

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Antigay Discourse on Chinese *Tongqi* Forum

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Although gay marriage has been legalized in more than 20 countries and regions around the world, the marriage between gay people is illegal in China. This article adopts a critical discourse analytical approach to explore how Chinese gay men (CGM) are represented in netizens' antigay discourse in Chinese online forum, while also inquiring into the gender ideologies reflected by these representations. For this purpose, we assembled a collection of 3,476 user comments posted on the *tongqi* "homo-wives" forum in China. *Tongqi* is a label commonly used to describe and refer to heterosexual women who unwittingly marry gay men in mainland China. We examine netizens' posts by applying Ruth Wodak's discursive strategies that include nomination, predication, and argumentation. Our findings reveal that CGM are mostly represented as husbands who bring trauma to their wives, and as fathers who have a negative influence on children. Meanwhile, we explicate gender ideologies that emerge from public representations of gay men in China.

Keywords: Chinese gay men, representations, antigay discourse, *tongqi* forum, discursive strategies, gender ideologies

Currently, most Asian countries have a long way to go before legalizing same-sex marriages. In mainland China, for instance, same-sex love is not widely accepted, and people of the same sex are not allowed to marry. Although recent decades have witnessed increasingly tolerant attitudes in China toward gay people (Hu, 2018), stigmas and stereotypes of these people still prevail. A case in point is that many Chinese hospitals still equate homosexuality with HIV/AIDS (e.g., Huang, 2018; Wang & Ma, 2021), despite the depathologization of homosexuality in 2001. In addition, several Chinese websites, such as the *fantonglian* "antigay-love" forum and *tongqi* "homo-wives" forum, abound with antigay sentiments. In the

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fantonglian forum, for example, gay people and their supporters who favor same-sex marriage in Taiwan are pictured by homophobic people as betrayers of the Chinese nation (Liu, 2021), which might create an impression that to legalize Chinese same-sex marriage still “remains more slogan than reality” (Wang & Ma, 2021, p. 198).

Such situations and statuses of gay men in China have attracted the attention of researchers, but the existing literature has largely drawn on Chinese newspaper reports as data sources (e.g., Chang & Ren, 2017; Huang, 2018; Wong, 2005). We attempt to make an empirical contribution by conducting a critical discourse study of public antigay comments in the online *tongqi* forum. Specifically, we investigate public representations of Chinese gay men (henceforth CGM) and also explicate gender ideologies underlying these representations.

To this end, we first introduce the *tongqi* phenomenon in mainland China, followed by a section that reviews previous studies on antigay discourse in China. After that, we describe our research data and present the theoretical framework. We then present our critical analysis of antigay discourse in the *tongqi* forum, while explicating gender ideologies reflected in this discourse. Finally, we offer a brief conclusion of our analysis.

Contextualizing *Tongqi* in China

Because of the unlawfulness of gay marriage, gay men in mainland China who desire to be married to women usually have two main options: *xinghun* (contract marriage) and *pianhun* (fraud marriage). The former means “a queer form of marriage” between Chinese gay men and lesbian women (Huang & Brouwer, 2018, p. 155). The latter refers to the phenomenon that gay men fraudulently get married with straight women by not disclosing their same-sex sexuality. In such a fraudulent marriage, heterosexual women as wives of CGM are commonly called *tongqi*. Researchers estimate that there are currently 3.87 million *tongqi* in mainland China (Li, 2018), and the number is still on the rise. Having fallen into the trap of the so-called heterosexual marriage, most *tongqi* lack “sexual satisfaction in marriage” (Zhu, 2018, p. 1076) and even bear no children. Gay husbands of the *tongqi* chose to marry these women but concealed their sexuality a priori. Also most of *tongqi* never have opportunities to learn the truth that their husbands only use them as shields to defend pressures from families and the society, as gay marriage is still unlawful in mainland China.

Living in their fraud marriages, some of the *tongqi* get sexually transmitted diseases from their husbands’ extramarital gay relationships, some suffer from domestic violence abuse, and others have depression disorders and even commit suicide (see Figure 18). Some *tongqi*, however, upon learning the truth about their husbands, divorce them. The remaining *tongqi* choose to continue their marriage for reasons that pertain to “source of finance, and ability of children to cope with the information” (Shi, Xu, & Zheng, 2020, p. 453). However, the Chinese Law of Marriage contains no special chapter on divorces between gay men and straight women, which would cause difficulties for *tongqi* to achieve a state-sanctioned divorce, a situation reflected in their nickname of 边缘人 “marginal women.” For many of these women, the online *tongqi* forum provides a public space where they can express their dissatisfaction with and anger toward gay men.

Literature Review

In China, the last two decades have witnessed an increasing research interest in discourses surrounding gay men from the perspectives of linguistics (e.g., Wang & Ma, 2021), sociology (e.g., Zhang, 2014), and communication studies (e.g., Chang & Ren, 2017). Scholars across different disciplines have been working to understand this social issue. However, the extant literature remains limited.

Wong (2005), for example, examines news coverage of gay men in Hong Kong by analyzing the *Oriental Daily News* (ODN). His analysis reveals that editors and journalists of ODN tend to portray gay men negatively and derisively as engaging in disapproved behavior and lewd conduct. Zhang (2014), after examining the impact of socialist ideologies on Chinese sex culture, finds that the overall tone toward homoeroticism tended to be negative from 1949 to 2013. Several of Zhang's (2014) particular observations are worth noting. First, the author mentions that homoeroticism in the Maoist period was politically and culturally suppressed and perceived as a vice of the capitalist West. And that phenomenon was only slightly changed when China entered the postreform era in 1978. Second, Zhang (2014) notes that homoeroticism was represented as the sole source of AIDS, which itself was further signified as a capitalist disease. Third, the author observes that homoeroticism (perceived as) arising out Western capitalist individualism conflicted with socialist collectivism in China. Chang and Ren (2017) carry out a critical discourse analysis of Beijing newspapers' representations of Chinese lesbian women and gay men and conclude four major types of representations. Their study shows that homosexuals are portrayed not merely as victims of crimes (gay men victimized in robbery and blackmail; lesbians victimized in rape) but also as criminals who jeopardize Chinese social stability. Their other two representations are that gay men and lesbian women are violent attackers and destroyers of traditional marriages. Similarly, Huang (2018) conducts a discourse analysis of *People's Daily* (PD) reports on homosexuality. He finds that the attitudes of PD toward homosexuals have been positively changing but that negative evaluations still prevail. In particular, he notes that when describing gay people, PD often associates gay men with social threats, disease transmission, illegal activities, immorality, and abnormality. A more recent study on this topic by Wang and Ma (2021), however, suggests that official English-language media in China have begun to portray gay people in a positive manner because the Chinese government endeavors to build up a tolerant and harmonious society. Such a slightly positive representation of CGM, however, may not change the repeatedly prejudiced representation of gay men in general media such as the city tabloids (Chang & Ren, 2017), which silence them and associate them with HIV/AIDS.

Most of the aforementioned studies investigate antigay sentiments in Chinese print media, and far less research focuses on other social media such as Facebook (Wang, 2020) and online forums (Liu, 2021). For example, Wang (2020) examines how Facebook users frown on same-sex bills to be enacted as law in Taiwan. Wang's findings reveal that Taiwan netizens tend to reference referendum results as their central argument that traditional marriage is set for a man and a woman rather than for two people of the same sex. Analogously to Taiwan's proposal of same-sex marriage, the topic has also stirred up heated discussions among netizens in mainland China. A case in point is Liu's (2021) study that investigates the ways in which homophobic sentiment is articulated in Chinese antigay online forum. Based on posts discussing Taiwan's legalization of same-sex marriage, his research shows that Chinese netizens' antigay discourse is always interwoven with the nationalist ideology. According to Liu's conclusion, homophobic

people often construct CGM who support Taiwan's legalization of same-sex marriage as unpatriotic and doomed. Building on these studies, the present article aims to contribute to the knowledge about discourses around CGM by exploring how ordinary people use language to represent gay men in mainland China.

