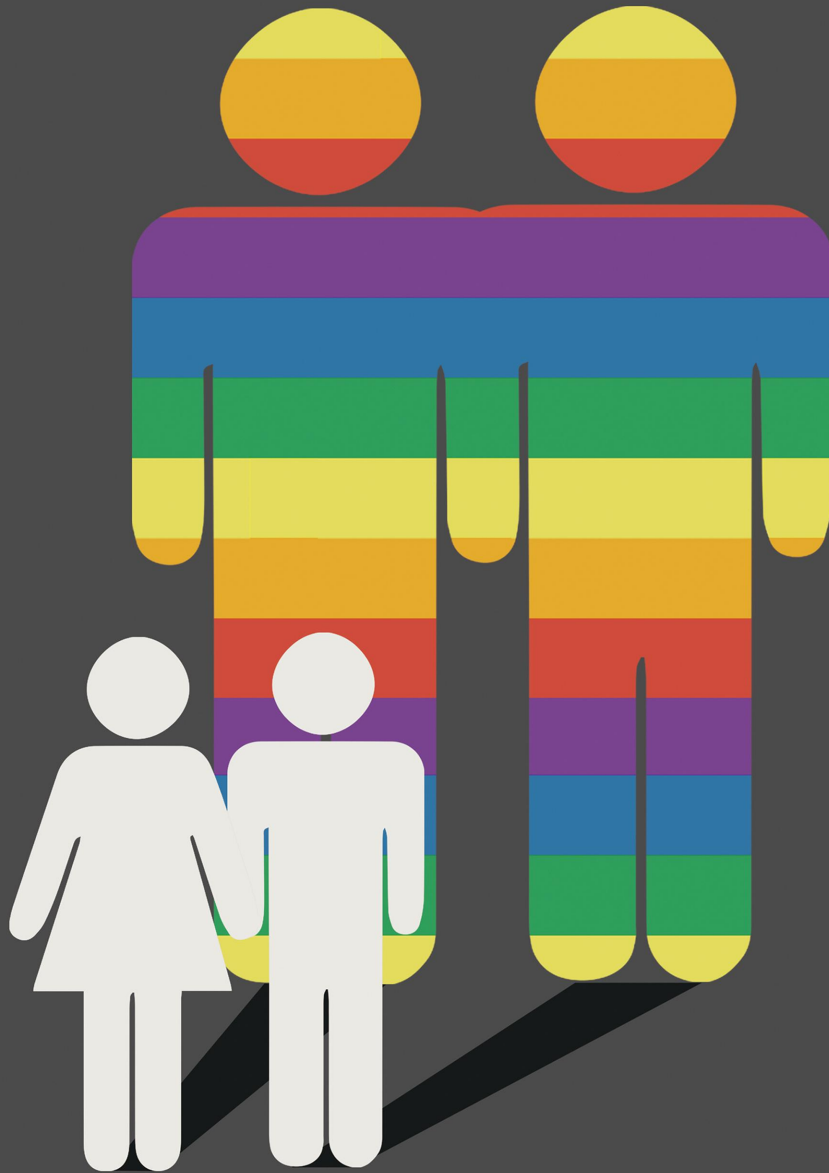


Togayther



Advised by Archie Lee Coates IV

Linjie Deng

2017

INTRO TO PROBLRM

THE CONTEXT

01

In China there is a growing imbalance between men and women of marrying age. This is largely attributed to China's infamous single-child policy. This policy has had many unanticipated consequences, that are made more complicated by some traditional Chinese values and traditions. One of the consequences, that is complicated by both cultural values and government policy is related to the impact this situation has on gay men, who often find themselves feeling forced into heterosexual marriages in order to fulfill filial obligations and avoid detection by the society. This project looks closely at this situation and demonstrates a way that public performance art coupled with strategic use of social media can make an impact by raising consciousness.

According to statistics released by the China National Bureau of Statistics, China has over 1.35 billion people. Of this 1.34 billion people there are 20% more men than women, resulting in a gender imbalance between men and women.

