CONDITIONAL SPACES

Hong Kong Lesbian Desires and Everyday Life

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Introduction

There is an urgency to understanding the city of Hong Kong through its spaces. A city with a population of 7 million living on only 25 percent of its developed land, the portrayal of Hong Kong as a geographic token of urban density has prompted many studies.[1] It can be perceived as a global fascination with how one city has managed to cope with limited physical land space and a dense population. The city's economy is heavily dependent on land development and property sales. If I take the state imposed policy of land scarcity as a contributing factor to the overall cultural identity of the city itself, then it is inevitable that we examine the connections between spaces and sexual identities in Hong Kong.

Previous sociological studies on marginalized sexualities in Hong Kong have been primarily identity-based or focused on human rights and legal issues in gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities. I propose that in order to analyze same-sex sexualities in Hong Kong, specifically, women with lesbian desires, one needs to view them as a theoretical project encompassing cultural studies, feminism, urban sociology and queer theory. Whereas each theoretical concept can be recruited, discussed and applied to the understanding of sexualities, I contend that only through an intricate approach that takes into account the spatial element of Hong Kong as a late capitalist city and neoliberal economy, with its global effects and influences upon lesbians' articulation of desires and acts of everyday resistance, can we develop a framework that is constitutive of lesbian subjectivities. Whereas academic scholarship in the area of sexualities and spaces is abundant, this book aims to bring the notion of lesbian and spaces together in a theoretical exercise to focus on the forces that determine the conditions and possibilities for the materialization of lesbian desires and identities in Hong Kong.[2]

Upon returning to Hong Kong in July 2003, I went to Club 64 in Lan Kwai Fong for a meeting organized by the Women Coalition of Hong Kong SAR.[3] I walked past bar tables and chairs to a well-lit backroom and met twenty or more women who were discussing issues related to coming out at work and love relationships. I felt awkward and mildly nervous; after all, I had been immersed in North American queer organizing and felt that I needed to shake myself out of a cocoon in order to reorient myself. Being upfront and direct, I introduced myself briefly as a novice on the scene and a research student. I faced questions about why I had returned and why I would be doing research on Hong Kong "les".[4] I replied slowly, since I still had not caught up with the city's pace, giving simple reasons for my motives. I came to realize that these gatherings not only provided a social space for Hong Kong women who might not identify themselves as lesbians, bisexual women or queer to talk about their everyday lives, but also, as a physical space for women to get together. Located in Lan Kwai Fong in the middle of the financial district, where multinational businesses set up their global offices in skyscrapers, Club 64 attracted a loyal clientele of community activists by being a strong supporter of social justice causes. A countercultural site, the space essentially provides a much-needed physical space for meetings. The name of the bar itself was a memorial to the Tiananmen massacre in Beijing on 4 June 1989. As its lease agreement expired in 2004, Club 64 has since reinvented itself as Club 71, its new name in commemoration of the July 1st march organized by the Civil Human Rights Front.[5] The reinvention of Club 71 signifies a transition in time, place and cultural identity.

I spent the summer months getting to know the scene in Hong Kong. Through a contact from my thesis adviser Travis, I came to know about a women's party held at Queen's Disco located in a 1961 building named Luk Hoi Tong Building. The party was not advertised as a lesbian or bisexual women's party. The event was publicized by leaflets, on the Internet, via word of mouth and by mobile phone text messages. I went to the party with two new friends and sat at a round table by the margins of a large space. A runway in the middle divided the entire area with lounge chairs arranged in circles. An estimated crowd of three hundred were at the party but social interactions in small groups made it difficult for me to make immediate new contacts. As I focused on the space and the people in it, I came to experience a historical moment of being in the city of Hong Kong as a lesbian, researcher and observer. I felt outside of the space almost ephemerally. The site of the party itself was a landmark in Central. The Luk Hoi Tong Building housed the historic Queen's Cinema, medical clinics, tour companies, hair salons and other businesses. As ticket sales gradually dwindled for the cinema, its

space diminished to make way for a disco in order to generate profit. Queen's Disco was well known to the local gay scene, as large-scale gay parties were held regularly at the venue. Yet, it remained less known among lesbians and bisexual women. In 2007, the Luk Hoi Tong Building was demolished and the site is currently being rebuilt as a financial complex. What is salient to me is the fact that spaces have disappeared and have been displaced in an era when public reaction against the demolition of cultural landmarks seemed to coincide with an emerging visibility of a discourse surrounding civil rights, cultural belongings and sexual identities.

The writing of this book is primarily based on ethnographic research carried out between 2003 and 2008. I have conducted participant observations, informal interviews and thirty in-depth interviews. Twenty-eight women identify themselves as biologically female with lesbian desires. I interview two transgender lesbians for the study. One interview subject is biologically male and in transition to becoming a woman. Another interview subject identifies as a female-to-male transgender person after our initial session. I am aware of the dangers and limitations in representation with tokenism at its worst; yet excluding these transgender voices would only further marginalize their existence in lesbian communities. At the very least, I do not claim to have representation of Hong Kong transgender lesbians at all for this project. Throughout the book, I use the phrase "Hong Kong women with lesbian desires" to define women who have same-sex desires, regardless of their sexual orientation, and to include women who may not identify themselves as lesbians or bisexual women but engage in same-sex relations. By situating my discussion in sexual practices and erotic desires, I intend to bring out stories that might not have been narrated by subjects who assume distinct sexual identities as a means of coming out to themselves or to others. Pseudonyms were used unless otherwise requested by informants. Some informants who are activists preferred to use their commonly used names in the media.

There are many culturally specific taxonomies in the way informants express their gender identities.[6] A TBG (tomboy's girl) refers to a girl or woman who is usually attracted to a masculine woman, but also includes androgynous women. A TB, or tomboy, refers to a masculine or androgynous woman. A "Pure" describes a gender identity in between a TBG and a TB with multiple erotic possibilities not restricted to TB and TBG coupled relationships.[7] The term "les" is often used to refer to a woman with same-sex desires regardless of sexual identification as a bisexual woman or a lesbian. None of the interview subjects identified as queer per se, although some informants had been engaged with queer politics but were reluctant to bear the label. I also view the writing of this book as contributing to a process of localizing the

essence of queerness.[8] Tensions between the terms "*tongzhi*" and "queer" were raised among activist communities during the 1990s. The identification with *tongzhi*, a commonly used term to denote sexual minorities in Hong Kong, was only mentioned by interview subjects who aligned themselves closely with the *tongzhi* social movement. The origins of the term "*tongzhi*" can be traced back to cultural icon and film critic Edward Lam, who adopted the term from a Communist denotation of "comrade". By calling a programme of ten films at the 1992 Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival "New Queer Cinema", Lam suggested that the films depicted representations of homosexuality.[9] The word itself has been rejected by activists and community members based on its exclusive use to refer to gay men in general. In the introduction to a seminal collection of Chinese essays on sexual politics, independent filmmaker and scholar of queer studies Yau Ching reiterated the challenges faced when deconstructing queer discourse and sexual identities into localized contexts, but also the critical need to have Chinese language material available and widely accessible on the subject itself (Yau, 2006).

Postcolonialism and City Spaces

Hong Kong is often defined by its colonial past, as if a precolonial history has a limited existence and, worse still, the present as a bonafide postcolonial city. It was as if the history of Hong Kong began with British colonialism and its legacy continued to linger on as a defining historical moment, thereby presenting the city with a narrative that is overshadowed by postcolonialism. Understanding postcolonialism in the city by studying the trajectories of political, social and cultural identities, resistant spaces and Hong Kong history seems logical yet also dangerous. Dangerous in the sense that the term "postcolonialism" itself is deeply embedded in contested territories. It is a term that provokes and invokes a long list of concerns about colonial histories, psychological topographies, social conditions, body politics and regulated erotic desires. Postcoloniality in Hong Kong has significantly different characteristics from other British colonies. Thomas W. P. Wong contends that the British colonial government did not have "to standardize, to neutralize or to arbitrate" conflicting racial groups or communities divided by dialects, and suggests that the geographical close proximity of Hong Kong to Mainland China has resulted in a homogenous society with cultural values aligned with those known as Chinese culture (Wong 2003, 228–29). Kwai-Cheung Lo and Laikwan Pang posit a Hong Kong person as "the hybrid, diasporic subject who stands ambivalently against nationalism as univocal discourse" yet is capable of seeing him or herself entangled in "postcolonial consciousness and

sociability" (Lo & Pang 2007, 353). They further assert that if "the moment of Hong Kong's decolonization" can be pegged with clear markers, then it is often associated with "the nationalistic discourse of 'return' (huigui)" to Chinese nationalism embedded within global capitalism (349). It is in this ambivalent era of a postcolonial past and a problematic Chinese future that I find myself *relocating to and re-familiarizing with* a society in which I was brought up and in which I have lived for fifteen years, only to come to terms that in order to theorize my lived experience, I have to strive for an intellectual enquiry on Hong Kong lesbian desires, at times ostensibly ignorant of the overall environment.

In analyzing the economic miracles of the four East Asian economies, economist Li Kui-Wai employs a paradigm of economism to trace the post-war capitalist development in the various locales. He demonstrates that economism emphasizes economic growth over any other non-economic concerns; for example, fair distribution of resources or issues of rights and equality (Li 2002, 2).[10] Economic growth is the driving force behind East Asian economies which basically compromises activities that are deemed disruptive to society, for example, union mobilizations, strikes and political demonstrations. The economy depends on political stability in order to set consistent investment policies and to develop a viable financial environment. The demands for a democratic government have been put aside in order to ensure economic well-being. Li describes Hong Kong's "economic pragmatism" as a government that favours economic activities and tends to exhibit an impatient attitude towards political affairs (Li 2002, 183). I have come to understand Hong Kong and its overall environment as what Rosemary Hennessy refers to as a capitalist project in which "capitalism functions as a complex structured totality" (Hennessy 2000, 9).[11] I am drawn to the thought of a totalizing capitalist environment, not to simplify multiple ideological forces into economic determinism, but to highlight the less discussed connections between economics, spaces and sexualities firmly situated in the context of Hong Kong.