Methodology

Data: Forum Posts

This study uses data from a Chinese-based online *tongqi* forum (see Figure 1) that is a part of Chinese leading research engine service, Baidu. Together with the *fantonglian* forum and *tongfu* (homo-husbands) forum, *tongqi* forum has become a key platform for ordinary people to reveal fraudulent marriages and help heterosexual women defend their rights, with 6,329 active posts as of November 10, 2021. We first contextualize this forum as an "information cocoon" (Sunstein, 2006, p. 9), given that it is more socially and culturally unique as well as salient in the Chinese context. Though news discourse around CGM has started to show positive signs (see Huang, 2018; Wang & Ma, 2021), the *tongqi* forum is still heavily skewed toward readers' abusive comments on gay people because commenters only post what comforts them. Forum members seem to get trapped into the cocoon of aggregated prejudice by excluding everything perceived as positive about gay men. That is, the comments on this forum often reinforce the stereotypes of and stigmas toward CGM and spread hate toward them.

In addition, we regard *tongqi* forum as a "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 5) in that the forum serves as an interactive platform for antigay people, particularly *tongqi*, to openly participate in criticizing CGM and their lifestyles. This could be seen from the homepage design of this forum that uses two symbols (♂ and ♀) to highlight that despite getting married with unwitting woman, the gay husband still has same-sex attraction to another man, and the statement 反对gay欺骗和利用女人生孩子—"oppose gay men who deceive [straight] women and take advantage of their uterus." In other words, the *tongqi* forum sets no barriers to public participation and affords a convenient space for its members to articulate antigay sentiments. Moreover, a trend is found that experienced *tongqi* are most likely to help newer *tongqi* coming to this forum by answering their queries. Such participation not only helps the experienced ones believe that their posts and comments matter but also strengthens connections among *tongqi* as forum members.

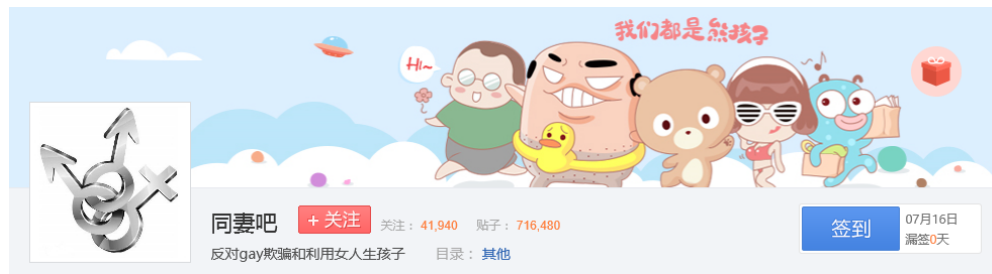


Figure 1. Homepage design of the tongqi forum. (Source: <https://tieba.baidu.com/f?kw=%CD%AC%C6%DE&fr=ala0&tpl=5&dyTabStr=MCw2LDQsMiwzLDEsNSw4LDcsOQ%3D%3D>)

Before we delve into a detailed discourse analysis, our preliminary observation shows that there are three main threads on the topic of Chinese same-sex love in this forum, containing 716,480 comments (July 16, 2020). These three threads are identifications of whether the poster's boyfriend/husband is truly gay, critiques of the poster's boyfriend/husband as gay, and consultations of whether/how to disclose gay identity of others. Finally, we harbor no ethical concerns about data collection since online forum posts are anonymous and freely accessible (Coimbra-Gomes & Motschenbacher, 2019).

Our data collection involved four stages. First, we repeatedly read all forum posts and their comments that appeared between January 1 and June 30. We then selected the top 20 posts in terms of their "post popularity" (Karlsen & Scott, 2019, p. 3). The more popular a post is, the more comments it receives from online readers. The 20th most popular post received 105 comments. However, in *tongqi* forum there were two posts with 105 comments. Therefore, two of the authors had a discussion as to whether both of the posts would be included or excluded as data before consulting the third researcher. A final decision was made to exclude these two posts, and we obtained a total of 19 posts with 3,476 comments. An overview of the comment numbers of each post can be seen in Table 1. Finally, we translated all comments into English as close to their original meanings as possible rather than directly verbatim.

Table 1. Numbers of Tongqi Forum Comments Collected.

Year	Period	Date	Number
		Jan-4	114
		Jan-6	227
		Jan-16	129
		Feb-14	127
		Mar-11	109
		Mar-15	308
		Mar-18	168
		Apr-2	161
		Apr-6	124
2020	January–June	Apr-10	347
		Apr-11	169
		Apr-11	111
		Apr-13	155
		Apr-29	138
		May-16	132
		May-18	153
		May-21	183
		May-29	355
		Jun-18	266

Method: Discursive Strategy

Our analysis of these forum comments is mainly informed by Ruth Wodak's (2001, 2016) discourse-historical approach that "integrates social theories in order to define the (textual-discursive, socio-institutional, socio-political, historical) context in which discursive events happen" (Catalano & Waugh, 2020, p. 123). As one strand of Critical Discourse Studies, Wodak's (2001) analytical framework suggests five discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation. For want of space, however, we draw only on the first three strategies. Table 2 below shows the definitions of each discourse strategy while also presenting a preview of how they are evoked in the analyzed data. Despite their initial applications to political discourse on refugees and immigrants, Wodak's (2001, 2016) discursive strategies such as we use have recently been extended to investigate gender and sexuality issues. Studies of this kind include Atanga's (2012) discursive constructions of model traditional Cameroonian women, Bennett's (2017) discourse representations of gay pride movements in India and South Africa, and Sagredos's (2019) analysis of newspaper coverage of sex workers in Greece. However, such studies focus solely on institutional discourses (e.g., parliamentary debates and news reports) and leave other discourse types unexplored.

Procedurally speaking, we conducted data analysis in three steps. First, the sentences of each comment were manually typed and saved in an Excel file for the convenience of our identification. We then identified how same-sex-attracted men in China have been named, labeled, and referred to in the

online environment. For instance, same-sex-attracted men were labeled *jilao*, pervert, and monster. In addition, we identified the qualities, features, characteristics, and activities associated with these people. In the second step, we classified what had been identified in step one, including the topoi of argumentation strategy. Finally, in the third step, we offered explanations as to what informed antigay discourse in the *tongqi* forum and why such prejudiced discourse had been produced and circulated. This step helped to explicate gender ideologies that underlay the discourse.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies Used in the Data.

Definitions and brief explanations

Nomination

relates to what names and labels are given to same-sex-attracted men.

Names same-sex-attracted men by reference to hybrid terms (see Figure 2) and indigenous terms (see Figure 3); names same-sex-attracted men by reference to derogatory labels (see Figure 5) and sexual antilanguages (see Figure 8).

Predication

relates to how same-sex-attracted men are described, featured, and qualified in the form of evaluative expressions.

Describes same-sex-attracted men by using negative adjectives (see Figure 10); Describes same-sex-attracted men by means of presupposition (see Figure 14), allusion (see Figure 16), and irony (see Zuogemanhuajia, 2020).

Argumentation

relates to justifications for name-calling practices of and evaluations on same-sex-attracted men.

Justifies the descriptions of same-sex-attracted men by reference to topos (see Figures 17 and 18) and fallacy (see Figure 22).