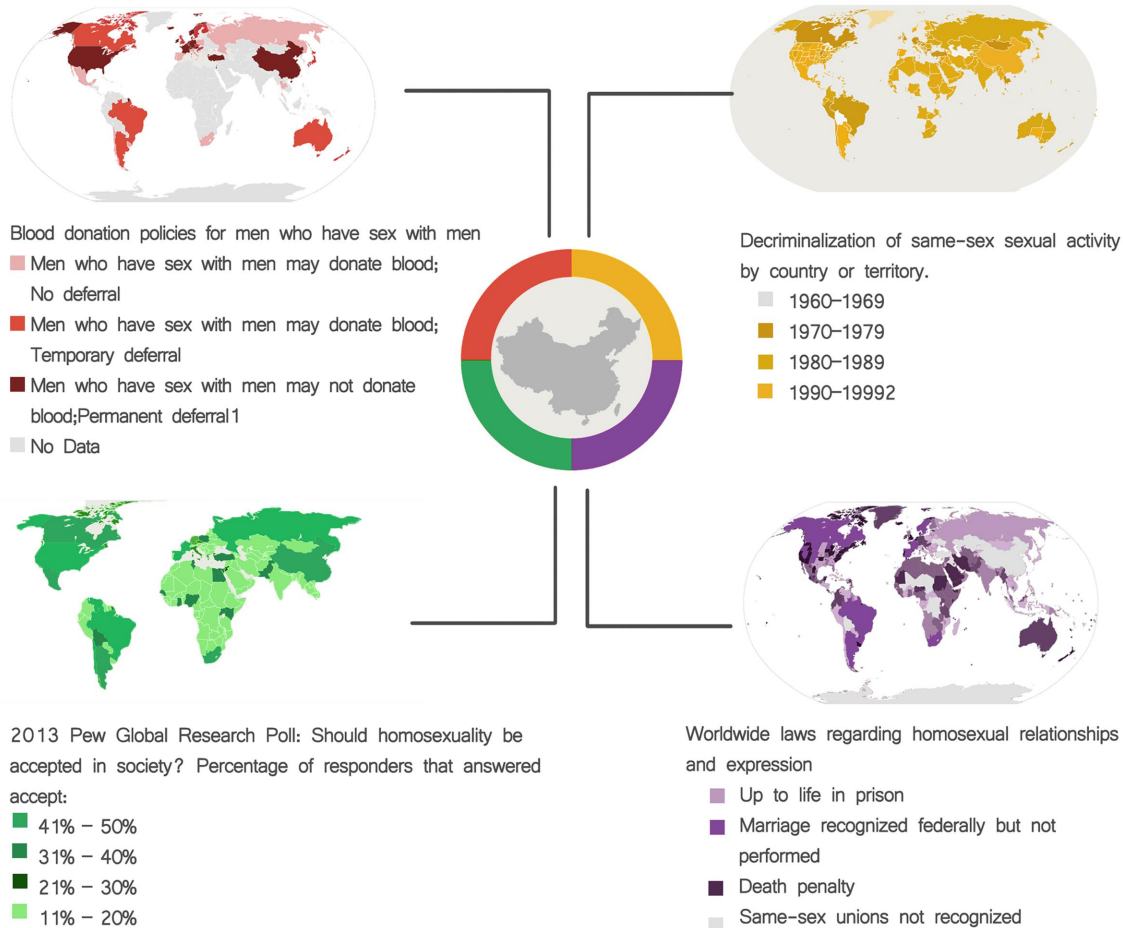
Since 1980, the government of China has enforced a one-child policy. China, for cultural and for practical reasons, has always favored sons. Ended formally in January 2016 after 36 years, this policy has had many intended and unintended consequences. One is the horror of having to choose (or being forced to choose) which child lives, and which child dies. Another is : due to the disproportionate number of men to women of marrying age, adult men cannot find wives. In fact, by 2020, China will have an estimated 40 million bachelors which is a number that exceeds the entire population of Canada. This is a significant social problem, because in China a young man is not really considered a man, and has not fulfilled his filial duty until he gets married and has a child, preferably a son. Normative culture standards in China demand that a young man / young woman must marry and have a baby boy to find happiness.

For rich men, this is less of a problem. Because in China, having a home, car and good job can attract a mate. Many Chinese ethnic groups still practice the custom where a man's family is expected to pay a "bride price" to the girl's family. In the west this is call a dowery. But young men from poor families are often priced out. Meanwhile, to be married and have a child is the normal way to find happiness within Chinese culture. Millions of young men, because of this situation are excluded from experiencing this feeling of happiness and are unable to fulfill their filial duty. This brings shame not only to the young men, but also to their families.

This is the problem faced by straight men who desire to make a family with a woman. But in fact there are two kinds of men in China. One is the man who wants to marry a woman, and the other is the man who doesn't want to marry a woman. Because he is gay. The social pressure faced by the gay man is exacerbated. Not only can he not find a wife, but even if he can he does not want to get married, but feels forced to do so because of social and government pressures.

THE CONTEXT

According to a 2014 survey from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, there are over 70 million gay people in China. Statistics from the Chinese government blood donation policy, illustrate the differences between government attitudes, legitimacy, social acceptance and living conditions of gay people in China compared to other countries. These differences are shown below.



From this map it can be seen that at this moment in China, to be gay is still taboo as a topic of discussion. For the majority of people for their attitude towards the gay population that it is something that does not concern them. While the government's attitude is one of not supporting, not opposing, and not promoting the gay community.

In addition to the unfavorable situation related to the social pressure gay people experience as described above, the situation is only made worse by the barriers they experience from a traditional society.

90%

As mentioned above, in Chinese traditional culture filial obedience is of paramount importance. In order to show filial obedience to their parents and continue their family line, 90% of Chinese gay men choose to endure their situation silently; □ on the premise of not “coming out”, they have a heterosexual marriage and have children with their spouses whom all the while are totally unaware of their true sexual orientation. Or maybe they do know, but choose to ignore it.

This situation becomes even more complicated when one recognizes that even if parents were to know that their son was gay, social and cultural pressures are such that they would nonetheless still force their children to have a heterosexual marriage and form a new “family” after having children, in order to maintain respectability from friends and social equality even by deceptive means.

With so much heart ache and so many marriages entered into under false - presences we have to wonder why, after thousands of years of personal tragedies and group catastrophes, do we continue to make the same mistake? As noted above Chinese government statistics claims that there are 70 million gay people (men and women) while Blued (China’s most popular mobile gay men’s dating application), currently has over thirty million users (since Sep 8, 2016).

Due to social pressure and fear of being known to be gay, government statistics are not reliable. And about 90 % of gay men have to fake it by marrying a woman, because they want to make their parents proud. Resulting in a large number of “gays’ wives” or “lesbians’ husbands”. This phenomenon is so well known that Chinese even have a word for these: 同妻, 同夫。Based on data acquired from Blued (October 12, 2016) claims that the number of gays’ wives is more than 30 million. □ These women become the tool (or a practical means) for gay men to carry on their family line or they act an umbrella beneath which they conceal their husbands’ identities. The women are faced with similar social/cultural pressures. Their families would lose face should it become known that their husband and the father of the parent’s grandchild should turn out to be gay. As couples they face not only inharmonious “sex” lives but they also live a lie. As time goes by more and more people get involved in this situation. The 30 million quickly becomes over 60 million.