If we take economic stability and progress as key defining factors of what the city holds dear, then it is vital to regard land property as the most expensive commodity in Hong Kong. After the signing of the Nanking Treaty in 1842, the British colonial government announced the island as Crown Land. By 1898, the Second Convention of Beijing saw the Qing imperial dynasty relinquish the New Territories to a lease of ninety-nine years with the cessation of Kowloon peninsula being sealed in an earlier convention. In order to secure Hong Kong as a colonial trading port and to partially subsidize other British colonial conquests, an inaugural land auction swiftly took place, eventual land transactions succeeded by British companies such as Jardine Matheson & Co.,

Lindsay & Co., and a few Parsis merchants who were former employees of the British East India Company. A few Chinese merchants completed sporadic land transactions, their later generations becoming business and property tycoons in Hong Kong.[12] By the 1930s, land developers in the private sector were in control of housing (Rooney 2003). Faced with a population increase and a post–Second World War economic recovery, the colonial government was more concerned with public hygiene, safety requirements and access to labour. When immigrants began to leave Mainland China due to the rise of communism in late 1940s, they settled in squatter homes built along hillsides, in alleys or on the rooftops of buildings. The aftermath of the Shek Kip Mei fire in 1953 is widely cited as the first governmental intervention into building public housing estates for the community of 60,000 people (Rooney 2003, 22). The next event that prompted the British government to tackle the housing issue was the riots about working conditions in April 1967. The government felt an urgency to address social inequality and hence decided on housing as the key area for community development. A new Hong Kong Housing Authority was established to oversee all public housing estates and to strategize on the overall development of low-income housing. Over the next two decades, new public housing estates were built as "self-contained towns" and new towns in the New Territories began to be developed (Rooney 2003, 37). Different home ownership schemes and government loans were set up to accommodate the increasing numbers of middle-class dwellers, allowing private property developers to increase their profits (Fung 2006, 211).

After 1997, Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa pursued a long-term housing strategy that would guarantee 70 percent home ownership by 2007. The Asian economic crisis led to a collapse of property prices, among other financial catastrophes, and contributed to Tung's eventual resignation. Even though the increased development of public housing estates helped alleviate housing problems, Chan Kam Wah points out that familial ideology was the dominant ideology affecting the development of housing (Chan 1997). It was not until 1984 that single people or two-person households were allowed to apply for public housing. The demand for these flats often outnumbered the available supply. As a result, heterosexual married couples and nuclear family units are still given the highest scores when applying for a public housing flat. The allocation of physical space has to be daring, resourceful and strategic when housing and economic resources are limited. Living space, as a basic necessity, is conditional for many individuals and families. The social and institutional process of marginalizing and excluding a person from society can often be traced back to the allocation of living space.

In this book, I begin with an investigation of the effects of physical land scarcity on the living spaces inhabited by Hong Kong women with lesbian desires and transgender lesbians. The physicality of these spaces is not the only factor I want to examine; rather I intend to expand towards intimate mappings, cultural representations and political sites for a more rigorous consideration of how multi-faceted experiences of living in density shapes one's life and determines how lesbian sexuality manifests itself within and beyond these spaces. In a city like Hong Kong with its modern history situated in a postcolonial past, I strive to understand the social relations within certain spaces and the links between a living room, a busy street, a classroom, a church congregation, a workplace and a queer film festival. I come to understand Hong Kong women with lesbian desires and transgender lesbians as exclusionary to some spaces but participatory in the constant development of new sites where their needs and intimate desires are met. I argue that a preliminary analysis of spaces in Hong Kong can be rooted in a physical sense but that its extension to conditional spatiality as a theoretical concept enables certain spaces to emerge and others to disappear.

Queering Spaces and Timing

Judith Halberstam's assertion of "queer time" and "queer space" directs us towards disrupting "a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality", and even though the reference point for Halberstam's theorization is "the Western human subject", I aim dangerously to split up the phrase into two terms, namely "middle-class" and "reproductive temporality" for the purpose of applying such logic to this study (Halberstam 2005, 1–4). Informants in this study have struggled towards both resisting and embracing an overarching middle-class ideology, and followed the desire for stability via a "reproductive temporality" that is simultaneously grounded in family units but also as significant as in economic configurations. Feminist scholars have long discussed the economic and reproductive functions of family units, but I want to further pursue Halberstam's notion of a queer timing and space to see if it might render a different form of understanding of Hong Kong lesbian desires. Marital concerns and familial expectations may not always be the most apparent priorities for the informants, yet economic self-determination, whether by their own means or by more commonly accepted occupations, can be queer by its own right. What I mean is that Hong Kong women and transgender persons with lesbian desires imagine a queer time and queer space under the rubric of a totalizing capitalist environment that is full of contradictions when it comes to what capitalism symbolizes in their lives, yet

how they have managed to query how non-normative lives can be lived and experienced and how that might help us to understand that queerness can indeed be as contradictory and as continuously unstable as it had first been introduced as a way of thinking. The key question is not how transgressive or queer one can be, but, as Halberstam demonstrates, the critical need to push aside "paradigmatic markers of life experience" and carve out one's own time and space in a queer sense (Halberstam 2005, 2). I aim to understand how informants in this study cope with an environment that is suffocating in its economic determinism but at the same time, promising of ways to subvert these constraints to various forms of self-determination, and to establish a form of queer livelihood that might not be known as *that* queer to begin with. My intention is to complicate whether the necessity to economic self-determination, compounded by one's status as a marginalized subject through one's gender identity, sexual desire and class position, can be suffocating to say the least, since the expectation to fail can be as hard to cope with as the expectation to succeed. So are queer time and timing a consequence of a city symbolized by "borrowed time" and "borrowed place" (Hughes 1976)? And if we use a sense of queer time to understand historical transitions, cultural flows and erotic desires through Hong Kong women and transgender lesbian bodies, then we might come up with more productive ways to understand how queer time and queer space are materialized and actualized through their everyday lives.

Queer and East Asian, Hong Kong and *Tongzhi*

Queer Asian research encompasses studies in different geographic locations, language origins, sexual cultures and urban environments. My past work experience in queer Asian organizing with North American non-governmental organizations has often left me querying the categories of "queer" and "Asian". I found myself taking up multiple subjectivities and geographic positionings as partly Asian Canadian but fairly influenced by a good dose of Asian Americaness, fairly Hong Kong lesbian increasingly leaning towards a form of gender queerness. Commenting on the issue of race in the Stonewall riots, David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom caution me to conduct a meticulous analysis in their statment: "what it is to be queer cannot be understood without a serious consideration of how social differences such as race constitute our cognitive perceptions of a queer world, how sexual and racial difference come into existence only in relation to one another" (Eng & Hom 1998, 12). I have learnt to be productively queer and Asian in this context and with a devoted subject I found myself returning to Hong Kong for doctoral studies,

and learning more on inter-regional information flows within and among East Asian countries, the meanings of sexualities in various locales, and local translations of what accounts as queer sexual cultures. The need to create more inter-regional and intraregional conversations has been observed by scholars invested in shifting the geopolitics of queer studies and reorienting the queer lens to come from within those outside of the "presumed center (both in Asia and non-metropolitan Western countries like Australia)" (Martin et al. 2008, 3). There is also a call for more feminist research into same-sex desires among women's communities in conjunction with critical analysis of the impact of global capitalism on Asian countries, along with the formation and processes of global sexual identities (Wieringa et al. 2007).

Local scholarship on homosexuality was first pioneered by gay activist Xiaomingxiong (also known as Samshasha) with a magazine column and books, including foundational book titles such as *A Chinese Gay's Manifesto* (1980), *The History of Homosexuality in China* (1984) and *Thirty Questions about Homosexuality* (1989).[13] Chou Wah-Shan published a series on *tongzhi* sexualities in the 1990s, featuring coming-out stories from Hong Kong and Beijing lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals, theories on the *tongzhi* subject in relation to traditional Chinese societies and postcolonialism. Chou's prolific publication record and participation in *tongzhi* conferences have seen many community activists, including those in this book, influenced by his works but more so, dissatisfied with his over-generalized and uncritical usage of the term "*tongzhi*" and a lack of in-depth analysis on bisexuality. Anson Mak, along with editors Mary Ann King, Lucetta Kam Yip-Lo and Wong Chun-Pang, point out the limitations of using "*tongzhi*" in the book *Bisexual Desire*, which features writings and theorizations on bisexuality. As a regular contributor to newspaper and magazines, independent filmmaker and video artist Yau Ching's commitment to queer politics is well demonstrated through her continuous interrogations of sexual categories and politics in her writings and media productions. I provide a close reading of her film *Ho Yuk: Let's Love Hong Kong* in the epilogue of this book.

A collection of twenty-six first-love stories, Lucetta Kam Yip-Lo's (2001) *Lunar Desires: Her First Same-Sex Love in Her Own Words* asked for submissions via the Internet in a first attempt to document and legitimize the ongoing existence of Hong Kong women with same-sex desires. Cheung Choi-Wan's (2001) reflective essay offers insights into contradictions and tensions within the mainstream women's movement and discussions on lesbian sexualities. Travis Kong Shiu-Ki theorizes on everyday resistant strategies "against the disciplinary notion of hegemonic masculinity in the straight world and hegemonic cult gay masculinity in the gay world" through life history

interviews with thirty-four gay men (Kong 2004, 6). John Nguyet Erni cautiously warns us about the difficulties in locating queer Asia since "there isn't really a coherent 'queer Asia' to speak about" (2003). Petula Ho Sik-Ying demonstrates the complexities in identity politics when "*lesbigay* individuals" engage in "naming and renaming" amid "strategies of inclusion/exclusion" (Ho & Tsang 2000, 676). Helen Hok-Sze Leung aptly summarizes *tongzhi* research as "scattered ethnographies" (2002) and proceeds to give a thorough examination of Hong Kong cinematic and subcultural texts as representative of queer "undercurrents" (2008).