Analyzing Discursive Strategies of Antigay Discourse

In the ensuing sections, we unveil three of Wodak's (2001) discursive strategies that were found to be employed by forum members in their antigay discourse. These strategies are nomination, predication, and argumentation, and we find that they all contribute to negative representations of CGM. Comments presented in the analysis were selected for their typicality and significance in demonstrating the representations of social actors, gay men in our case.

The Nomination Strategy to Name CGM

We start with the practices of naming Chinese same-sex-attracted men. Naming appears to be a complex matter, as Wong (2016) argues, because ideologies can be captured from name-calling practices. For instance, there is no consensus among the lesbian group about how to label same-sex-attracted

women in Hong Kong (Wong, 2016). In fact, the complexity or controversy of naming Chinese sexual minorities is never restricted to lesbian women. Instead, the same is true for naming men attracted by the same sex. Ho (2008) provides several labels for these people in contemporary China, including *tongzhi*, *tongxinglian*, *tongxing'ai*, *duan bei*, money boy, and gay. More existing studies on media representations of Chinese men with same-sex desire tend to label them as gay (Chang & Ren, 2017; Wang & Ma, 2020), homoeroticism (Zhang, 2014), and *tongxinglian* (Huang, 2018).

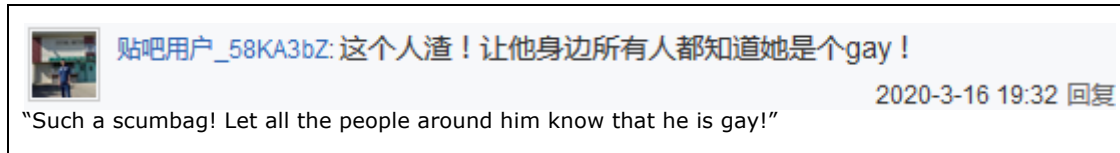


Figure 2. Comment 1 (Source: Tongqi, 2020e).

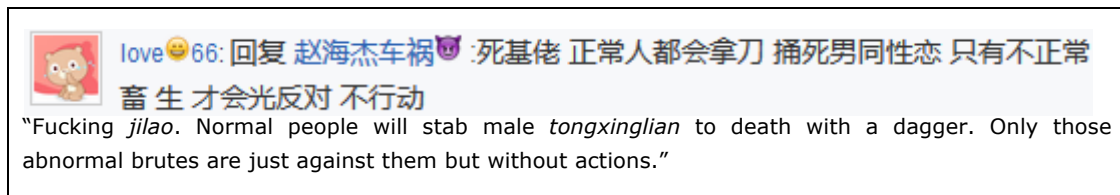


Figure 3. Comment 2 (Source: Tongqi, 2020a).

Compared with previous research, public naming practices of same-sex-attracted men are more diverse and can be roughly categorized into three labels. This diversity is supported by Ho's (2008) argument that "there is no fixed term [with which] to speak of an 'authentic' Chinese same-sex identity" (p. 492). The first of the three label categories is the most general and includes the term *gay* and other indigenous terms like 同性恋 "*tongxinglian*" and 同志 "*tongzhi*," as evidenced by Figures 2 and 3. However, we find no use of such loanwords as *homosexual* and *queer* in forum comments.

The second label for these people sounds more derogatory and insulting. In the *tongqi* forum, a recurrent name is 基佬 "*jilao*" (see Figures 3 and 4). Its Cantonese pronunciation is similar to that of gay. Other names include 变态 "pervert," 骗子 "fraudster," 狗 "dog," 人渣/渣男 "scumbag," 魔鬼 "demon," 怪物 "monster," 垃圾 "rubbish," and 搅屎棍 "shit-stirrer." The last four of these names are impersonal, which may signal forum commenters' tendency to dehumanize Chinese men who are sexually attracted to men (Figures 5 and 6). The noun phrase 搅屎棍 "shit-stirrer" serves as a double-layered metaphor. Here, the word of stirrer refers to not only the gay man himself, but his penis in particular, and anal penetration during gay sex is described as stirring shit, echoing similar descriptions of anal sex among gay men discussed in Fongkaew et al. (2019).

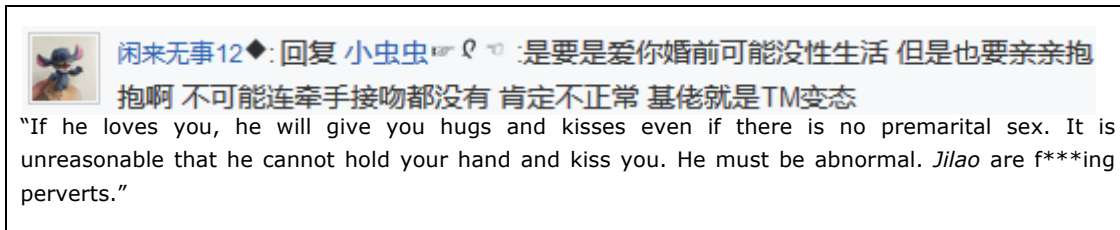


Figure 4. Comment 3 (Source: Tongqi, 2020b).

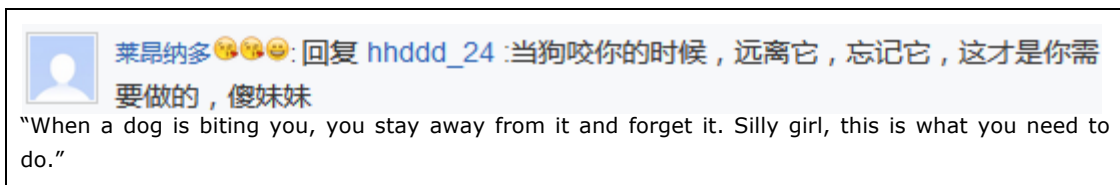


Figure 5. Comment 4 (Source: Tongqi, 2020i).

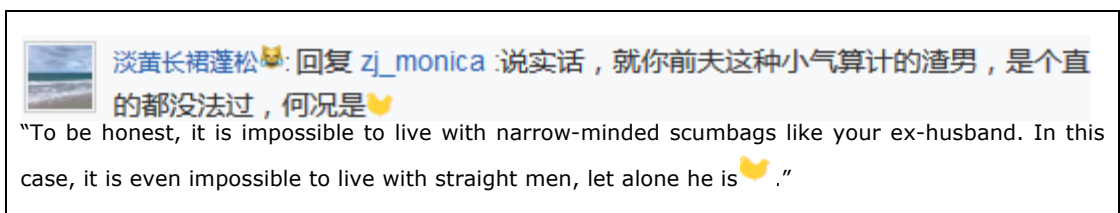


Figure 6. Comment 5 (Source: Tongqi, 2020f).

Of interest in Figure 6 is the commenter's use of a metaphor through the hen emoji to express her feelings; the Chinese pronunciation of hen is a homophone of the *ji* in *jilao*. Since symbolic resources such as emojis and images can make meanings and reflect attitudes (O'Halloran, Tan, Smith, & Podlasov, 2011), we derive two implications from this usage. One, the commenter discredits the gay husband by equating him with poultry. Two, the term hen in China is a euphemistical reference to female prostitution. In this context, a metaphor surfaces that the original poster's gay husband is a prostitute that services men, given his penetrated role during gay sex. CGM have thus become perceived as buyers/sellers of sex trades, insinuating that there is no such thing as true love among gay men. Similarly, Ho (2008) observes that male prostitutes have often been perceived as male same-sex prostitutes. A broader implication of this perception may be that marginalized groups such as gay men are more likely to be tied to negative evaluations. An impressive case in point is that transsexual men in Thai newspapers are perceived as a "second type (class) of women" and even labeled as "neo-vagina" or "anus" (Fongkaew et al., 2019, p. 268).