90 % of gay men have to fake it by marrying a woman, because they want to make their parents proud.

In China this is called keeping face 面子。

FRAMING

THE PROBLEM

02

Because of the above, young Chinese men are being forced into marriages under false pretenses. The divorce rate in China is skyrocketing. □ No one wants to get married under false pretenses. Everyone desires a beautiful family. Nobody wants to live with a lie. However, a young man is expected to have a family, marriage is a prerequisite for family. But when being forced into a marriage because of external pressures, it is difficult to make a free and honest choice. A marriage should be mutual, agreed upon by both sides. Only with mutual trust can both sides establish and own a healthy family life. But the current situation makes this nearly impossible for young gay men.

If as a society we are going to expect and promise that family life be built on real love and accept the right to choose our own ways of life, then we must first recognize that not everyone is the same, and some people are going to be gay, and recognize the existence of the homosexual community. The society has an obligation to make it (reasonably) possible to live up to its expectations and fulfill its promises for a happy life. This is the most basic kind of social contract. In this way the Chinese government and society in general has failed an entire generation of young men.

If we are going to expect that family life be built on real love and accept the right to choose our own ways of life, then we must first recognize that not everyone is the same, and some people are gay, and recognize the existence of the homosexual community. From this perspective then, it follows that inevitably, some children will be born who are homosexual. Research has proven that homosexuality is not a choice, but rather a predisposition that some people are born with. When we realize that there is a possibility that our child might be gay, we should have the courage to face this, and not deny it, or pretend that it is not so. As long as we do this it is less likely that the society can fulfill its social contract. After all, as parents, we cannot be sure about child's sexuality until years after he is born. But we can be confident in the hope we have that our child will be happy with and be free to be 100% himself from the day of his birth. This is the main point of my research.

How we can stop making the same mistake from generation to generation?

We need to break the taboo. If we are to reduce the pain that so many young gay men experience as they seek to find a happy life, due to cultural traditions, family obligations and government policy, we need to find a way that young men and women who are getting ready to have children to face the reality that their children might be gay. So that when their children grow up, they do not feel the need to hide who they are and they can feel the support of a loving family, and not feel pressured to live the lie that so many young men now must live.

03

PROCESS

-
1. understand the problem
 2. initial research
 3. hypothesis
 4. explore ideas and text flexible
 5. Prototype 1: Performance artworks
 6. ideate context & medium
 7. Develop idea
 8. Implement
 9. Evaluation/Additional Research
 10. Prototype 2: Article
 11. ideate content & tool
 12. Develop idea
 13. Implement
 14. Evaluation/Additional Research
 15. Prototype 3: Togayther
 16. Implementation
 17. Evaluation

PROTOTYPE 1

INITIAL RESEARCH

04

Political Reason:

According to a report in The Beijing Times, the government of China has new guidelines that lay out an array of subjects that will be prohibited, including depictions of gay relationships. For example a popular web drama, “addiction,” was pulled offline by China’s regulators. The 15-episode show about a romance between two high school boys was the series with the second-highest views on iQiyi at the time it was taken down, according to The Global Times.

So gay propaganda must be prohibited. and gay is a still a taboo as a topic to discussion in China.

Cultural Reason:

Not marrying and producing offspring is considered unfilial and challenges cultural notions of family that go back thousands of years. While arranged marriages have largely faded in China, parents remain deeply involved in the nuptials of their offspring, chasing down leads on potential suitors and hounding their children during holiday visits about marriage plans. □ In fact pressure to get married in China is so high that it has led to a small industry where young men can pay a girl to act as his girlfriend. So that when he attends family events he does not have to deal with all the questions.

Law Reason:

Homosexuals in china used to be categorized as hooligans and could face criminal charges for committing hooliganism, a crime carry punishment from short-term detention for up to 7 years in jail. In 1997, that crime was abolished following an amendment to the country’s Criminal Law. In 2001, the Chinese Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of psychiatric disorders. Until now, Chinese law does not permit same-sex marriage.

INITIAL APPROACH

To understand Chinese people's perceptions, opinions, motivation and behavior concerning gay relationship, or to gather information from experts in the field, I've interviewed 238 Chinese gay men, under 30 years old. And 51 Chinese parents over the past ten months.

Step 1:

Make an interview guide, including a list of topics, based on my research questions. Test this guide in a pilot interview.

Step 2:

Invite the right interviewees. Depending on my objective my may interview 10—20 people in first two weeks.

Step 3:

Carry out the interviews. An interview typically takes about one hour.

Step 4:

Either make transcripts of what was said or make summarizing notes.

Step 5:

Analyze my transcripts and draw conclusions.



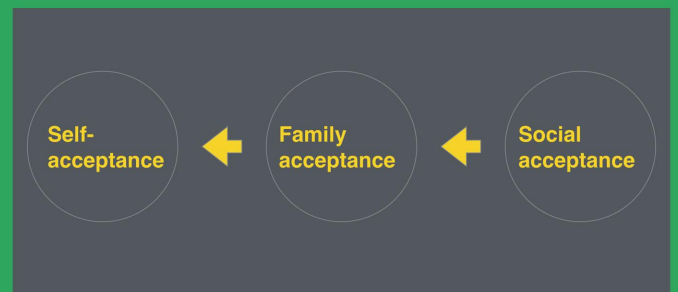
Defined Target Audience

There are two kinds of gay men in China, One is the gay men who chooses to stay remain in the closet and to marry heterosexual women. The other is the man who chooses to come out. There are various ways to classify parents:

1. Their parents cannot see that their son is gay.
2. Their parents can see, but don't want to see.
3. Their parents can see and want to help.
4. Their parents can see and don't want to help.
5. Their parents can see and they can't help, because they don't have the resources or ability.