Figure 1 *Tongzhi Afterwaves* (August 1993 and March 1994) and *Lesbos* (August 15 and October 15, 2005)

The sharing of understanding about same-sex sexualities between Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China has already taken place in *tongzhi* conferences, Asian lesbian and bisexual networks and academic panels. I came to know of a 1990 newsletter publication *Tongzhi Afterwaves* through a contact from Queer Sisters.[14] Having been warned about the editor's likely reluctance to meet me after years of absence in the community, I became more curious to find out how one woman without any official association with an organization at first, decided to put out a newsletter comprising of page after

page of photocopied information from various Chinese newspaper sources. *Tongzhi Afterwaves*, similar to other newsletters from *tongzhi* organizations then, was sent out by mail to anyone who showed an interest in signing up for a copy in the pre-Internet era. I sat down with Waveman for an interview in 2008. She aptly begins with a description on how she craved information in Chinese and proceeded to gather news clippings at random, resulting in haphazard pages of world news, interviews with lesbians and gay men with illustrated appearances, and, in between these clippings, were handwritten comments on the selected media coverage and an occasional advertisement of an upcoming gathering hosted by Queer Sisters.[15] By the time the last newsletter was sent out in 1994, Waveman had two hundred names on her mailing list and a few letters of support from Taiwan readers. Ten years later, a group of students put out a bimonthly publication *Lesbo* with a mission to provide a collage of everyday life stories and news coverage on same-sex intimacies between women. The publication not only featured *tongzhi* news coverage but also creative writing touching on diverse issues that went beyond coming out and sexual identification. The diversity of submissions included letters from parents, love stories, political commentaries, queer research articles, peer advice or counselling articles, and film and book reviews. *Lesbo* was distributed in cafés, bookshops, non-governmental organizations and by mail before its discontinuation two years later. The main difference between the two publications seems to be that *Lesbo* allowed for the active engagement of community members in contributing to the newsletter, for not only were they consuming information but they were also situated as producers of the information.

LGBT Activism and Sexual Citizenship

There is no recent shortage of LGBT activism in Hong Kong and, as David T. Evans (1993) puts forth in his conception of sexual citizenship, of an insistence on understanding sexual politics as interrelated and complementary to each other. The John MacLennan case in 1980 gave rise to a public discourse on sexualities among lesbians, gays and bisexuals in the community.[16] The resulting controversies surrounding the incident forced the colonial administration to address the issue of male homosexuality and paved the way for more direct engagements between homophobic forces and *tongzhi* organizations. Since then, government-appointed commissions and joint meetings between Hong Kong government and local community organizations have been established, with most of the outcomes remaining short of establishing anti-discrimination legislation. In September 2004, a Sexual Minorities Forum was established

to call regular meetings on issues affecting sexual minorities. A year later, a Christian-led conversion and reparative therapy group, New Creation Association, was invited to attend the forum. Local LGBT and human rights groups walked out of the meeting in protest and filed a formal objection against its inclusion. This incident demonstrated the government's effort to appease all groups without understanding the issue at hand. A twenty-year-old man named William Roy Leung challenged legislation on the age of consent that stipulated men under the age of twenty-one who engaged in sodomy could face imprisonment, and called for a judicial review in 2004. In August 2005, High Court judge Michael Hartmann ruled that legislation prohibiting men under the age of twenty-one to engage in sex with another man was unconstitutional and discriminatory against gay men.

In the spring of 2007, the "In/Out: H.K. Tongzhi Art Exhibit", organized by NTXS and partly funded by the Equal Opportunities (Sexual Orientation) Funding Scheme under the Home Affairs Bureau, was classified as "indecent" by the Obscene Articles Tribunal. The same period saw the classification of the Chinese University Student Press and inmediahk.net articles as "indecent" and led to various petitions against censorship of sexual expression. State censorship and ruling through the Broadcasting Authority saw a public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) documentary programme "Gay Lovers" described as "unfair, partial and biased towards homosexuality and having the effect of promoting the acceptance of homosexual marriage" after complaints from Christians in February 2008.[17] In May 2008, a High Court judge ruled that the Broadcasting Authority was restricting freedom of speech by making a discriminatory ruling against the television programme.

In 2008, a record number of three parades were held to demonstrate an increased visibility of Hong Kong lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and their allies, including an IDAHO rally that for the first time mentions the rally to be one against transphobia *and* homophobia, and a Straights for Homos march in Sham Shui Po. In February 2009, around seven hundred people marched on the streets of Kowloon for the protection of civil rights against fundamentalist Christian right factions as a result of community mobilization efforts by a newly emerged Facebook group, Civic Movement Network. By May 2009, over three hundred participants marched annually at the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) Hong Kong marches and took part in what Nancy Duncan refers to as "deconstructive spatial tactics" (Duncan 1996, 139). Familiar march routes often began in a crowded pedestrian area in Tung Lo Wan (Causeway Bay), a catchment area full of migrant workers, shoppers, families and young lovers. Demonstrators walked along Hennessey Road holding placards and yelling slogans next to

cars, passengers on buses and curious bypassers on the road. At least eighteen organizations involved in various social justice causes such as human rights, sexual rights, migrant workers' rights, women's issues, democracy and anti-censorship groups spanning across local, regional and international connections participated in the public demonstrations. The inclusion of same-sex cohabitants under the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance with effect from January 1, 2010 and the ongoing debates on potential amendments made to the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance have seen strong debate between LGBT communities and conservative religious factions, and have also given rise to speculation as to what the enactment of the legislation will mean for Hong Kong society in general.

I rely on cultural theorist Hui Po-Keung's position that the strategy to build coalitional politics is also affected by the way political mobilization efforts have taken shape among marginalized groups, such as workers' unions, migrant workers, environmentalists and cultural preservation groups. Although each group might face different oppositional forces that aim to minimize the significance of these political issues, I argue that it is the inability and incapacity of government officials to deal with diverse and multiple needs that force them to come up with band-aid solutions that eventually prove to be ill-conceived, contradictory and void of a longer commitment towards social justice. The series of incidents point to a heightened awareness of a human rights discourse not limited to those involved with the Hong Kong *tongzhi* movement but also the wider public, who have been made aware of social justice issues through the media. An immediate effect of this visibility can be seen in the bombardment of homophobic attacks launched by fundamentalist Christian groups on LGBT communities through media campaigns and political infiltration. In this book I am concerned with how an increasingly visible public discourse on sexual rights interrelates with the everyday lives of Hong Kong women with lesbian desires and transgender lesbian desires. I aim to investigate the conditions for allowing certain spaces to be politicized and how the respondents in the study made sense of such spaces. To bring it back to my earlier argument on conditional spatiality, I intend to demonstrate how the respondents choose to participate in or to withdraw from political spaces such as protests, courts and media arenas within their immediate circumstances.

Everyday Life and Ordinary Spaces

Everyday life is at once ordinary and strange, familiar and distant, transparent and opaque. Beyond the scope of daily routines, tending to everyday life is an ambitious task; as cultural theorist Ben Highmore rightfully asserts, "to invoke an ordinary culture from below is to make the invisible visible, and as such has clear social and political resonances" (Highmore 2002, 1–2). The task of disrupting the ordinariness of our daily lives lies in assigning and destabilizing meanings, querying common gestures, and demarcating particularity from generality. To seriously pursue everyday life as a research subject is to embrace Raymond Williams's statement: "culture is ordinary: that is the first fact" (Williams 1958, 93). Perhaps to understand the intricacies of the lives and spaces inhabited by Hong Kong women and transgender persons with lesbian desires is to complicate ordinariness and subject seemingly mundane activities to investigation, and to carefully pick on life's particularities but only to draw back and allow what Doreen Massey refers to as "the chance of space" (Massey 2005, 111).

French Marxist intellectual Henri Lefebvre (1974) in his book *The Production of Space* put forward a set of questions analyzing how spaces are often politicized and continuously interfered with by state apparatuses, therefore informing and developing a "spatial role of the state" (Lefebvre 1991, 378). Combining analytical approaches from geography, history and semiotics, Lefebvre begins with the partial production of abstract spaces as a result of "a bureaucracy which has laid hold of the gains of capitalism in the ascendant and turned them to its own profit" (52). He further contends that these abstract spaces are abundant in political intervention and through these particular state apparatuses, social spaces are formed by lived experiences, acted upon and used by individuals embedded within social relations. Lefebvre's insistence on studying the production of space is also his means of understanding "the contradictions *in* space and contradictions *of* space" (334). It is here that Lefebvre names "real property" as vital for the state to generate profit and to consolidate state power. However, it is also central for social beings to occupy "real property" and to consume it, knowing that these spaces can be used to generate symbolic values (335–40). Informants in this study occupied and used social spaces tactically to assert their lesbian subjectivities despite "a set of institutional and ideological superstructures" (349).

Taking Hong Kong's political environment one step further, Agnes Ku explains that the colonial government in partnership with Hong Kong's business elite and the Chinese government obstructs the path to democracy through their emphasis on "economic prosperity and political stability" (Ku

2001, 261). Ku further explains that the government's official discourse created a form of "hegemonic narrative of a miraculous success" (260).[18] While it is not the purpose of this book to give a detailed explanation of how market economies have developed or have been sustained in the East Asian region, a regulatory discourse on economic progress can condition the way we have come to understand the city of Hong Kong, hence providing a more in-depth way to consider how Hong Kong lesbian and transgender lesbian subjectivities might intersect with their cultural identities. What I want to point out is the "hegemonic economic narrative" and how close interrelations between state and capital have made the development of alternative spaces conditional. Market forces, including the real estate market, directly affect the development of alternative spaces for marginal populations and subcultural communities in both physical and cognitive mappings. Noted Chinese literary and cultural scholar Leo Ou-fan Lee views the lack of cultural space in Hong Kong as stemming partially from the government's emphasis on the marketability of cultural arts, therefore any form of cultural arts would be judged by its ability to expand public consumption (Lee 2002, 108). In this book, I make links across conditional spaces, such as one's living space, social sites and cultural representations, in order to demonstrate the complexities in social relations within and between these spaces. As this is an interdisciplinary project, I aim to investigate how Hong Kong's urban and capitalist environment affects the conditional emergence of spaces where lesbian and transgender lesbian desires are created, negotiated and maintained in resistance to a hegemonic discourse of late capitalism and neoliberalism.