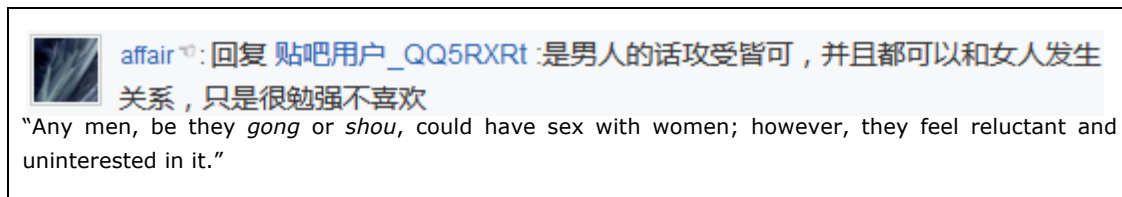


Figure 7. Comment 6 (Source: Tongqi, 2020d).

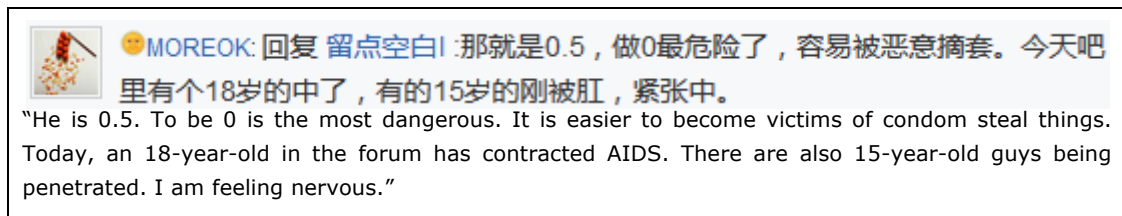


Figure 8. Comment 7 (Source: Tongqi, 2020r).

Aside from the above two naming practices that explicitly label Chinese same-sex-attracted men, the third label category manifested by nouns and numbers is more implicit (Figures 7 and 8), including 攻 (*gong*, the one performing the penetrative role during sex), 受 (*shou*, the one receiving the penetration during sex), 1 (the top), 0.5 (top or bottom), and 0 (the bottom). Such labels are instances of what we call sexual antilanguage. As for this point, we argue that sexual antilanguage instantiates Halliday's (1976) "antilanguage" characterized mainly by metaphors at three levels (phonology, lexicon, and semantics). Vocabularies of sexual antilanguage are concerned with sex and sexualities (such as sexual organs, roles, activities, desires, and relationships) and circulate among members of CGM.

Following this, we observe that the names that denote sexual positions are examples of lexical metaphors. More specifically, *gong* and *shou* derive from the metaphor of war. That is, practicing anal intercourse is compared with fighting a war. Furthermore, the shapes of 1 and 0 represent a penis and an anus and are respectively appropriated to designate the penetrative and penetrated roles of CGM. The choice of these in-group (CGM) terms may indicate that same-sex love in China has become more and more visible and may have become a part of normal life. In particular, since being gay may have become a less and less covert practice, even the out-group (Chinese heterosexual women) may be aware of argots used among gay men. Despite the increasing visibility, however, same-sex sexuality in mainland China is still an urgent social issue that needs to be addressed.

In Chinese ideologies of gender, patriarchy plays a critical role by endowing men with superiority and women with inferiority. Moreover, in many other Chinese cultural traditions women are positioned as dependent on and submissive to men (Yu, 2021). However, the nomination process in the *tongqi* forum perceives same-sex-attracted men as female prostitution, which explicitly belittles them in the guise of the traditional patriarchal ideology. Today, such norms still hold true even for women whose husbands are gay, as women have been positioned to be born to serve "sexual and reproductive functions" (Yu, 2021, p. 260) in patriarchal marriages and societies (see Figures 27 and 28). This is exemplified by cultural beliefs

and values such as 女子从夫便是德 “women’s subordination to their husbands is the virtue” and 不孝有三，无后为大 “there exist three unfilial acts, the worst of which is having no descendants.”

The Predication Strategy to Describe CGM

Previous institutional discourse on sexual minorities has been predominantly negative and unfriendly, particularly in mainstream Chinese newspaper coverage of gay men (Chang & Ren, 2017; Huang, 2018; Zhang, 2014). Perhaps unsurprisingly, we find extensive examples of negative representations of CGM in forum comments. However, what is most noticeable is that several distinct representations emerge from these comments. For instance, CGM become perceived as patients who lack sexual interest in women, fraudsters who hide their gay identity to marry straight women, immoral husbands who take advantage of women to have children, and threats that influence children negatively.

These negative representations are manifested in various ways, most of which are negative adjectives and evaluative nouns. Such words include *deceptive*, *selfish*, *psychological distortion*, *effeminate*, and *promiscuous*, and they are mainly used to describe gay men in aspects of morality (Figure 9), behavior (Figure 10), personality (Figures 10–12), and sexual relations (Figure 13).

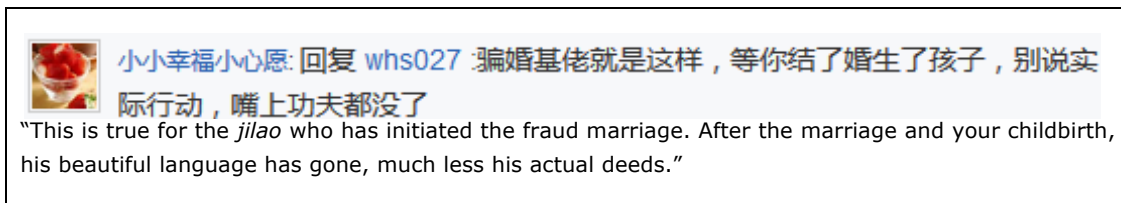


Figure 9. Comment 8 (Source: Xiaoxiaoxingxiaoxinyuan, 2020).

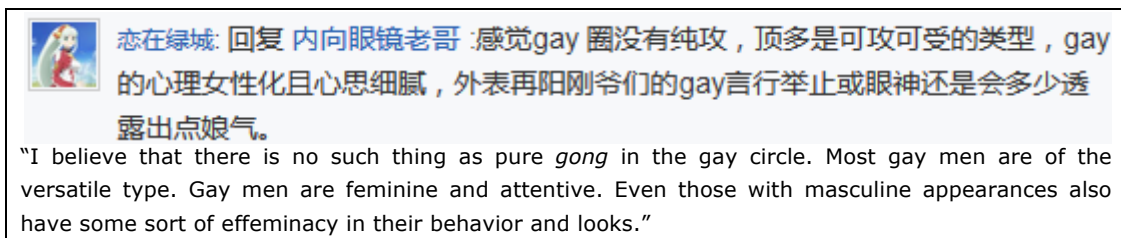


Figure 10. Comment 9 (Source: Lianzailvcheng, 2020).

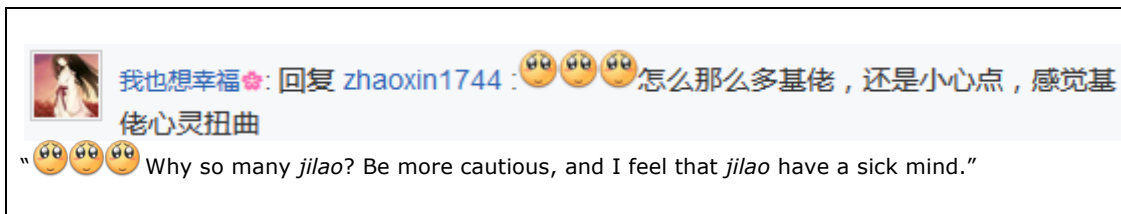


Figure 11. Comment 10 (Source: Tongqi, 2020k).