Key Insight

1. Many parents truly don't know (and often do not want to know) what a gay relationship is. So their son chooses to keep his sexual orientation hidden and has to try and fake it by marrying a woman because of parental pressure.
2. Many young people do not know they are gay until after they marry, due to a cultural reluctance to discuss sexuality, and a lack of sex education at school.



4. It seems to me that there are three levels of acceptance that need to take place: (1.) self-acceptance, (2.) family acceptance, and (3.) social acceptance. These do not always coincide. A lot of the times, people who have these conditions are very angry because they feel as through their parents don't love them, when what actually has happened is that their parents don't accept them. Love is something that is ideally unconditional between a parent and a child. But acceptance is something that takes time. It's always takes time.

My research and feedback I received from testing ideas lead me to conclude that if I can do something to help the parents reduce the social pressures, the parents will feel free to learn new things about gay lifestyle. And If I can break the taboo by public artwork and talk about the gay topic in public places, the parents will know more about gayness and begin to feel that its ok to be gay, that it is socially acceptable, that it is normal. As a result, it will be less necessary for their son's to hide their sexual orientation and they can be happy.



Beijing, Sanlitun, China
01/01/2017



In order to understand how contemporary Chinese young people view gayness in real life, I planned a public performance art event to be held in a public space in Beijing. This event involved me designing, fabricating and wearing custom white clothes with the message “I am gay, would you like to give me a hug?” written across the chest. I also made the use of a black cloth to cover my eyes (like a blindfold), while I stood in Beijing’s very public and popular Sanlitun shopping district.

I wasn’t sure if this type of performance art that discusses gayness was breaking the law. Would people report me? Would I go to prison?

Would I be allowed to leave the country again? Nobody knew the answer, or they were not willing to discuss it because this is China. But according to Beijing City government, the essence of Beijing is: “Patriotism, Innovation, Inclusiveness, Virtue.” So, as one of Beijing’s essences is Inclusiveness, I thought I would do it anyway. It was a big risk.

Success:

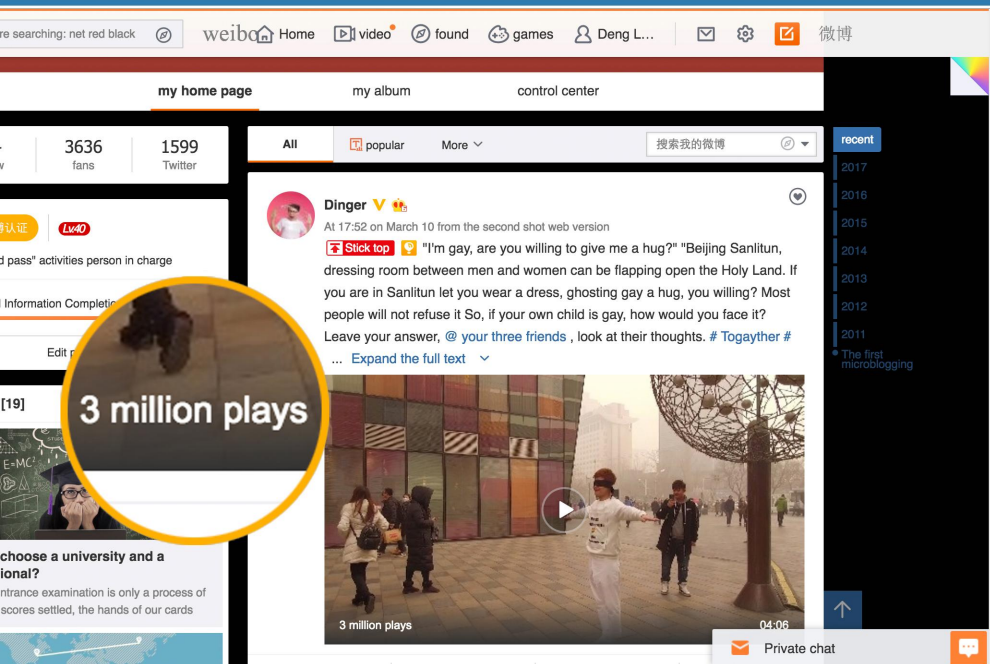
After standing in Sanlitun for an hour, I received 65 hugs from passersby, a warm kiss, a group photo, a short spell of wanting to cry, and a spirit of not being overwhelmed by public opinion. Of course, there were also those who didn’t come forward to hug but stayed back to watch and take photos to post on WeChat. These are all things that I didn’t expect beforehand.

Failures:

Returning to the hotel, I looked at the video and realized that I lost important information. For example: I did not know why they chose to hug me or why they did not hug me. Did the straight family support me, because their son is gay? etc.

If I were to do this again I would invite my friends to help me do interviews, asking passers-by about my “gay hug” while I’m standing in the Sanlitun Square.

USER FEEDBACK



My video got 3 million plays within 5 days.

Back in New York, in order to understand how more contemporary Chinese young people view gayness, I created a discussion topic called “Togayther” on Sina Weibo and WeChat (popular forms of social media in China) and I posted my performance video online after editing. I paid 200 RMB to the social media company. I received this letter after an hour.

“Dear Linjie
We can not promote your video. Because it’s related to (Restrict content—Gay) We will refund the money in three business days.”

Then the social media company remove my video from the hot video list and changed the video playback count.

Xiao tingwang: “Even though I am not gay, I’m really touched.”

Wang Wanggou: “I want to know what they said to you?”

Yi Fufu: “Your video have done very well. This is a very meaningful, Thank you.”