I draw upon sociologist Lui Tai-Lok's work to comprehend a form of class analysis that takes into account an ideological influence on how middle-class aspirations are constructed and regulated in everyday life. Lui credits government policies on education and housing enacted in the 1960s and 1970s as contributing to an overall ideology of upward class mobility for the working-class population. He also observes that the education system facilitates the notion of personal competitiveness by emphasizing equal opportunities, open competition and neutrality, as in sitting public examinations, therefore constructing an individualistic belief that one can rely on oneself to be successful regardless of one's class. Even though class identification and differences are significant among different social classes, there remains a significant common belief that an individual has a role to play in achieving class mobility. I have turned to Lui Tai-Lok because of his emphasis on middle-class values as being one of the most dominant ideologies governing Hong Kong society and more interestingly, in formulating rules and regulations for social order. I do not intend to argue that middle-class

aspirations are the only path to achieving personal success as a Hong Kong woman with lesbian desires; rather I am more concerned with how this kind of ideology permeates everyday life and its various spaces.

Yvette Taylor's ethnographic study on fifty-three working-class lesbians in Scotland and England puts class back into discussions of "the economic, cultural, interpersonal and embodied aspects of class positioning and dis-identifications, taking class and sexuality 'beyond' the economic alone" (Taylor 2007, 31). Taylor examines everyday spaces and "differently classed territories" to complicate the intersectionality of sexuality and class, and to highlight its significance in "shaping life experiences" (185). I do not use class as the defining criteria in my study; instead I focus on the capitalist influences across class positions through an investigation of the everyday spaces inhabited, used and traversed by Hong Kong women with lesbian desires and transgender lesbians. Class positions and their meanings, and "what class does", remain prevalent in my analysis specific to living environments, work occupations and leisure activities. It is not set as the starting point of analysis but rather as an interlocutor to gain further insight into lesbian sexualities and spatial limitations in the city.

Many scholars have pointed out that gay and lesbian cultures in cosmopolitan cities have increasingly become more commercial.[19] Hong Kong with its international and highly commercial city image seems to fit this description of gay commercialism or a mecca of "homoeconomics" (Gluckan & Reed 1997). I suggest that the city's commercialism in its multiple manifestations serves to shape values on what counts as personal achievement, civil status and life goals, and plays an increasingly significant role in influencing the way we have come to understand social and erotic relations. We are at a bind here. The pink dollar has not been fully embraced by local LGBT communities, nor has it been actively promoted by the official tourism board, at least not to the extent of a thriving economic imperative for lesbian and gay businesses to start up and specific enclaves to be developed. Rather, the high rental costs make it inherently tricky for women-only businesses to survive. Some interview subjects in this study discussed their experiences of opening up businesses for a female clientele, yet high rental costs and the lack of a government initiative to establish rent control often make it hard for these businesses, and also alternative cultural art spaces or office spaces for non-governmental organizations, to survive. David Bell and Jon Binnie alert us to be cautious about the globalization trends of gay villages and gay tourism as "part of broader urban entrepreneurialism agendas", and yet for city officials to make these urban sites attractive means for them to clean up the undesirable places and its inhabitants (Bell & Binnie 2004, 1813).

I share Bell and Binnie's concern that a staunch reliance on consumerism as a strategy for public visibility leaves those who cannot afford it invisible and further marginalized. After all, pink consumerism seems generally to cater for gay men rather than lesbians. There have been more visible gay commercial spaces than lesbian ones.

There is an inherent understanding that political freedom is compromised in exchange for economic prosperity. Chua Beng-Huat develops this argument further by naming such an exchange as a "covenant" between semi-democratic or arguably authoritarian East and Southeast Asian governments and their people, as an official justification for high economic growth (Chua 2000, 9). Yet it is also contradictory for consumption to be taken as a manageable method of establishing social control over populations, since the notion of consumption brings with it a sense of liberal individualism (13). As noted by many scholars, state control and policing over such matters would give rise to "sites of ideological contestation and resistance" (18). Tangential forces, as in capitalism, land scarcity, everyday life and the marginalization of sexualities, is what propelled me to write this book.

Research Design

Qualitative research on sexualities has gradually developed from a clinical approach with classifying and stigmatizing homosexuals, to a narrative approach of presenting marginalized voices.[20] Early pathological studies on homosexuality resulted in the Kinsey studies which pushed discussions of sexualities into a new realm of public interest by trying to normalize sexual practices such as homosexuality, adultery and premarital sex (D'Emilio 1983; Gamson 2000). In the early 1970s were studies addressing the homosexual as a stigmatized individual yet nonetheless a strange fellow (Reiss 1961; Humphreys 1970). Representations of gay and lesbian subjects and voices of ethnic minorities and women have emerged out of social movements such as the feminist movement, the Asian American movement and the civil rights movement. Qualitative research on gays and lesbians have taken on a political value and contributed to the emergence of oral narratives as legitimate texts. However, the legitimacy of voices has also faced the postmodern challenge of whether a text can truly represent without contestation or close interrogation of the researcher's power over the researched (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Kong, Mahoney & Plummer 2002; Kong 2004). Feminist methodologies have repeatedly confronted the traditional epistemological stance of research

as distant, scientifically objective, apolitical and void of power differentials (Jaggar 1983; Stanley & Wise 1983; Fonow & Cook 1991; Smith 1987; Stacey 1988; Reinharz 1992).

Based primarily on an inter-disciplinary and integrative approach, feminist ethnography grounds theory contextually in women's everyday lives. It enables marginalized populations to be heard and situates knowledge as contextual and interpersonal. It calls for sensitivity towards gendered behaviour, racism, cultural misogyny and coping mechanisms. Struggling against positivism and androcentric beliefs, feminist ethnographers emphasize respect, reciprocity and intersubjectivity between the researcher and the researched (Reinharz, 1992). Feminist research focuses on empathetical understanding with research participants, hence attempts to build ongoing relationships in communities involved with the study. Besides, feminist ethnography urges researchers to be ground themselves in everyday life experiences of feminists and partake in the transformative process of being a researcher.

I use life history as an approach to conduct unstructured interviews with twenty-eight women with same sex desires and two transgender lesbians living in Hong Kong (see Methodological Notes). Life history allows me to collect data from the interviewer's point of view in addition to adopting a participatory role during the interviews. Sociologist Ken Plummer asserts that a life history approach enables a researcher to question outsider assumptions and take into careful account the interviewee's view of life as it happens around him or herself (Plummer 1983). Apart from using a life history approach, I am also inclined towards Arlene Stein's notion of "self stories" in conducting interviews. A variation under the rubric of life histories, Stein explains, "A self story is literally a story of and about the self in relation to an experience, in this case the development of a lesbian identity, that positions the self of the teller centrally in the narrative that is given" (Stein 1997, 7). Similar to Stein, I am interested in the daily negotiation, mapping and construction of lesbian identities as articulated by the participants themselves, and as situated within their everyday lives. By asking general questions regarding their backgrounds, I followed where they led me in the narratives, be it concerning love, intimacy, work, family, social relations, discrimination, sex, aging, health and outlooks on life.

In writing this book, I aim to use feminist ethnography as the primary methodological basis to collect and analyze data. In particular, I argue that feminist ethnography enables me to gather data for a more grounded analysis, incorporating theoretical strands within cultural studies, feminism, urban sociology and queer theory, hence producing much needed investigative scholarship in the area of Hong Kong lesbian spaces and subjectivities.

Fieldwork

By snowball sampling, interview participants were identified through personal contacts and referrals from individuals whom I got to know through my community involvement with local organizations (see Profile of Informants). All interviews were taped and conducted in Cantonese (see Interview Guide). Consent forms were signed. Interviews range from one-and-a-half to three hours. Apart from two transgender lesbians, all interviewees identified as female expressed erotic interests or have had romantic relationships with women. They range from fifteen to fifty-one years of age. Interviews were conducted in venues chosen by the participants or mutually agreed upon by the participant and myself. These venues include cafés, restaurants, homes, community centres and a postgraduate student office. I am fully aware of the fact that my sample of interviewees cannot fully represent the diversity of Hong Kong women with same-sex desires.

I have engaged in participant observation through my attendance at social gatherings, political events and community organizing. Upon returning to Hong Kong in July 2003, I have been closely involved with the Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival. On 29 November 2003, I delivered a seminar on "Les and the Cities" through a comparative analysis of Asian Canadian lesbian director Desiree Lim's *Sugar Sweet* (dir. Desiree Lim, 2001, Japan, 67 min, Video) and local Hong Kong lesbian director Yau Ching's *Ho Yuk: Let's Love Hong Kong* (dir. Yau Ching, 2002, Hong Kong, 87 min, 35mm), and demonstrated how they utilized urban landscapes in the metropolitan cities of Tokyo and Hong Kong. I became festival director of the Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival in 2004 and in 2005, and a programming consultant in 2006. As festival director on a voluntary basis, I have met with representatives of nineteen community organizations serving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender populations.[21] By immersing myself in the local queer scenes, I have absorbed community organizing experiences as evident in community politics, identity issues and community histories.