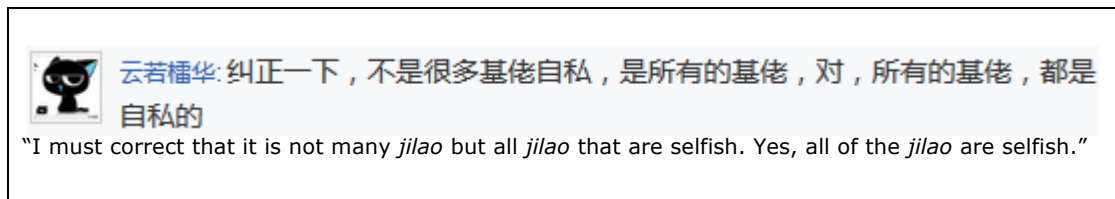


Figure 12. Comment 11 (Source: Yunruoleihua, 2020).

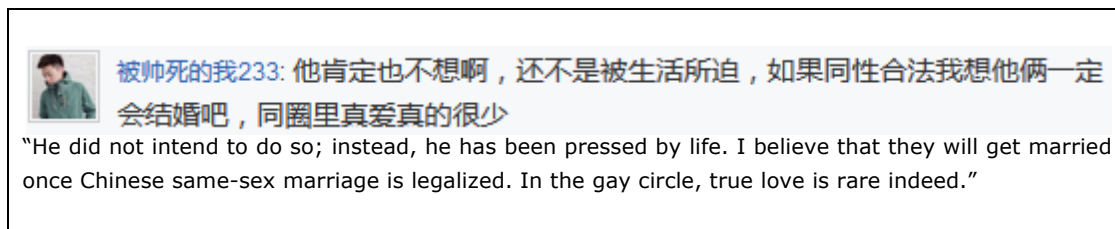


Figure 13. Comment 12 (Source: Beishuaisidewo233, 2020).

Figure 9 echoes previous comments by using the pronoun 这个 “this.” It insinuates that gay men are dishonest by nature, and they excel in deceiving their families about their sexualities. Only when they beget an heir to carry the family bloodline will they take off their masks. By contrast, *tongqi* are placed as victims of fraudulent marriages carried out by their gay husbands. Figures 11 and 12 use a common strategy, namely that the number of same-sex-attracted men is intensified through quantifying adjectives, 那么多 “so many” and 所有 “all.” The author of Figure 11 reminds readers of the potential threat from gay men by using an adjective 小心点 “cautious.” Furthermore, through the strategy of self-repair (不是 . . . 是 . . . “not . . . but . . .”), Figure 12 not only creates a sense of certainty of the threat but also reinforces antigay sentiments toward gay men in general. Figure 13 positions same-sex relationships between gay men as more fragile and hence insincere, compared with heterosexual relationships, an evaluation that resembles the representation of gay relationships as unsteady, fleeting, and merely sexually rather than affectionately intertwined (e.g., Baker, 2005; Chang & Ren, 2017).

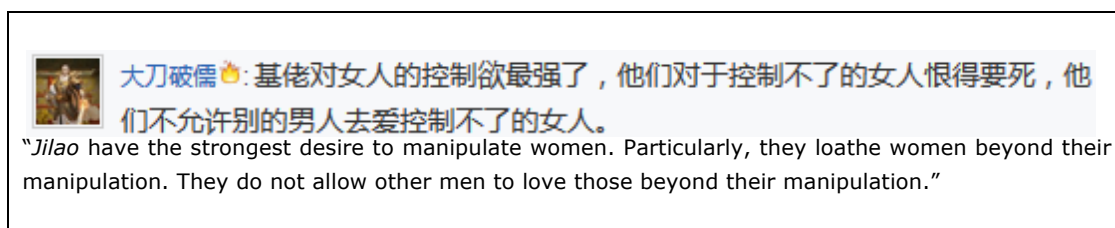


Figure 14. Comment 13 (Source: Tongqi, 2020).

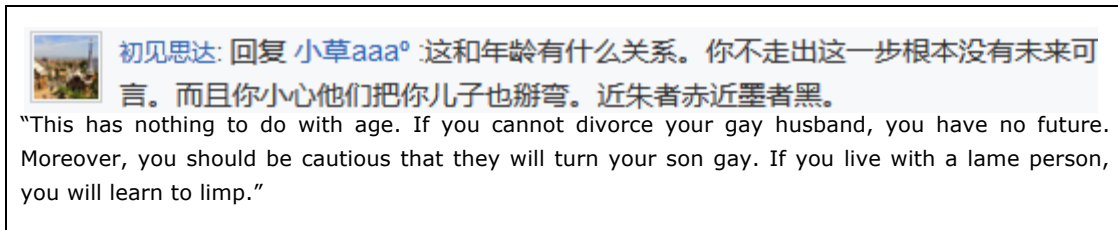


Figure 15. Comment 14 (Source: Chujiansida, 2020).

Presupposition and allusion are also employed in the comments to negatively evaluate CGM. For instance, Figure 14 presupposes that you are screwed if you are beyond the manipulation of your gay husband. A seemingly contradictory representation is made here. That is, on the one hand, gay men are positioned as manipulative and controlling of their heterosexual wives. On the other hand, gay men are said to lack interests in their wives, such as sexual interests (see Figures 19 and 20). This contrasting positioning of CGM serves to highlight them as control freaks, a common label used to name them. Here, we concur with Huang's (2018) claim that it might be inaccurate to exaggerate and extend the misbehavior of a few gay men to the whole gay circle. The comment in Figure 15 presupposes that for the sake of her son, this poster as *tongqi* should stay away from her fraud marriage; otherwise, her only child will suffer from sexual abuse and turn gay. It appears that the accusation of gay men's influence on children is a prominent element of antigay discourses (e.g., Baker, 2005; Yanita & Suhardijanto, 2020). This comment also intensifies undesirable consequences strategically by citing a Chinese proverb manifested in the final sentence, as proverbs function to caution and advise (Bennett, 2017).



Figure 16. Comment 15 (Source: Tongqi, 2020p).

Figure 16 alludes to an imaginary world in which the citizen will get into trouble under the regime of the newly elected U.S. president. Allusions such as this insinuate that the gay man who is the subject of this comment is as insane as the president of the United States, and that the original poster, as *tongqi*, will end up by drawing fire against herself.

Although negative evaluations prevail, we also find that several forum comments allocate positive traits to CGM, as described in Zuogemanhuajia (2020). However, we should acknowledge two points. First, we find comments like this that use positive words to be rare. Second, such comments disguise real antigay intentions in the form of litotes. In other words, the adjective 温柔 "sweet" originally has a positive connotation and is normally used to describe females. In this case, however, it has been appropriated to implicitly evaluate gay men rather than women in an ironic manner. As a result of such an appropriation, the commenter's perceived effeminacy of CGM is further intensified. A similar portrayal of gay men can be

seen in Figure 10 above, which makes an implicit comparison between gay people and straight men. Such kind of comparisons strengthen the binary characteristic of gender and sexuality. That is, masculinity has nothing to do with gay men because they are characterized by the perceived femininity.