Bao baoxi: “I love this video, you are so great! Look for more to come and enjoy today's feature.”

05

PROTOTYPE 2

INITIAL RESEARCH

I wanted to know why they removed my video from the hot video list and changed the video playback count. So I asked the China's top Internet monitor, the Cyberspace Administration of China, but did not get a response to my request for comment so far.

China heavily censors its Internet, limiting what its people can see or say online through channels that the government can control. But China's managing of the internet does not end there. It also taps untold masses of people to cheer for its side on online message boards and social media. The common belief is that they are paid 50 cents per post. Because of this people in China call them the Fifty Cent Party. Beijing primarily sought to guide public opinion by having commenters write posts designed to "regularly distract the public and change the subject" rather than rebut arguments against the government line. Distraction is a clever strategy in information control in that an argument in almost any human discussion is rarely an effective way to put an end to an opposing argument.

Tracking government activity has become trickier, as Chinese users shift away from social media services that are broadly accessible to anybody. They increasingly use mobile-chat apps, like China's WeChat, where only friends connected over the app can see one another's posts.

INITIAL RESEARCH

Anecdotally, so many people have told me, "We would love to know more details about your video, your performance art work, after watching the video..." The "gay hug" video has already laid a very good foundation for us. At least it inspired so many young people who say it making them apt to chat about this once-taboo topic. To explain what I did wrote as if I was telling a story to make it easy to read.

Step 1: Start from the following elements: ideas, simulations, the purposes of article, a readers' demands.

Step 2: Choose a story and a message: what do I want the article to express, Limit my story to a clear message.

Step 3: Create sketchy storylines. Design the timeline before detailing. Use variations in panel sizes and captions for emphasis and expression.

Step 4: Follow the rules of Chinese Media. I also know how challenging it is to discuss topics related to gayness in the highly controlled cyber-space in China. China has set up a huge online censorship system sometimes dubbed the "Great Firewall of China" that aggressively blocks sites or snuffs out internet content on topics considered sensitive. (In Chinese culture, it's very normal. Our basic worry in this country is that we only ever see what happens, we never know the reason.) So to make my point I cannot be direct, I can only communicate in a vague, approximate, or metaphorical sense. For example, "gay", "haze", "police" belong to sensitive words list. If these words show up on my post it will immediately be shut down.

Stand Out: The Only Possible Way To Be Loved



STAND OUT:

THE ONLY WAY TO BE LOVED

By Linjie Deng

1

Everyone tends to associate the term “coming out” with gay people. Perhaps you aren’t gay, but you have certainly have had a “coming out” experience.

We all have closet, things that are difficult to speak about. or things that we don’t want other to know. Your closet may be telling someone you love her for the first time. Or telling others that you have an unplanned pregnancy, or telling someone you have cancer. All of the “Closet” is a hard conversations. all closet conversations are hard conversation.

Although our “closets” may vary tremendously, the feeling of being in the closet and the experience of coming out is universal. It is scary, and we hate it, and it needs to be done.

My name is Linjie Deng, I’m currently at New York School of Visual Arts, majoring in Design for Social Innovation. My graduation is just around the corner, and as a graduate student who crowd-funded to go abroad, it seems like I’m bound to study important social topics such as Chinese manufacturing, solving the Chinese bachelor problem, or environmental protection. However, I’m concentrating my research on what was until now a more peripheral group: gay men.

In order to understand how contemporary Chinese young people view gayness, I created a discussion topic called “Togayther” on Sina Weibo and WeChat (popular forms of social media in China) and I received feedback such as “Fuck! Why bother researching it?” A such as this makes it seem like only topics related to the national economy or the peoples’ livelihood are worth researching, while researching gayness would just be wasting higher education resources. Is sexuality not a part of our lives? Do all zoologists have to focus their studies on elephants?

Another response was “this author must be gay, so that’s why he’s researching this”. I can understand this kind of response, after all the Chinese famous female popular singer Han Hong’s masculinity and the Chinese famous reporter He Jiong’s unmarried status have also been called into question. But going with this logic, does that mean that if medical students want to study cancer they must first get cancer? Or do criminology PhD students need to first commit a crime?

Because this isn’t touching on my own feelings, I believe that we can clear up these problems by using reason to explain them clearly. we can clear up these problems by using reason to explain them clearly. That was until I decided to go back to China and make performance art in Beijing’s Sanlitun, when my thinking unexpectedly hit a breaking point.

First, how do I explain to my family my reason for going back to China? During the two years that I’ve been in the US my mother was seriously ill and even my grandmother passed away, still I didn’t have the chance go back. Airplane tickets were already expensive, but during the Christmas season they became even more so. What reason did I have this time to force me to return?

I started to fear that I was sinking into an unclear and unclean family conflict. My mother has lived all her life as a working class woman in Shanxi Province. My family is similar to many other normal Chinese families, where families never discuss topics related to sex, not to mention researching gayness.

“Mom, my school is requiring me to go back to China to do research, otherwise I can’t graduate”. I delivered in a sentence.

Through the phone I heard my mother promptly say “Good! Great! Come back. Graduation is important, so do your work first. If you finish your work in Beijing and still have some time, come back to your hometown, come back so that I can give you your favorite dough cakes.”

After I hung up the phone, a scalding tear ran across my face and fell onto my phone screen as I looked at my closeted self.

2

On December 19, 2016, the sky gradually changed from blue to gray. A plane from New York descended into Beijing Capital Airport. Before I even left the airport, my nose was assaulted by the pungent scent of pollution, but more pressing was my performance art in two weeks. I planned to wear white clothes with the message “I am gay, will you give me a hug?” written across the chest and use black cloth to cover my eyes, then stand in Beijing’s popular Sanlitun area to test how the public really views gayness.