In addition, I have been a core organizing committee member of a local queer women oral history travelling exhibit titled "Brazen Women: Hong Kong Women Who Have Same-Sex Desires Oral History Exhibit", held from 22 January to 20 February with it being first unveiled at Mackie Study, an independent bookstore located on the second floor in a building on Yun Ping Road, Causeway Bay. On 11 February 2005, I co-organized a queer women workshop with Yau Ching. This workshop comprised four sessions: Coming out and Relationships, Sex and Desires, Integration of Self and Hong Kong Society, and Film Representations of Lesbian Sexualities and Desires. Speakers

ranged from local activists, scholars, writers and artists to delegates from Taiwan. Thirty-eight participants engaged in a day-long intensive honest discussion about what it means to be a woman with lesbian desires in everyday life. Since 2006, I have been a core committee member of Nutongxueshe, a local cultural arts and advocacy organization with the first Chinese online television station GdotTV. I am partly responsible for the organization's fundraising and organizational development.

This book is divided into five chapters and an epilogue. In chapter 1, I will describe how living spaces affect interviewees in identity formations and recognition of same-sex desires. Drawing on their narratives about family relations and living conditions, I aim to show how sexualities are tightly constrained with the family structure and the living space and how these intimate spaces are imagined, identified, created and used. By positioning spaces of same-sex intimacy within an urban environment with dense living conditions, Hong Kong women and transgender persons are constantly seeking creative solutions and building capacity within their own networks to foster relationships with each other, needless to mention the depth of emotions necessary to sustain lesbian relationships in resistance to homophobic forces in society. In chapter 2, I will focus on Tung Lo Wan as a key consumption space and explore its popularity as a lesbian haven and as part of everyday life among Hong Kong lesbians, bisexuals and transgender lesbians. Tung Lo Wan is both commonplace and particular for its dense concentration of businesses and residences as well as its significance as a site of consumption. Lesbian commercial spaces will be discussed for their critical role as temporal sites of resistance. Chapter 3 is a discussion on regulatory spaces and social worlds as inhabited by Hong Kong women with same-sex desires and transgender lesbians as in schools, workplaces and religions institutions. By investigating their coming-out strategies and coping mechanisms within these spaces, I will argue that Hong Kong lesbians, bisexual women and transgender persons resist heteronormativity both covertly and overtly within the spatial maps of their everyday lives. In chapter 4, I make an attempt to trace the development of *tongzhi* politics and its spatialities. Moreover, interview data from activists will be drawn to illustrate the complexities and tensions within community mobilization efforts. The last chapter sees a departure from the informants in the study and instead I rely on my former role as festival director of the Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Festival to focus on how lesbian representation has begun to emerge within independent film and video representation in Hong Kong. Despite the abundance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender characters in Hong Kong cinema, the nature of these characters are often made fun of, belittled or portrayed as deranged individuals. Therefore, one

turns to independent media for its potential to create cultural works that are more representative of Hong Kong lesbian sexualities. In particular, the Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival is presented as a case study to illustrate the close connections between a politics of consumption and cultural representation. The epilogue is a self-reflective essay on *Ho Yuk: Let's Love Hong Kong*, an independent film produced and directed by a noted scholar and activist, Yau Ching. I chose this film because of its complicated representation of multiple spaces that are symbolic of the city of Hong Kong. The film itself is a testimony to De Certeau's notion of walking as possessing "enunciative" functions (De Certeau 1984, 97–98) as the protagonist enters, exits and re-enters various everyday spaces to make sense of her complex identity as a cyber-sex worker who desires same-sex intimacy and as a daughter who shares a flat of less than two hundred square feet with her mother.

Notes

Introduction

1. For more information on 2009 Hong Kong population statistics, visit http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/.
2. Academic scholarship on the area of sexualities and spaces has been vigorously investigated by feminists, cultural geographers, ethnographers, cultural studies scholars and sociologists in the past decade (Castells 1983; Lauria & Knopp 1985; Winchester & White 1988; Bell 1991; Adler & Brenner 1992; Massey 1994; Duncan 1996; McDowell 1996; Bouthillette 1997; Stein 1997; Valentine 2000; Valentine & Skelton 2003, Massey 2005). Extensive studies have discussed how everyday spaces are sexualized and gendered, in addition to how spaces play a major role in the way gays and lesbians mediate their daily lives in urban cities. We have come to learn how the naturalized processes of heterosexualization among spaces are maintained via surveillance and regulated performative acts (Bell & Valentine 1995; Duncan 1996; Valentine 1996; Herng-Dar 2001; Corteen 2002). Moreover, there have been discussions on the differences between lesbians and gay men from identity formations to public visibility in urban public spaces (Wolf 1979; Bell 1991; Peake 1993; Rothenberg 1995; Valentine 1995; Bouthillette 1997; Forsythe 2001). Most notably, Castells's research on gay male culture in gay commercial areas and neighbourhoods resulted in his claim on gender differences between how women and men view spaces. He asserts that men have more territorial ambitions whereas women are more attached to personal relationships and social support networks (Castells 1983). Many scholars have challenged Castells's explanation of lesbian spaces. Adler & Brennar (1992), Linda Peake (1993) and Gill Valentine (1995) argue that lesbian spaces are there if we know what we are looking for. Tamar Rothenberg (1995) poses a different question and asks us to widen our concept of spaces to include what Benedict Anderson would call "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983, 15).
3. Established on 1 July 2003, the Women Coalition of Hong Kong is a non-governmental organization providing community services for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer communities. For more information, visit http://www.wchk.org/. I came upon this group through the Internet and sent an e-mail to one of the key organizers, Connie Chan Man-Wai, to inquire about gatherings.
4. The term "les" is commonly used to identify oneself as a woman with same-sex desires. Many informants in my study also identified with "les" and sometimes along with other gender identities.

5. The first July 1st march was held in 2003 to protest against an anti-subversion bill known as the Hong Kong Basic Law Article 23 in which an individual can be charged with committing treason if national security is jeopardized. Debates about what constitutes treason and the threat of losing freedom of speech along with general discontent against the administration saw 500,000 people take to the streets. July 1st marches have since been held to protest against government policies and to demonstrate for multiple social justice causes. In 2005, the fundamentalist Christian group The Society for Truth and Light launched a protest against *tongzhi* organizations being positioned at the front, leading the public march, which sparked off debates between religious factions and *tongzhi* organizations.
6. I base my definitions on a booklet published by Nutongxueshe (www.leslovestudy.com) on a Tongzhi Art Exhibit. The booklet provides a glossary of common terms used by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in Hong Kong. Established in 2005, Nutongxueshe (NTXS) is an all volunteer-run collective, community-based group and advocacy organization for and by members from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in Hong Kong. NTXS aims to raise public awareness on LGBT issues in the media, to create multiple dialogues among diverse communities and to advocate for social change. I am actively involved with this organization in terms of overall organizational and fund development.
7. The term "pure" has been further elaborated to include "Pure leaning towards T" or "Pure leaning towards TBG". In Mainland China and Taiwan contexts, "pure" is synonymous to "*bufen*".
8. The term "queer" or "*ku'er*" in Mandarin gains more usage in Taiwan's academic discourse but still largely remains as a theoretical position. I agree with Helen Hok-Sze Leung's suggestion that the term along with its meanings "between deconstructive critique and coalitional identity politics" can be partially found in "the noton of tongzhi" (Leung 2008, 3).
9. See Helen Hok-Sze Leung's Introduction chapter in *Undercurrents: Queer Culture and Postcolonial Hong Kong* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008) for the popular usage of the term "*tongzhi*". A renowned film critic in Taiwan also mentioned the origins of the term in a newspaper, available online at http://blog.chinatimes.com/formosamovie/archive/2006/03/12/46134.html.
10. For a government to depend on the notion of economism, it has to fulfill five central components: poverty reduction instead of income equality; maintaining a viable business environment instead of a welfare state; a strong domestic economy to facilitate international investment; political stability; and a "capitalistic, market-oriented" economy (Li 2002, 4). In providing a substantial analysis on the economic successes of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, Li Kui-Wai also points out two weaknesses of economism, namely, the neglect of social responsibility in wider society and a monopolistic approach to establishing industries due to minimal governmental assistance for smaller business enterprises (Li 2002, 265–67). I contend that it is because of the influence of economism on the Hong Kong government that human rights issues have often been seen as an obstruction to economic progress.
11. Late capitalism refers to the heightened accentuation of the capitalist mode of production through new technologies in addition to an international division of labour (Hennessy 2000, 6).
12. For a detailed history of property development in Hong Kong, see Fung Bong-Yin, *A Century of Hong Kong Real Estate Development* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co. Ltd., 2006).
13. An interview with Samshasha was conducted by Mark McLelland and is available online through *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* (Issue 4, September 2000) at http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue4/interview_mclelland.html.