Among forum comments, such hegemonic masculinity figures importantly in public representations of CGM. However, the question that follows is: how to define masculinity? Hegemonic masculinity embodies the most honored way of being a man, which ideologically legitimates the global subordination of women to men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). When exploring masculinity in British society, Baker and Levon (2016) find that types of men differ in the types of masculinity attributed to them. For instance, middle-class men are characterized by privilege and working-class men are characterized as striving for themselves and by themselves, while upper-class men are characterized as deviant and unmanly. For Levon, Milani, and Kitis (2017), violence, crime, and physical toughness best characterize masculinity in South Africa. In addition, Hu's (2018) diachronic analysis of Chinese masculinity finds that China has witnessed shifting understandings of masculinity over past decades (1951–2016). Such interpretations of masculinity imply that masculinity may vary from culture to culture, race to race, and time to time. The *tongqi* forum commenters, however, argue that what makes a man is his masculinity, and that it is masculinity that distinguishes men and women. They harbor the view that being gay fails to be masculine. From this perspective, it comes as no surprise that effeminate gay men are evaluated on the *tongqi* forum as less-than-real men because of their possession of feminine traits and their failure to be sexually active with women. These gay men are more qualified to be 闺蜜 "besties" rather than husbands and fathers. Note that in the circle of some CGM, the perceived effeminate gay men are judged to be unpopular, as evidenced by sexual antilanguage labels and sexist lexicons that include 娘炮 "sissy gay men," 娘一 "feminine top," and 母零 "feminine bottom," which compare effeminate gay men as women.

The Argumentation Strategy to Justify Descriptions of CGM

This section examines the arguments used to depict CGM negatively. According to Wodak (2001, 2016), the strategy of argumentation is characterized by topos and fallacy. This is particularly the case for the *tongqi* forum comments. However, because of the space limit of this study, we focus only on several prominent topoi.

First, the topos of deception (namely "fraud marriage") features most heavily in our data. Figure 17 shows personal experiences of an unhappy *tongqi* trapped in a fraud marriage like her mother-in-law. This comment may invite the reader to consider the heredity of homosexuality. Also notable is Figure 18 whose commenter makes explicit reference to the tragedy of Mrs. Luo to highlight the terrible risks of living with gay men. Specifically, Luo, as *tongqi*, committed suicide by jumping off her apartment in 2012 after receiving provocation from her gay husband. Nevertheless, we have to mention that this comment might be fallacious. A formula, "y, because x" (Wodak, 2016, p. 372) can illustrate the fallacy clearly. That is, because Luo's suicide was caused by her gay husband, likewise, the poster to whom this comment is replied will not have a good fate because of her husband's homosexual orientation. As a result of this fallacy, a panic discourse is created that portends to picture an ominous image of all CGM labeled as *jilao*.

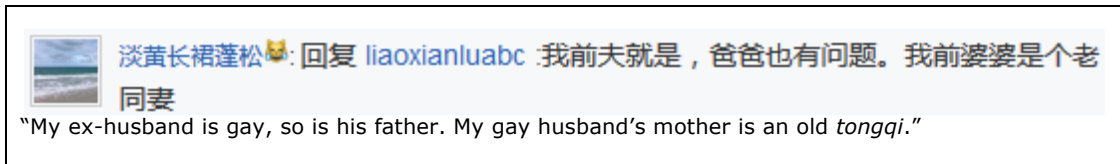


Figure 17. Comment 16 (Source: Tongqi, 2020g).

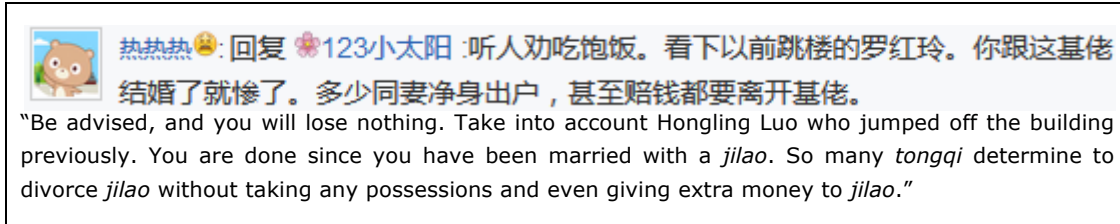


Figure 18. Comment 17 (Source: Tongqi, 2020c).

Representations of gay men in these comments signify the traditional Confucius ideology of marriage in China. When adult men are at the right age of 22, they are expected to 成家立业 "get married and have his own business" and 传宗接代 "have children to continue his family line." This is also the case of some CGM who are perhaps more pressured to produce "legitimate offspring" as their "family line" to deflect social stigma and relief from family pressures (Wu, 2003, p. 118). Family-line has become perceived as a procreative task that needs completion. To complete this task, gay men are most likely to marry straight women without acknowledging their sexual orientation. By entering into a fraud marriage for the purposes of procreation, some CGM can avoid hurting their parents (Chou, 2000). However, some CGM tend to continue to disguise their gay identity by using their wives and children as shields. Given this behavior from gay men and the trauma it has brought to the *tongqi* (Shi, Xu, & Zheng, 2020; Wang et al., 2020), many forum commenters have condemned the immoralities of CGM (see Figures 9 and 25). Similar social phenomena have occurred elsewhere in Asia because of the unlawfulness of gay marriage. For example, McLelland (2000) observes reluctance among Japanese gay men to give up either their male or female partners because dating men satisfies their sexual desires, while marrying straight women is the prerequisite to procreation.

The second recurrent topos is that of (male) frigidity. In the *tongqi* forum, most CGM are represented as people who have no sexual interest in women, as exemplified by Figures 19 and 20.

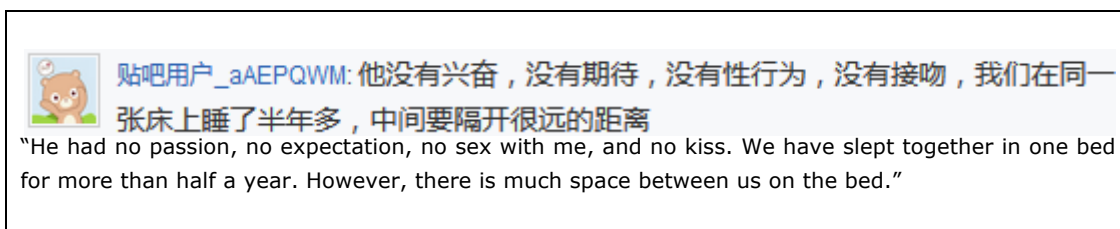


Figure 19. Comment 18 (Source: Tongqi, 2020j).

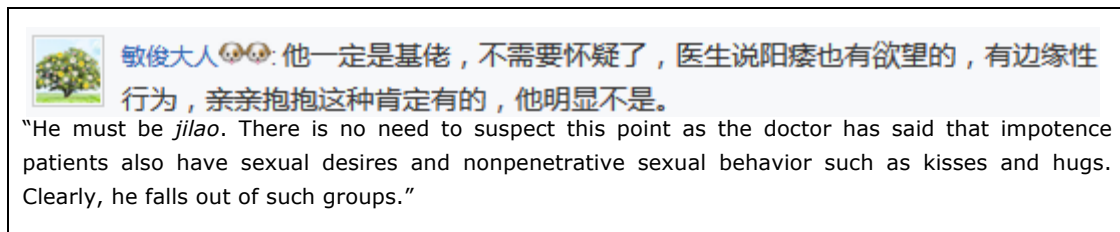


Figure 20. Comment 19 (Source: Tongqi, 2020m).

In Figure 19, the commenter employs the negation 没有 "no" several times to emphasize that her husband has not been engaged in sex with her for a long period. Figure 20 continues to talk about how to distinguish gay men from straight men from the perspective of sex. The commenter here uses an "expert authority" legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 107), namely the doctor's utterance, to support her opinion. Both examples focus on unsatisfactory sexual performances from CGM, whereas Figure 21 further highlights that gay men's lack of libido toward women is attributed to misogyny rather than sexual dysfunction or (male) frigidity. Furthermore, gay men's perceiving themselves as women (Figure 22) also causes them to have no interest in female bodies.