There was not enough time to adjust to the time zone- as soon as I put my luggage down, I contacted the photographer and prop manager, then ran to East Sixth Ring Road Dou Ge Village to imprint the design on the clothes. At the same time, I connected the photographer with the makeup artist to discuss how my appearance and photography would be on site.

In two years, aside from pollution, Beijing had experienced significant changes. For example, everywhere you went you could see security guards patrolling the streets, the common newspaper or magazine are more voiceless. This made me feel a little uneasy, especially since I wasn’t as familiar with the Mainland’s social environment, and wasn’t sure if this type of performance art discussing gayness was breaking the law. Would people report me? Would I go to prison? Would I be allowed to leave the country again? People never know the answer, because this is China, this is Beijing.

What is the essence of Beijing? “Patriotism, Innovation, Inclusiveness, Virtue. ”

Using this slogan to deceive myself- although it’s ridiculous, it’s at least some form of mental protection. On December 31st, I prepared for everything that could happen, but I still hadn’t prepared how to explain to my mother what I had to do. If she went online, saw the photos, and asked me about it, what would I do? If she saw the photos, but pretended she didn’t and then didn’t say anything, what would I do? It’s a terrible feeling. If I don’t stand up today and face my fears, then tomorrow and forever after, I would lie down and avoid the problems. Therefore, I promised myself that I would start this tough conversation.

I took a deep breath: “hey, mom. Tomorrow in Beijing I’m holding an art performance about gayness.”
“Ah, what is that?”

“Just a different lifestyle.”

“Okay, then when you’re done, what day do you come back? Do you want to eat sweet or salty dough cakes? ”
It was the easiest hard conversation I’ve ever had.

3

January 1st, 2017, at 2pm in the afternoon, at the front of the Uniqlo in Beijing's Sanlitun, I wasn't not hooking up in the fitting room, but rather standing in the public area being myself.

The pollution lingered, and a wind from the northwest blew a bicycle over, making it fall like a drunk man stumbling out of a bar.

Inside the Starbucks, the stylist applied make up and asked; "Linjie, if no one acknowledges you, then what do you do?"

I said, "As long as the police don't make me leave, I will continue to stand there. Standing there is my resolution, being hugged or ignored by passerby is their choice. As I stand there, I become a mirror, a symbol. If I don't stand up, I will never know the result, I won't know how people in this day and age react to gayness."

After choosing a good spot, I took off my down jacket, and a few street photographers came up and asked if they could take photos.

Before I could open my mouth, the flash of the cameras started clicking and flickering.

After a few photos, I promptly said, "Sorry, I'm not a Fashion Boy, I have to get back to work."

The photographers were not satisfied. "We want to take pictures with you." I tactfully declined, but this type of beginning let my mind settle a bit.

Using the black cloth to cover my eyes, my vision instantly became black, like someone turning out the lights in a room. Opening both arms wide, I felt both vulnerable and provocative, very public and excited, because I had no idea what would happen next.

Yes, I stood up. Three security guards also stood up. However, it was not a large commotion, and there was no violence, rather they stood there silently in front of me, not knowing what to do.

I couldn't see anything, but I could hear everything. I could hear the sound of the people surrounding me growing, but also felt the growing silence, which made me even more certain that others were watching me.

When I started to shiver from the cold, I suddenly felt two hands across my lower back and a head push itself against my chest, tightly hugging me.

Then I heard a gentle voice: "Hello, I don't know you, but I support you."

I replied: "Thank you, you are the first person to hug me."

People who stopped walking to gawk, passersby who took photos and posted on their WeChat accounts, and travelers originally intending to shop one after another consciously formed a circle, quietly looked at me, and in that moment, I felt like a fountain shooting out water, bursting with energy.

"Hello, you are extremely brave, good luck!"

"Thank you, you are the second person to hug me"

"Thank you, you are the third person to hug me"

.....

The people who hugged me were endless, which completely exceeded my expectations. Not even five minutes had passed, and more than 10 people had hugged me. When the twelfth person hugged me, I felt like crying. Before I had stood up, I had prepared to be abandoned by everyone, but I wasn't ready to be hugged and welcomed by so many others.

Until then, no one else perceived this. I knew that I was a performance artist, as I stood there I was just a prop that shouldn't cry, that shouldn't pass on my subjective attitude to the audience. But everytime someone touched me, I was stunned by the sincerity of the other person. Of those people that I hardly knew, every sentence vividly broke into my heart.

At that time a mother came up to me and asked me why I dared to stand up? I said: "The clothes of fear cover our bodies, but love lets us stand up naked." She hugged me again and had her husband help us take a group photo.

Suddenly, someone rushed up against me and kissed my neck, and I felt a distinctly warm feeling on my neck, as warm as hot chocolate. I just stood there, not moving back or forward. There was no conversation, then "hot chocolate" stealthily walked away.

Before 20 minutes had passed, the space in between Uniqlo and Adidas was filled with people, not letting anyone pass. The police were flustered and called their supervisor over. He pushed past everyone and removed the black cloth from my face. My eyes all of the sudden were illuminated, bringing me back to reality- it felt like someone slapped me in the face.

But ironically is regardless of how angrily he yelled at me and force me away, as I tried my best to open my eyes and I saw the densely packed audience and turning around I end up giving the police officer a hug. The audience broke into enthusiastic applause.

It's too bad that the hug had no effect, because I soon heard him say: "don't do anything ridiculous this is a public space. Where are you from? Who let you do this? Who allowed you here?" He started shooing people away and tried to snatch away my cameras.

there is a saying: "Don't just hang yourself on one tree." So I moved to another place and continued.