14. Queer Sisters was established in 1995 by a group of women who reject identity politics by stating on their website that they refuse to "be named or explained by one (whatever) ism". In the introduction to the organization, they write: "We are a group of women who are playful and serious, personal and political. We are involved in a movement fighting for a more inclusive, more open and better world with larger space for women, as sexual beings and as subjects, who have different, various and everchanging routes in the immense domain of sexuality." Queer Sisters operates a regular hotline, holds workshops and public seminars, and produces resources such as DVDs and publications on issues relating to sexualities. For more information, visit www.qs.org.hk.
15. There was another bilingual gay and lesbian magazine, *Contacts Magazine*, published in 1993. The magazine was edited by Barrie Brandon who was a founder and chairperson of Horizons. A volunteer-run gay and lesbian organization, Horizons was established in 1992 and operates a hotline as its primary service (http://www.horizons.org.hk/). The contents of the magazine were primarily English with personal advertisements also published in English.
16. The beginnings of a public discussion on homosexuality can be traced back to a landmark case. The John MacLennan incident sparked off a series of public debates on homosexuality and its place in society (Ho 1997). In 1980, John MacLennan as an inspector with the Royal Hong Kong Police Force was charged with gross indecency by the Special Investigation Unit. Established in 1978, the Special Investigation Unit's mission was to conduct a witchhunt on civil servants and uniformed officers in regards to homosexual behaviour. McLennan was found dead in his apartment with five gunshot wounds. Suicide was given as the official cause of death but the fact that McLennan himself belonged to the unit earlier in 1977 and had access to confidential information on a list of high-ranking officers suspected of homosexual conduct led some to question the British government's role in his death.
17. The programme is titled "Gay Lovers" in Engish but "Tongzhi Lovers"《同志・戀人》in Chinese. See http://sites.google.com/site/gayloversrthk/ for more information in Chinese on the court case. See http://www.hkba.hk/en/press/20080630_e.html for a Broadcasting Authority press release specifically on the television programme "Gay Lovers".
18. By alarming us about the "hegemonic narrative", one is reminded of Antonio Gramsci's key concept of hegemony where a major social group (to be understood as class alliances and not necessarily one particular class grouping) has been able to impose its ideologies upon civil society through its dominance over social, political and cultural arenas in the name of state unity (Gramsci, 1946). Antonio Gramsci (1946) posits civil society in three dimensions; cultural ideologies, a totalitarian state and an oppressive economy. To Gramsci, the perspectives of the ruling class were readily immersed within the workers' consciousness so much so that a cultural hegemony resulted from a successful bombardment of popular culture, mass media and compulsory education. The concept of cultural hegemony can be applied generally to include norms, everyday practices, beliefs and social institutions which form patterns of domination and liberation.
19. See John D'Emilio's (1983) pioneering essay on how capitalism has made it possible for household-based economy to shift towards wage labour, therefore enabling men and women to have personal lives beyond nuclear family structures and develop same-sex relations. Adrienne Rich's (1980) essay on "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" points to capitalism as part of the reason for imposing compulsory heterosexuality among women through its emphasis on production and reproduction. American economists and queer scholars Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed observed that the relatively affluent North American economies in the 1990s have had a political effect on gays and lesbians, in the sense that political awareness has diminished,

especially among gays and lesbians with more economic resources (Gluckman & Reed, 1997, xv). The positive upturn of the economy also brought gay and lesbian markets into consideration as corporations began to jump on the possibilities of a niche market.

20. Research focusing on gay and lesbian communities using interviews has evolved from a traditional clinical approach to diagnose "the homosexual" to modern psychological and sociological surveys on gay white males. The early days of interviewing "the homosexual" stems from a medical discourse that classified homosexuality as a disease. Feminist research practice has changed the way we think about interviews in general. Self-reflexivity and self-consciousness are brought to the forefront of how we analyze and understand the power relations between the researcher and the interview subject. The interview is no longer an arena of objectivity. Instead, the researcher lays out the reasons for conducting research in the hope of developing a more ethical and reciprocal relationship. The research process becomes exposed and part of the analysis on methodology. Similar to my own positioning as researcher, there have been many feminist researchers who identify themselves as lesbian researchers and conduct sociological research on lesbian issues (Krieger 1983; Ponse 1978; Ross 1995).
21. The list of community groups include AIDS Concern, Amnesty International, Chi Heng Foundation, Civil Rights for Sexual Diversities, Freemen, F'union, Gender Concerns, Hong Kong Blessed Minority, Hong Kong Queer Campus, The Hong Kong 10% Club, Horizons, Les Peches, Nutong Xueshe, Queer Sisters, Rainbow Action, Fruits in Suits, Satsanga, Hong Kong Transgender Equality and Acceptance Movement (TEAM) and Women Coalition of Hong Kong SAR.

Chapter 1 Living Spaces

1. This is a colloquial phrase to show meaningless chatter similar to *blah blah blah*... In Bik Bik's interview, she uses this phrase to denote her own impatience at her parents' continuous interrogation of her lesbian sexuality.
2. Henri Lefebvre's attempt to interrogate spaces as social products is useful to bridge further understanding between bodies, social relations, mental mappings and physical spaces, yet certain important factors such as race, gender and sexuality remain out of his theoretical framework.
3. For further reading, please see *The* 逼 *City*, 作者: 陳翠兒, 陳麗喬, 蔡宏興, 吳啟聰, published under the series of 香港點滴系列 by 民政事務局, 2006.
4. The total number of visitor arrivals for 2008 is 29,506,616, as announced by the Tourism Commission.
5. By mid-year 2009, 47.1 percent of Hong Kong population lived in public permanent housing, including rental flats and subsidized sale flats governed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. The remaining percentage of the population lived in private housing with 0.8 percent living in private temporary housing, meaning rooftop structures and contractors' huts. The average domestic household size is three members. Average living space per person is 12.5 square metres for public housing. For a flat in the New Territories, the average cost for each square metre is HK$38.
6. For a review of sociological studies on class in Hong Kong, see Wong Chi-Tsing's book chapter on "Class and Social Stratification" in Tse Kwan-Choi's edited collection *Our Place, Our Time: A New Introduction to Hong Kong Society* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2002).
7. Academic publications on Hong Kong gay men's identities and sexualities have been more available than studies on women, bisexual and transgender people. Rather, I look to local community project publications and edited stories for evidence on how Hong Kong women situate their lesbian desires within social networks such as family, work, school and leisure.

8. The Home Ownership Scheme is a governmental subsidization scheme to help Hong Kong residents purchase their own home by buying certain flats that are built and subsidized by government funds with some housing projects also jointly built by private property developers. The buying, selling and mortgaging of these flats are regulated by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. These flats provide an in-between option between private and public housing. For more information, see http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/b5/residential/shos/hos/0,,,00.html.
9. Yu Tsang was a well-known radio disc jockey, broadcaster and chief executive officer for Commercial Radio Hong Kong since the seventies. Known more for her masculine appearance and high-profile same-sex relationships, Yu Tsang is widely perceived as a lesbian media icon.
10. The issue of "face" in Chinese societies relating to lesbian and gay sexuality is prevalent in studies by Travis Kong, Fran Martin and Chou Wah-Shah. It is interesting to note that the issue of face seems to be more significant with gay male communities and I query the issue of face with being masculine in the public sphere.
11. The Protestant and Roman Catholic churches operate many educational, medical and social service organizations in Hong Kong, which makes it difficult for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities to access social services. For example, it has been difficult for young people to discuss sexuality issues with social workers with a Christian background. Nutongxueshe, a cultural arts and public education organization encountered difficulties renting spaces to hold workshops as many social service organizations with space rentals are often religious-based. The Protestant Church runs 3 post-secondary institutions, 630 schools and 116 nurseries. In addition, the Protestant Church runs 7 hospitals, 18 clinics, 60 social welfare organizations providing 250 community (family/youth) service centres, 75 day care centres, 17 children's homes, 35 homes for the elderly, more than 100 centres for the elderly, 47 training centres for the mentally handicapped and disabled, 25 drug rehabilitation centres, and chaplaincy services for prisons, hospitals and the airport. The Protestant Church also runs 15 campsites. The Roman Catholic diocese runs 283 Catholic schools and kindergartens, six hospitals, 12 clinics, 39 social and family service centres, 19 hostels, 13 elderly homes, 20 rehabilitation centres and many self-help clubs and associations including the Caritas (Hong Kong Report 2008).

Chapter 2 Consumption Spaces

1. It is important to note the various degrees in density among urban and rural areas in Hong Kong. If both urban and rural areas are included in the calculation of density, then Hong Kong's 2005 figure remains at 6,291 persons per square kilometre.
2. An oral history project organized by the Women's Coalition of Hong Kong SAR, Rainbow Action and F'Union has published a booklet collecting women's stories on their same-sex relations and desires. The booklet provides a map of existing and closed down bars and cafés. The booklet is available online at www.wchk.org.
3. Tung Lo Wan is located on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island including parts of Wan Chai and Eastern districts. Tung Lo Wan used to be a fishing village with most of its land sitting on silt. Land reclamation has pushed the area's boundaries further into Victoria Harbour and has seen shopping areas and hotels spring up in the area. For this chapter, I am mostly referring to streets popular with lesbian spaces such as Gloucester Road, Jaffe Road, Lockhart Road, Tung Lung Street, Yiu Wa Street and Yee Wo Street.
4. The industry report from Cushman & Wakefield is widely regarded as a definitive ranking of shopping locations and their leasing rates by the real estate industries worldwide. The 25 October 2006 press release was accessed on 29 August 2008 for this chapter at http: //www.cushwake.com/cwglobal/jsp/newsDetail.jsp?repId=c7800055p&LanId=EN&LocId=GLOBAL.

5. The emergence and social significance of lesbian bars have been documented in ethnographic studies and oral history scholarship on lesbian lives in US cities including Detroit, Colorado, Boston, Buffalo, Massachusetts, Montreal, New York, San Francisco and Indiana.
6. The term "les" is commonly used by informants to describe their sexual identities as well as a term commonly seen in news media to denote lesbians.
7. TB vests are sports bra vests that function to flatten one's chest or bosom. Commonly used among tomboys or butch women in Hong Kong and Taiwan, they cost between HK$300 and HK$500.
8. The popularity of upstairs cafés has also seen chain-operated cafés moving upstairs; most noticeably, the chain known as Paris cafés.

