 123 Xingye Lu, by Madang Lu. (6385 6385)
莱蝶吧. 兴业路123弄新天地南里2号楼. 近马当路



◀ Capa Bar

This prime piece of real estate situated between the French Concession and Xujiahui should be banished to the boonies. Drinks are reasonably priced - RMB 35 for a beer, ditto for cocktails - but the banging Chinese techno is unreasonably loud. Inside the sparse Capa Bar there is a small circular drinks counter, a few couches and curtains, and little else - including customers. The waitresses flocked to the only patron - this reviewer - who apparently was on duty that night as translator. But when a harmless game of translating phrases scribbled on a napkin soon digressed from "where are you from?" to a somewhat steamier "if your wife is home we can go to my place" he realised it was time to leave - alone. If you are not into playing dangerous games, this bar might not be your cup of dice.

Daily 8pm-2am. All cards. 838 Hengshan Lu, by Tianping Lu (5465 3972)
衡山路838号. 近天平路

► Rendezvous

This place is packed, though it won't appeal to every Xintiandi yuppie. The space is intimate, with alcoves at the back and side for slightly more private seating, and a rather gloomy atmosphere. Even the Filipino band members here aren't quite as enthusiastic as their countrymen performing in surrounding venues. The beverage list fits on a plastic cardholder and the cocktails are weak. Our Hawaiian breeze tasted like the bartender melted a packet of mint breath fresheners and mixed it with blue dye (RMB 60). Thankfully there are better places to rendezvous at Xintiandi.

Daily 6.30pm-2am. All cards. 2B, No 22, North Block Xintiandi, 181 Xingye Lu (6336 5383)
老第坊. 兴业路181号新天地北里22号2楼B



◀ Cuba

This stately cigar lounge provides a quiet place to puff, without extortionate drink prices or maddening membership fees. The comfortable leather couches and oversize chairs are full of scotch sipping businessmen and chatting hotel guests - this subdued spot is not a place to mix and mingle. So bring a guest or a cigar for company, and peruse the long and reasonably priced list of scotch (RMB 40 upwards) Irish whiskeys (RMB 40-50) and imported beers (RMB 40-48). The only problems with this bar are the low hanging ceilings and inadequate ventilation system that could leave you in a grey nicotine haze.

Mon-Sat 3.30-12pm. All cards. 2/F, JC Mandarin, 1225 Nanjing Xi Lu, by Shaanxi Bei Lu (6279 1888 ext 5232)
南京西路1225号锦沧文华酒店2楼. 近陕西北路

▼ Red Station

It's red, there's a motorbike hanging over the bar, and the servers are dressed like gas station attendants. In a nod to the artsy rebelliousness of Taikang Lu, there's graffiti on the walls as well. But all is not grunge and grittiness here. In an unwelcome reminder of another red-hued bar, California Club, it was impossible to sit in half of the seats because they were reserved for more important guests. Hmph. As if seeking a happy medium between snobbery and street cred, the live singer churned out middle-brow KTV favourites, while sunglasses-wearing patrons sat around doing their best to look at home in the midst of this identity crisis of a bar. At least the long island iced tea (RMB 50) was well-mixed, packing a punch without delivering an unpleasant one to the tastebuds. Dice were provided for those who wanted to do their best to ignore their surroundings - which considering their ugliness, seemed like a good idea.

Daily 9.30pm-2am. All cards. 4/F, 200 Taikang Lu, by Sinan Lu (6415 8695)
红色加油站, 泰康路200号4楼, 近思南路



▼ Dream Star

If you love the jockstrap snap of locker room rapport, enter the steamy confines of the Dream Star bar for a hot wet surprise. This establishment is curiously located under an apartment complex, and for RMB 40 you can use their heated indoor pool - or pump up your pecs on the indoor gym equipment while you pound your beer. The place was empty on our visit, but it could heat up on weekends if the word spreads about this hip place to dip. Qingdaos are reasonably priced at RMB 20, but the rum and coke (RMB 35) was as watery and flat as the poolside tile floor. The bar's interior is hurting for decorations - the walls are adorned with Christmas stencils and a lonely male bodybuilder. Come to Dream Star for a dip in the pool and experience all your bathhouse fantasies in this underground watering hole.



Daily 7.30pm-2am. No cards. 307 Shaanxi Nan Lu, by Jianguo Lu (6471 2887)
陕西南路307号, 近建国路

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Dream Star

If you love the jockstrap snap of locker room rapport, enter the steamy confines of the Dream Star bar for a hot wet surprise. This establishment is curiously located under an apartment complex, and for RMB 40 you can use their heated indoor pool – or pump up your pecs on the indoor gym equipment while you pound your beer. The place was empty on our visit, but it could heat up on weekends if the word spreads about this hip place to dip. Qingdaos [beer] are reasonably priced at RMB 20, but the rum and coke (RMB 35) was as watery and flat as the poolside tile floor. The bar's interior is hurting for decorations – the walls are adorned with Christmas stencils and lonely male bodybuilders. Come to Dream Star for a dip in the pool and experience all your bathhouse fantasies in this underground watering hole.

Daily 7.30pm – 2pm. No cards. 307 Shaanxi Nan Lu, by Jianguo Lu (64712887)

陕西南路 307 号，近建国路