In the north section of Sanlitun, a girl hugged me and said: "My boyfriend wants me to tell you that he supports you, but he's embarrassed about hugging you, so I'll hug you twice." Before she left, she spoke again: "Sorry, my lipstick smeared on your clothes, I'll help you wipe it off."

The most excessive occurrence was an elderly Beijing woman who happened to pass by, carefully read the words on my shirt: "I'm gay, will you give me a hug?", and lifted her glasses while pointing at me and asking the surrounding crowd: "Is this something I can hug?" The surrounding people burst into laughter. I quickly told her yes and she said: "Oh, then I'll just hug you."

4

After standing in Sanlitun for an hour, I received 65 hugs from passersby, a warm kiss, a group photo, a short spell of wanting to cry, and a spirit not overwhelmed by public opinion. Of course, there were also those who didn't come forward to hug but stayed back to watch and take photos to post on WeChat. These are all things that I didn't expect beforehand.

Returning to the hotel, I looked at the video and realized that one auntie started crying when she hugged me. I didn't know her, and didn't know why she was crying, but I could see that she was crying deeply and passionately.

I'm guessing that those who hugged me were not necessarily all supportive of gay people, but maybe that day that auntie was feeling unhappy, or maybe got into an argument with her husband that she has disliked for many years. She suddenly saw a young person with the courage to be himself when she was taking a walk around square, reflecting to herself that she too easily bowed down by society's demands, which led to the unfortunate and bruised self she has become today.

Like many of the people above I went from having trouble explaining to my family my real reason to come home, to worrying about no one hugging me during my performance art. Really, my closet is not different from yours or anyone else's- our closets are all the same. Sure, I can give you 100 reasons why coming out as gay is harder than coming out of other closets, but the important thing is that hardness is not relative, hard is just hard.

We all have our own forms of difficulty. Who can say that one person declaring bankruptcy is harder than telling someone that you've deceived them? Who can decide if coming out gay is harder than telling your five year old child that you've just divorced your partner?

Here there isn't a more difficult, only difficult. Sometimes we hide ourselves in closets, as they let us feel safe, or at least safer than what lies on the other side of that door.

"Coming out" implies that we will inevitably lose friends, parents, or others close to us. Will they be disappointed, angry, or something else? These are all problems we often run into. But, it seems like precisely because these problems are too scary, we do not have the audacity to courageously seek answers. We maintain our silence towards these problems, as if discussing these things not only not have a result but will also evoke anxiety and leave behind the culture and lifestyle that we've become so familiar with.

When you don't start these hard conversations, you keep the truth about yourself a secret, and you're essentially holding a grenade. Perhaps you always try your best to strive for success, while not letting your parents, friends, and colleagues feel disappointed. But if you don't throw this grenade away, it will kill you.

We are out in this world, regardless of how young or tender we are, we should all go out and play. No matter what your closet is made out of, it is no place for a person to truly live in.

Stand out, don't just "come out. "

Stand out, and feel the possibility of love.

Being loved isn't passive. In front of being loved is yourself moving one step forward, standing up, bravely catching the love.

Linjie Deng
March 20, 2017
New York City, Brooklyn

05

FEEDBACK

LEARNING

SUCCESS FAILURES

Success:

This article was published in the March 20, 2017 of The Jinrongbaguanv and more than 100,000,000 people across China read and shared this article within 23 hours. The next day this article was picked up by a number of media outlets and spread across China's cyber world. (Zank, Sohu, Tencent, Today's Headline, Weibo.) More and more young people are interested to know more about gayness topic, even they are people of the older generation.

Failures:

This article is a little lengthy. Some people do not have time to read such a long article. Shorter papers are easier to read than longer ones in the internet age. People read differently on the internet than they do in print. They are generally looking for a quick read when they're online.

Feedback:

1. Last night, I check my son's social media account when he sleep. He save your article. So I read your article too. Now I understand my son. and this morning I cooked breakfast and I take the initiative to talk with him. thank you help our home get warm back.
2. After I read your article, I came out of the closet last night.
3. Thank you, let me not lower self head brave work. And your encourage me to open the door of my closet. I will come out with a warm smile on my face.

Learning:

1. A great article is one of the best ways to engage with the topics being discussed.
2. Think about camera position (for example, close-up versus wide shot), sequence and the style in which I visualize the storytelling.
3. A storytelling can also be used to make a video clip, for example, about the unique selling points of my design.
4. A storytelling can also help me to communicate with my stakeholders.

PROTOTYPE 3

06

INITIAL RESEARCH

According to The Economist, what could help spread tolerance about gayness? If the past half-century is any guide, the prime movers will be gay people themselves. The more visible they are, the more normal they will seem. But it is hard to be the first to come out in a country (China) where that means prison or worse. Besides, most of Chinese young people after watching my video and reading my article find themselves willing to face the challenge and solve this problem. But they really do not know how to deal with gayness problem. Think of the last time you were in a situation where you weren't totally sure how to behave. Maybe it was your first time in a new church, or your first time in another country, or maybe it was a dinner party where you didn't know many of the guests. What did you do to try to fit in?

You watched other people, of course.

In ambiguous situations, we all look to others for cues about how to behave. Maybe you've had the experience of scanning the table frantically at a fancy dinner, trying to figure out which fork is for dessert.

When the environment is unfamiliar, we sprout social antennae that are exquisitely sensitive. In the fancy dinner situation, our antennae work great, because someone at the table knows what to do, and we just copy that person. But sometimes in times of change, nobody knows how to behave.

INITIAL APPROACH

Step 1: Framing:

Empathy: Frame the design problem to be solved for next step. An effective method for framing a complex design problem is to use empathy. (What would you do/how would you feel if you were gay?)