Chapter 3 Regulatory Spaces

1. According to the Hong Kong Yearbook 2008, the Protestant community runs three post-secondary institutions: Chung Chi College at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University and Lingnan University (out of 12 post-secondary institutions). In addition, it operates more than 630 schools (273 kindergartens, 206 out of 601 primary schools and 160 out of 527 secondary schools) and 116 nurseries. In terms of religious organizations, the community operates more than 35 theological seminaries/Bible schools, 30 Christian publishing houses and 70 Christian bookstores. In Hong Kong, there are two Christian weekly newspapers, the *Christian Times* and *Christian Weekly*. Currently, there are about half-a-dozen Christian media agencies broadcasting regular Christian TV programmes and four weekly Christian radio programmes on Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK). On the health front, the Protestant community manages 7 hospitals, 18 clinics, 60 social service organizations and 15 campsites. The Roman Catholic Church also operates 283 Catholic schools and kindergartens. On health and social services, the Church runs six hospitals, 12 clinics, 39 social and family service centres, 19 hostels, 13 homes for the aged, 20 rehabilitation service centres and many self-help clubs and associations. Caritas is the official social welfare division of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church publishes two weekly newspapers — *Kung Kao Po* and the *Sunday Examiner*.
2. This is particularly true when news reports on a typical working day of Donald Tsang, chief executive of Hong Kong, often emphasize his morning visits to a church for prayers.
3. Visit http://www.truth-light.org.hk/sex/sodo.jsp for more information on the media campaigns.
4. In September and October of 2005, there were two workshops comprising a series on the anti-discrimination legislation on sexual orientation and its challenges for Christians. These seminars were held with the intention of educating the Christian community and broader public on issues of sexual minorities, and to open a dialogue between multiple stakeholders. In March of 2006, a seminar was held on the film *Brokeback Mountain* and its significance to gay Christians. In May the same year, a Taiwanese priest, Brother Tsang was invited to a sharing session held by the Institute to share his experiences on working with sexual minorities in Taiwan. Tsang was also invited as a guest speaker at the 2006 International Day Against Homophobia parade held on 21 May 2006 in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. For more information on the Institute's activities, visit http://www.hkci.org.hk/index.htm.
5. For more information on the Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship, visit http://www.bmcf.org.hk/eng/index.htm.
6. Choi Fung's full name is Wong Choi Fung (黃彩鳳). As a postgraduate student in cultural studies and a well-known student activist in Hong Kong on women's issues and local politics, Choi Fung is also known for her self-documentary titled *Desire of*

Egg (卵子體慾 2003, 香港, Color DV, 37 min.). Filmed by posing naked in front of a camera, then twenty-five-year old Choi Fung spoke candidly about her feelings prior to having an abortion in 2002. The short film was awarded the Gold Award by the 9th Hong Kong Independent Short Film & Video Awards 2003.

7. I recognize as part of my research limitations in not being able to locate informants who have gone through reparative therapy and felt strongly enough to choose one or the other.
8. For more information on what counts as moral and civic education, see http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=2397&langno=2#.
9. I acknowledge that not all students in an elitist school come from the same class background and should not be generalized as such, but graduating from such a school can provide better career options or further education opportunities.
10. "By feel" and "by look" can be understood as colloquial Cantonese terms as "through one's feelings and one's outward appearance". I am highlighting these two terms because of the popular usage among young people to express their sexual desires .

Chapter 4 Political Spaces

1. I translated the quote. For the original text in Chinese, see Yau Ching's (2006) introduction and the collection of essays for more insights to the current state of sexual politics in Hong Kong. Yau also notes in her discussion of citizenship influences by Ken Plummer's discussion on intimate citizenship in his book titled *Intimate Citizenship: Private Decisions and Public Dialogues* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).
2. Established in 1998, Rainbow of Hong Kong (http://www.rainbowhk.org/about.html) is the first LGBTQ Community Centre providing social services such as a peer-counselling hotline, training workshops and information sessions on topics related to LGBTQ communities. Rainbow of Hong Kong receives government funding intermittently but has also gone through periods without stable funding.
3. E-mail correspondence dated 3 March 2010.
4. The death of John MacLennan led to the official establishment of two commissions, the Commission of Inquiry focusing on the MacLennan case and the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong on the revision of laws regulating homosexual conduct. In 1983, the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong proposed that men who are over twenty-one years of age should not be criminalized for sexual conduct if carried out in private. The proposal caused moral panic among organizations comprising religious personnel, educators and social workers, and resulted in the formation of the Joint Committee on Homosexual Law. On 11 July 1990, the Legislature Council passed the motion decriminalizing homosexual conduct and the Crimes (Amendment) Ordinance became effective a year later.
5. The Legislative Council Building is located next to Chater Garden on Chater Road. Public demonstrations usually end up at the Central Government Offices on Battery Path, a five-to-ten-minute walk from Chater Garden.
6. I came upon this information in Cho Man Kit's essay titled "A Brief History on Hong Kong's Tongzhi and Equal Rights Movement" collected in a booklet published by Rainbow of Hong Kong. Please see Works Cited (in Chinese).
7. In a book published by the Women's Coalition of Hong Kong SAR, there is an interview with Stephanie, who is part of the group called "International Feminist League". Stephanie mentions that both local lesbians and expatriate women were involved early on in the women's movement to fight against sexual violence and sexual harassment. In the interview, Stephanie points out the lack of women's representation in the media. She is often contacted by Xiaomingxiong to take part in interviews with the Chinese media on her lesbian identity. This 1990 interview was

originally conducted by Cheung Choi Wan, a long-time feminist activist herself, and edited by Connie Chan in 2008 for the purpose of the book.

Chapter 5 Cultural Spaces

1. Although the notion of queer as an identifying category is not commonly used among lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people in Hong Kong, it is useful to borrow the theoretical underpinnings of queer theory to understand partially the fluidity of sexual identities and their effect on locating emerging spaces.
2. The term "*tongzhi*" was first initiated by Hong Kong cultural critic and writer Michael Lam (邁克) in order to find a more culturally appropriate word to replace "lesbian and gay" for the film festival. Other activists and writers, such as Mary Ann King and Anson Mak, have since criticized the limitations of using the term in activist discourse and academic scholarship as it largely denotes male gayness.
3. Since July 2005, the Society of Light and Truth, a local fundamentalist Christian organization, has published large-scale weekly advertisements in *Ming Pao Daily* highlighting the perils of letting anti-discrimination on sexual discrimination pass in legislature. The advertisements provide a negative picture of homosexuality equating it to promiscuity, AIDS, moral corruption and religious impiety. They also encourage reparative therapy and highlight cases of people who have turned from being queer to heterosexual.
4. The idea was first put forward by the Hong Kong government in 1996 with the intention of having a world-class entertainment expo and cultural arts mega-venue. A year later, it became known as the West Kowloon Cultural District Project and solicited bids from world architectural firms on the development of the West Kowloon land-filled site of forty acres. The project would include a multiplex theatre, auditorium, consortium of four museums, open-air performance venue and a minimum of four public gathering spaces. The project has been controversial for not including artists and cultural groups at the planning stage as well as for allowing land developers take over the project. To put it succinctly, the government has been criticized for its lack of long-term vision and overall neglect of cultural arts development policies. Similarly, the discourse around Wan Chai urban renewal projects in public media and governmental documents have been focused on land prices and the tearing down of old buildings. In both cases, coalition groups have formed comprising local residents, cultural critics, community activists, artists, district council members and academics to raise their issues with the government.
5. Chua Beng-Huat, "Consuming Asians: Ideas and Issues" (Chua 2000, 18).
6. Ku 2002, 359.
7. Ibid., 360.
8. Ng, Ma and Lui 2006.
9. Ibid.
10. Lee 2006.
11. This strategic relocation of the festival has been prompted by Gary Mak joining the festival core committee. Mak occupies a high-level management position at Edko Films Limited which owns and manages both cinemas.
12. It is a requirement that anyone wanting to participate in festival programming committee be bilingual; however if they can only speak one language it is preferable that this be English.
13. In my capacity as festival director, I have proposed to selected committee members the possibility of changing the name of the festival to the "Hong Kong Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Film Festival", but my attempts have failed. Some members feel the festival's identity is more aligned with being lesbian and gay rather than succumbing to a form of political correctness.

14. The HKLGFF applied for government funding to assist in programming expenses for the year of 2005 under the Equal Opportunities Funding Scheme, Home Affairs Bureau. The grant application was turned down. Home Affairs Bureau staff explained that there were many submissions for that year. I have asked various community groups and found out that funding was given to online projects and print publications focusing on anti-homophobia, which might have appeared to be safer and less racy.
15. The committee was taken by surprise when the censorship board allowed the festival to screen the works of Bruce LaBruce in 2005. His films have been banned from many festivals for their pornographic content. This is not to say that the censorship board is lenient in Hong Kong since the poster of *Better Than Chocolate* (Anne Wheeler, 1999, USA, 102min) was banned in 1999 for depicting two naked women embracing. It was then deemed as offensive to the public. I want to point out that the censorship procedures are arbitrary.
16. Yau Ching is the writer, director and producer of *Ho Yuk: Let's Love Hong Kong* (Yau Ching, Hong Kong, 82min), an independent film on Hong Kong lesbian desires that has been critically acclaimed on international festival circuits. Yau produced many short videos on marginal and political issues prior to making a feature-length film. She is currently associate professor in the Department of Cultural Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong.
17. Fion Ng's *Gu Nui Gei* has no available English title. Literally translated, the title can be taken as a mechanical game that plays on cruising using a colloquial term, *gu* in Mandarin or *kau* in Cantonese.
18. Since the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, video artists such as Yau Ching, Anson Mak, Ellen Pau and Ellen Yuen have dealt with issues of gender and sexuality, as well as political matters such as the handover of Hong Kong in pre- and post-1997 eras. To a certain degree, these pioneering artists have pushed the agenda of gender differences through videos and art installations in both local independent media arts scene as well as on international circuits. Fion Ng, whose work was included in the Hong Kong Lesbian Shorts, has since become a programme manager for Microwave Company Limited, a digital arts organization that has hosted the annual Microwave Video Festival with Videotage since 1996.
19. Ironically, village life has not been of topographical significance apart from weekend hikes for city dwellers and occasional television programmes on Hong Kong heritage. Village life may not be what the average Hong Kong middle-class consumer would aspire to live since there is always Bali, Cebu and Krabi to satisfy those momentary cravings. Nevertheless, it fosters a community of artists, intellectuals and community activists who choose to live in villages in the New Territories and outlying islands.
20. It took ALFF more than two years to solicit films and videos, mobilize local queer communities and co-ordinate the festival as a community-oriented event. Organized by the Gender/Sexuality Rights Association Taiwan, the ALFF sets a historical precedence in the Asia region as the first Asian lesbian film and video festival. The organizers presented films and videos from Canada, Mainland China, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States touching on common issues facing Asian lesbians. The festival is currently on tour in other parts of Taiwan.
21. The Asian Lesbians' Kung Fu 101 series comprises five programmes: *Home Sweet Home*, *Yummy Yummy*, *Cloud and Rain*, *Under the Lion Rock* and *Rainbow Society*. *Home Sweet Home* focuses on family relations and coming out issues. *Yummy Yummy* features recent Japanese lesbian videos and *Cloud and Rain* showcases works that explore lesbian erotic desires. *Rainbow Society* is a collection of works that focuses on homophobia in a wider societal context. For more information visit www.hklgff.com.