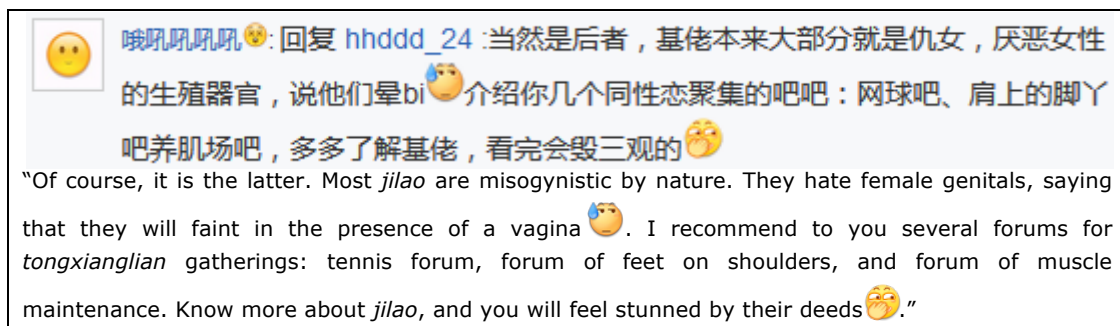


Figure 21. Comment 20 (Source: Tongqi, 2020q).

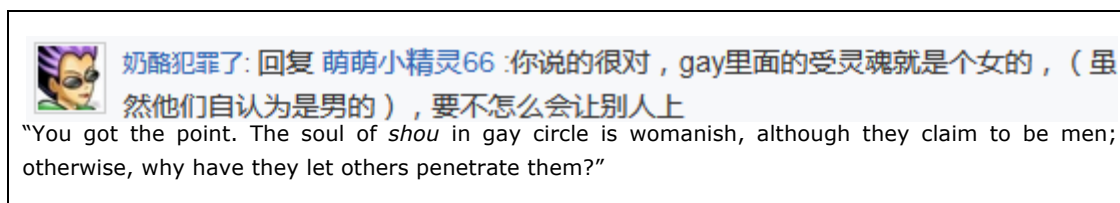


Figure 22. Comment 21 (Source: Nailaofanzuile, 2020).

A broader implication of such comments is possibly that the general public generally perceives same-sex sexuality as a sexual act rather than an identity. This is supported by previous observations that being gay is regarded not as an identity but as a sexual behavior (Baker, 2014; Yanita & Suhardijanto, 2020). In addition, these comments tend to "essentialize" (Wood, 2007, p. 19) men by assuming that all men share a defining characteristic that they are sexually attracted to women. Notably, here lies a fallacy that men lacking in sexual desire toward women are definitely gay, which neglects other social groups such

as eunuchs. However, the truth is that CGM increase their sexual autonomy by showing sexual desire toward people of the same sex. In mainland China, this is commented as a challenge and contradiction to the heteronormativity.

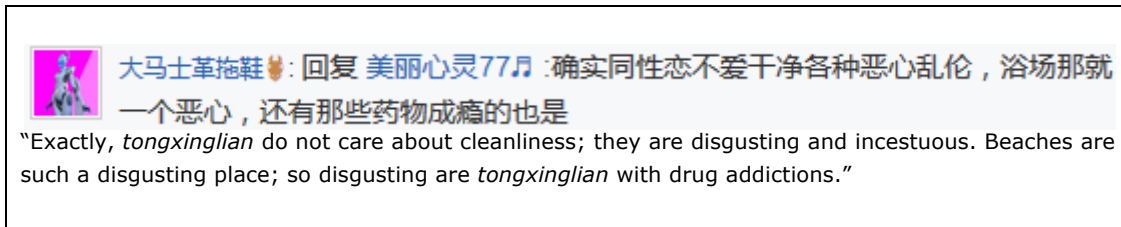


Figure 23. Comment 22 (Source: Tongqi, 2020o).



Figure 24. Comment 23 (Source: Tongqi, 2020h).

Other comments focus on CGM's engagements in multiple sexual activities, which is the third topos of promiscuity. In terms of previous studies (Baker, 2005, 2014), negatively representing gay people as promiscuous is a discourse strategy used by newspapers to discredit the gay circle. Similar representations have also been found in the *tongqi* forum. Evidence for this is Figure 23, in which gay men are described as engaging in incestuous relationships. The description is achieved via negative adjectives like 恶心 "disgusting." This is also evidenced in Figure 24, where the commenter employs a tag question to indicate the promiscuity of CGM. However, this example lists more places for casual gay sex compared with Figure 23. Consequently, gay men contract diseases when they are engaged in casual sex. This contributes to another topos, that of the prevalence of sexual diseases among gay men, as illustrated in Figures 25 and 26.

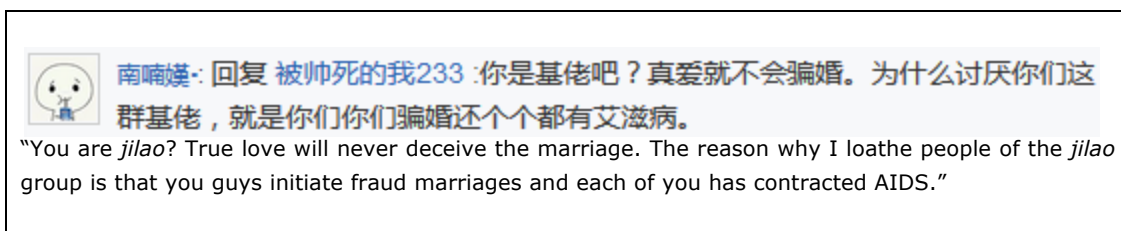


Figure 25. Comment 24 (Source: Tongqi, 2020s).



Figure 26. Comment 25 (Source: Xiaopengyou870903, 2020).

Figure 25 mentions AIDS among CGM, while Figure 26 concentrates on two more terrible diseases among gay men. Such comments are perhaps not surprising as it has been revealed in news coverage that CGM are heavily associated with the HIV/AIDS virus (Wang & Ma, 2021; Zhang, 2014). Moreover, both comments rely on the plural personal pronoun 你们 "you" to make a dichotomy between "us" healthy and "them" unhealthy groups. In addition, we also encounter two fallacies here. The first one is that being gay is equal to deceiving women in the heterosexual marriage. However, this comment might be overgeneralizing, since more and more CGM have chosen not to get married with straight women (Wen & Zheng, 2020). The second fallacy is that a man has AIDS virus if he is gay. To authenticate these claims, for instance, the author of Figure 26 concludes this comment with a "Mythopoes" strategy (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106) manifested by her curse-implying language. For her, deviant practices such as being gay will get punished by the mythical figure, God. Similarly, explicit references to God/Allah as the alliance to discredit and repress gay men have been documented in the contexts of Ireland (Bartley & Hidalgo-Tenorio, 2015) and Indonesia (Yanita & Suhardijanto, 2020).

Finally, we direct our attention to the topos of reproduction because children are traditionally viewed as the extension of family bloodlines in China. Despite this view, Figure 27 implies that it is immoral for CGM to marry unknowing straight women by using a double negation. The commenter further quantifies the number of these people using the tool of "aggregation" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 37) to highlight the popularity of such fraud marriages model in mainland China. Unlike Figure 27, Figure 28 is less explicit as it uses a metonymy to disclose the intensions of CGM engaged in marriages. The metonym 子宫 "uterus" here is employed to represent childbirth. The commenter further modifies uterus using the adjective 免费 "free" to imply the innocence of *tongqi* (and therefore the immorality of gay men). Such a modifier also serves as a criticism of fraud marriage between a gay husband and a straight wife. In addition, a tag question is used to intensify the undesirable risks of being pregnant, given that the pregnancy of *tongqi* signals the completion of tasks assigned to gay men as husbands (Chou, 2000).