Focus on the characteristics of the target audience: Frame the qualities of the experience you want to provide to the target audience through the new design solution.

Step 2: Exploration:

Search for situations where that problem has been successfully solved. (I interviewed young people from all over the world in New York Times Square.)

Precedent: search for a distant concrete entity that already has the quality I intend to convey.

Step 3: Applying:

Structure: Retrieve the relationships from the existing answers and processes in the inspirational domain. Abstract from what I see and capture the essence of that relationship. Transform and transfer the abstracted relationships to fit my new problem situation.

Apply to the situation: To explain the rules of the Togayther game, show three good examples in the new video. Transform them to match the inherent constraints of the Togayther game at hand.



TARGET AUDIENCE

Most gay people are born to straight parents. Those parents often want them to function in what they think of as the mainstream world, and those gay people have to discover their identity later on. Forcing gay men to “come out” can have terrible consequences. We need to realize that anyone can be deceived, hiding ones sexual preference is not that difficult. We need to create an environment where people do not feel the need to lie to each other. We want to create a better future for our next generation.

I found that the most effective target audience for this project is

my own generation of men and women,

who in the near future will be faced with raising children

who will grow-up in this emerging social environment.



INSIGHT

So far, the Chinese young people after watching my first video and reading my article already have a better idea about what gay lifestyle is. They express their own attitudes about gayness on social media. They talk about gayness with each other. It's a first step, but not good enough.

The majority of Chinese expecting parents (who belong to the generation most directly influenced by the single-child policy) need direction, not motivation. The hope is that every expecting parent is going to be motivated to support their child if their child was gay.

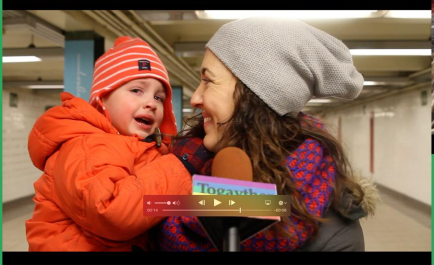
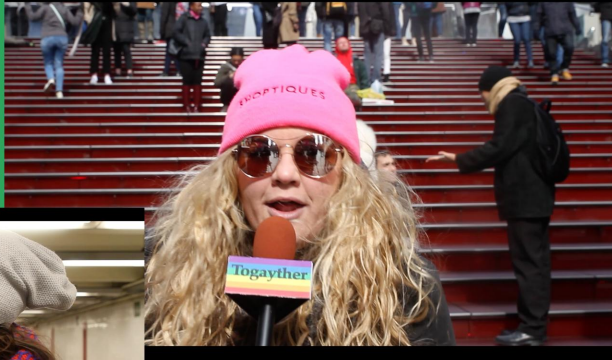
But how?

Knowledge does not change behavior, but it can influence behavior. For example, if knowledge determines behavior you would not expect to find highly educated professionals engaged in exactly the behaviors that they are trained to teach others to resist. We have all encountered crazy shrinks, obese doctors, and divorced marriage counselors. So its not likely that just teaching expecting parents about gayness will be sufficient to change their behavior. They have to practice it.

They need to take action.



What would you do If your child was gay?





Success:

The Togayther Weibo page got four hundred thousand plays within one week, and over four hundred people talk about this topic on Weibo. The answer from New Yorker (me) has struck a chord with Chinese young people, especially those in similar circumstances, and has garnered many positive reviews on public good sites such as danlan.org. The Togayther Liberation Movement is like a snowball rolling bigger and bigger, and it has already been to 42 cities through China.

TOGAYTHER

Togayther Liberation Movement Game rules

1. You need to shoot a video to answer the question: What would you do if your child was gay?
2. You can hold a paper with message “Togayther” in your hands, and you can pass on your video to your three friends.
3. You can upload your video on Weibo & We-chat (a popular Chinese social network app) and hashtag # Togayther

Failures:

I spent too much time looking for the right structure and content of video to design or thinking about the video post production, when instead I should have been considering more practical and valuable factors: such as delays caused by bad weather. Still, without spending this much time testing ideas and looking for resources, I never would have discovered, or been inspired to produce the video as I have. Design is a messy process, that requires a lot of time and energy. Not just to come up with an idea. But then to make the idea work. That’s the real challenge to design.

06

FEEDBACK

LEARNING

Feedback:

三三不是我：
@An6l My son, mom support you.

Pregnant woman: Hi, baby! No matter you are male or female, gay or straight. Don't kid yourself. Don't deceive others. I hope you live a life you're proud of.

章早早: Son! @峻叔 No matter who you love. I will always love you and love your lover, my son.

Learning:

1. Now more and more expecting parents join the Togayther Liberation Movement on Wechat, and they are “acting their way into a new way of thinking.” Most important, it was not what I did, but it was their change that happened inside them, something that arose from the local power and love of their friend circle.
2. My role was only to help them see that they could do it, that they could support gayness on their own. When so many of expecting parents were doing something, there was strong social pressure to go along. The Togayther Liberation Movement, in effect, is about changing the culture of China.
3. We talk too much, love too little and lie too often. Gay people are not demanding special treatment, just the same freedoms that everyone else takes for granted: to love whom they please and to marry whom they love.
4. People need a leader. They want to follow those that are passionate about something. Gay rights cannot be won in the court rooms, but in the hearts and the minds of people.

NEXT STEP

1. Encourage more people to join in the “To-gayther” liberation movement and pass on their video to their friends by Chinese Weibo social media.

2. Find cooperation with local organizations.

3. Also continue acting as an art director to design public performance art work for China team in NYC Pride Parade June 25, 2017.

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