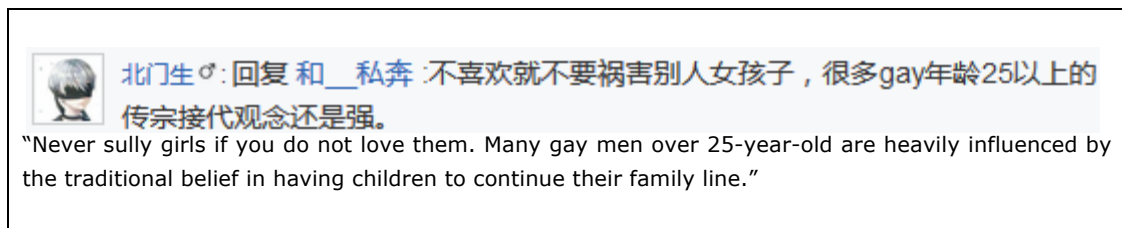


Figure 27. Comment 26 (Source: Tongqi, 2020n).

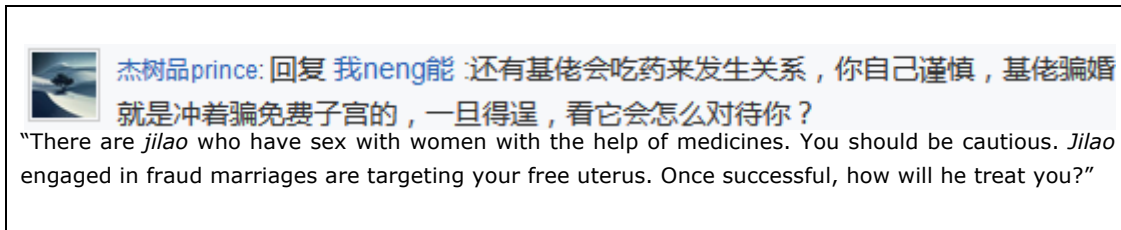


Figure 28. Comment 27 (Source: Jieshupinprince, 2020).

Conclusion

This article investigates antigay discourse in Chinese cyberspace (namely the *tongqi* forum) by examining nominational, predicational, and argumentative strategies. Our findings show that, while public forum names for same-sex-attracted men are more diverse compared with previous research (e.g., Huang, 2018; Wang & Ma, 2021), these name-calls are largely negative and derogatory. We also find an increased choice of sexual antilanguage to label same-sex-attracted men in mainland China. This may suggest that nonheteronormative love, such as the love between gay men, is attracting more and more attention from the general public.

Findings also reveal that CGM are typically represented in the *tongqi* forum as: patients who lack sexual interest in women, fraudsters who marry straight women by hiding their gay identity, immoral people who take advantage of women to give birth, threats that influence children, perverts whose behaviors are effeminate, sex addicts who often engage in promiscuous sexual activities, and virus carriers who are likely to have contracted sexual diseases.

With regards to these representations, we attempt to make three points here. First, compared with the findings of Huang (2018) and Zhang (2014), representing gay men as husbands who bring trauma to their wives and as fathers who have a negative influence on children comes forward as distinct. Second, many of these representations confirm extant studies in global contexts such as studies about discourses of gay men circulated in the United Kingdom (Baker, 2005, 2014), Indonesia (Yanita & Suhardijanto, 2020), and Thailand (Fongkaew et al., 2019). Third, our analysis indicates that the representation of CGM as a whole has been shaped by multiple gender ideologies, such as patriarchal ideology, hegemonic masculinity, and marriage ideology. On the one hand, forum comments perceive the *tongqi* phenomenon as a reflection of patriarchy and heterosexual marriage, as women are commonly expected to be good wives who will give birth to children to fulfill filial obligations. On the other hand, prevailing portrayals of CGM as effeminate and dishonest lend support to traditional masculinity and marriage expectation in China.

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Tongqi. (2020k, April 19). 🙄🙄🙄怎么那么多基佬，还是小心点，感觉基佬心灵扭曲 [🙄🙄🙄 Why so many *jilao*? Be more cautious, and I feel that *jilao* have a sick mind] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6608243436?pn=1>

Tongqi. (2020l, April 23). 基佬对女人的控制欲最强了，他们对于控制不了的女人恨得要死，他们不允许别的男人去爱控制不了的女人 [*Jilao* have the strongest desire to manipulate women. Particularly, they loathe women beyond their manipulation. They do not allow other men to love those beyond their manipulation] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6612096130?pid=131439840026&cid=0#131439840026>

Tongqi. (2020m, April 25). 他一定是基佬，不需要怀疑了，医生说阳痿也有欲望的，有边缘性行为，亲亲抱抱这种肯定有的，他明显不是 [He must be *jilao*. There is no need to suspect this point as the doctor has said that impotence patients also have sexual desires and nonpenetrative sexual behavior such as kisses and hugs. Clearly, he falls out of such groups] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6615861591?pn=1>

Tongqi. (2020n, April 25). 不喜欢就不要祸害别人女孩子，很多gay年龄25以上的传宗接代观念还是强 [Never sully girls if you do not love them. Many gay men over 25-year-old are heavily influenced by the traditional belief in having children to continue their family line] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6612096130?pid=131439840026&cid=0#131439840026>

Tongqi. (2020o, April 29). 确实同性恋不爱干净各种恶心乱伦，浴场那就一个恶心，还有那些药物成瘾的也是 [Exactly, *tongxinglian* do not care about cleanliness; they are disgusting and incestuous. Beaches are such a disgusting place; so disgusting are *tongxinglian* with drug addictions] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6649572156?pid=131890171760&cid=0#131890171760>

Tongqi. (2020p, May 4). 这个gay是要当政治家的男人，等他当上美国总统有你好果汁吃 🤔🤔 [This gay is the man who is gonna be a politician, and after his election as the U.S. president, you are in deep shit 🤔🤔] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6608243436?pn=4>

Tongqi. (2020q, May 6). 当然是后者，基佬本来大部分就是仇女，厌恶女性的生殖器官。说他们晕bi 🤔介绍你几个同性恋聚集的吧吧：网球吧、肩上的脚丫吧养肌场吧，多多了解基佬，看完会毁三观的 🤔 [Of course, it is the latter. Most *jilao* are misogynistic by nature. They hate female genitals, saying that they will faint in the presence of a vagina 🤔. I recommend to you several forums for *tongxianglian* gatherings: tennis forum, forum of feet on shoulders, and forum of muscle maintenance. Know more about *jilao*, and you will feel stunned by their deeds 🤔] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6615861591?pn=3>

- Tongqi. (2020r, May 18). 那就是0.5, 做0最危险了, 容易被恶意摘套。今天吧里有个18岁的中了, 有的15岁的刚被肛, 紧张中 [He is 0.5. To be 0 is the most dangerous. It is easier to become victims of condom steal things. Today, an 18-year-old in the forum has contracted AIDS. There are also 15-year-old guys being penetrated. I am feeling nervous] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6689303970?pn=1>
- Tongqi. (2020s, June 9). 你是基佬吧? 真爱就是不会骗婚。为什么讨厌你们这群基佬, 就是你们你们骗婚还个个都有艾滋病 [You are *jilao*? True love will never deceive the marriage. The reason why I loathe people of the *jilao* group is that you guys initiate fraud marriages and each of you has contracted AIDS] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6552482159?pn=1>
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- Yunruoleihua. (2020, April 9). 纠正一下，不是很多基佬自私，是所有的基佬，对，所有的基佬，都是自私的 [I must correct that it is not many *jilao* but all *jilao* that are selfish. Yes, all of the *jilao* are selfish] [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/6591593190?pid=131206857448&cid=0#131206857448>
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