22. For more information on *Nutongxueshe*, visit www.leslovestudy.com. The website also acts as a clearinghouse for primarily Chinese resources on coming out, sexual orientation, family and peer relations, sex, intimacy and media representation on same-sex desires.
23. Purushotaman 2001, 15–28.
24. Yau 2005.
25. The 2003/4 financial report released by the Arts Development Council reveals that HK$800,000 was given out as project grants under the category of film and media arts. There were only eight recipients listed for this category.
26. Information was obtained from an interview published in the winter of 2004 by *E+E*, a quarterly magazine on arts criticism and cultural development published by Zuni Icosahedron, an independent cultural collective founded in 1982. Moreover, artists, community activists, cultural critics and academics have been debating on a recent government proposal to promote local arts in a project known as the West Kowloon Cultural District. The government has proposed establishing a cluster of museums, exhibition halls, performance venues and theatres in an area of forty hectares. The project has been under attack for its lack of local participation in its conceptualization and implementation, and for allowing land developers to bid for commercialization of the project through residential and commercial ventures.
27. Johnny To Kei-Fung is one of the most prolific and commercially successful Hong Kong directors with more than forty films to his credit. His film company, with veteran director/writer Wai Ka-Fai, Milkyway Image, has produced many films including *Election* (2005), *Running on Karma* (2003) and *PTU* (2003).
28. Interview with Fion Ng published in *dye-a-di-a-logue with Ellen Pau* (New York: Monographs in Contemporary Art Books, 2004, 204).
29. Phone interview with Gary Mak on 23 February 2006.
30. Currently, there are many short courses offered by self-proclaimed artists or cultural critics that continue to reproduce a homogenous vision of what constitutes Hong Kong culture and art. This scenario is worsened by the fact that few artists have obtained successful grants and subsidies by the only major government funding source, the Arts Development Council, limiting the chances of emerging artists pursuing their careers.
31. Phone interview with Jonathan Hung on 24 February 2006 and 15 March 2006. Established in 2003, InD Blue provides production and distribution services for independent filmmakers. There are only two staff members, who financially support IndBlue through their work as freelance writers. The HKLGFF has screened two of their programmes, *Space of Desire* (David Chow, Hong Kong, 2005, 109min) and a collection of shorts *Here Comes the Rainbow.1* (Various Directors, Hong Kong, 2004, 90min). For more information on InD Blue visit www.indblue.com.

Epilogue

1. Brossard 1983, 15.
2. Ibid.
3. *Ho Yuk: Let's Love Hong Kong*, 2002, 35mm, 87min, director: Yau Ching; cast: Wong Chung Ching, Erica Lam, Colette Koo, Maria Cordero, Wella Cheung, Fung Manyee.
4. A TB is similar to what we commonly understand as a butch identity in popular gay and lesbian scholarship. The term is used to describe women who appear masculine by wearing men's clothes. A TB is usually expected to date feminine women and would refer them as her G. Recently the term TBG has been widely used to denote feminine women who desire tomboys. Being androgynous has a different term, PURE. I have often queried the boundaries between TBs and female-to-male transgenders. This area of research remains to be investigated and documented.

5. "Ho" in Cantonese denotes "very" and "Yuk" means "movement". When both words are put together, they mean "a strong vibration" or "strong movement".
6. For analysis on cybercity economies, read Mosco 2004, 199–204. Urbanist Anne Beamish's "The City in Cyberspace" in the same edited reader provides discussion on how urban cities are represented in virtual spaces (Graham 2004, 272–78). She argues that online participants create virtual cities in order to be sociable, creative and to develop alternative identities. Using urbanism as a framework, she questions the viability of these virtual cities in the real world and investigates the makings of physical cities.
7. Apart from the Fridae website (www.fridae.com), popular among Hong Kong lesbians, gays and queers, websites listed in www.yahoo.com.hk under the category of same-sex relations are often used by those who read and input in Chinese. Some of these websites have their own chatrooms and bulletin board sites. ICQ and www.gaystation.com.hk are still used by many to access other lesbians, gays and queers living in Hong Kong.
8. I have found Ho 2003 very useful in problematizing certain feminist perspectives on sex work and gender relations. The Center for the Study of Sexualities (http://sex.ncu.edu.tw) sited at the National Central University of Taiwan publishes a series of edited volumes on sex work and queer sexualities. For research on the working experiences of Hong Kong's female sex workers, see report published jointly by Zi Teng and the Centre for Social Policy Studies (Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Dr. Travis S. K. Kong) at www.acad.polyu.edu.hk/~sscsps. See a joint publication by Zi Teng and Step Forward Multimedia, titled *Asian Sex Workers' Stories* (2002) and *Sex Is Bread and Butter* (1999). Visit www.ziteng.org.hk for more information.
9. There have been very few film and video representations of lesbian desires and sexualities in Hong Kong that are created by lesbians and/or queer women themselves. Yau Ching's *Ho Yuk: Let's Love Hong Kong* is the first lesbian feature film. Ching has produced many short videos and short films integrating queer desires, political and social issues, gender issues, sexualities and popular culture. She has written on these issues in magazines, film festival guides and news publications. Apart from Yau Ching, independent video artist Ellen Pau has produced short videos and video installations from the perspective of being a lesbian feminist. I am not only referring to lesbian invisibility in terms of popular representation. Invisibility also applies to lesbian spaces, in particular, gathering spaces for lesbians, bisexuals and queer women to socialize and to access support. Whereas gay spaces are available commercially and at street level, lesbian gathering spaces tend to be more obscure and located in the apartments or rental floors of commercial buildings. Class and gender differences are crucial in any analysis of lesbian and gay spaces.
10. On reticence, I am inspired by Ding & Liu 1998. Through my conversations with Yau Ching, I came to understand the notion of reticence as possibly violent, especially in the use of reticence as a means to silence lesbian and queer desires in intimate relations as well as within a broader context of social movements.
11. See Halberstam 1998, Lucetta Kam Yip-Lo "TB Identity" at http://www.hku.hk/hkcsp/ccex/ehkcss01/issue2_ar_lylk_01.htm, Kennedy & Davis 1993, TRANS conference proceedings from the Fifth International Super-Slim Conference on Politics of Gender/Sexuality (Center for the Study of Sexualities, National Central University, Taiwan).
12. See Feinberg 1993 and 1996. In my struggle to draw emotions (both positive and traumatic feelings) into sexuality theories, I have found Cvetkovich 2003 very useful. By analyzing trauma discourses in clinical psychology theories and by tracing how trauma is represented in lesbian public cultures (sexual acts, butch-femme discourse, queer transnational publics, incest, AIDS and AIDS activism, grassroots archives),

Cvetkovich takes a bold step to connect acute trauma with everyday emotions. *Ho Yuk: Let's Love Hong Kong* has been criticized as a film that depicts negative emotions (loneliness, isolation, suppressed desires), but I strongly argue that the protagonists demonstrate strength and agency in their survival mechanisms as women, as women with same-sex desires and as women who cross gender boundaries in Hong Kong. It is by looking at both sides of emotions and everything that falls within the gap that we come to understand desires as complex, contradictory and transient.

13. Stein 1997, 98–99.
14. On poetic notions of space, I have found Bachelard 1964 very thoughtful and insightful. This quote is taken from page 183 in chapter 8 on intimate immensity, in which he draws on poetry, nature, daydreaming, solitude and tranquillity to describe the depth of emotions within ourselves.
15. I found the scenes between Chan's mother and Chan Kwok Chan, and the scene in which Chan Kwok Chan puts on face cream nostalgic, partly because the domestic space signifies a form of stillness that is comforting and a past that holds Chan Kwok Chan emotionally intact. I want to clarify that I am not using nostalgia in the usual sense of material things since most certainly, those things and settings are still very much commonplace in working class homes and domestic spaces for people who live on poverty levels.
16. I borrow the term from Bachelard 1964, 183.
17. Gutierrez & Portefaix 2000, chapter 3–12.
18. Properties along new KCR and MTR lines have boasted attractions such as artificial lakes and beaches, Japanese style hot springs, grass plots for growing plants and luxurious spa facilities.
19. Gutierrez & Portefaix 2000, chapter 3–12.
20. *Torch Song Trilogy* (dir. Paul Bogart, USA, 120 min) features Tony Award–winning actor and playwright Harvey Fierstein as Arnold Beckoff in the film adaptation of the Broadway play *Torch Song Trilogy*. It chronicles Arnold's life as a drag queen, his romantic relationships with a teacher (Brian Kerwin) and a young fashion model (Matthew Broderick) and his decision to adopt a gay youth (Eddie Castrodad). Arnold's relationship with his Jewish mother (Anne Bancroft) is the core of this very emotional and touching story.

Methodological Notes

Research can be a lonely exercise. No matter how serious I swore my loyalty to feminism is, no matter how astute I claimed my participant observations to be, no matter how intrigued I was with my interview data, I remained in solitude with interview data I had collected. I have come to believe that any intimate engagement with research methodology strips one to the bare bones. It questions a researcher's basic intentions in conducting the research and holds the researcher accountable for data collected. It puts a researcher's position under scrutiny and to a certain extent, exposes the study to closer investigation. It is an inevitable step and an urgent matter.

The Insider/Outsider Discussion

In keeping with many scholars engaged in queer studies, my research interests are closely tied to personal politics and community involvement with marginalized populations. It may not be a purely academic affair for many who are also involved in gay, lesbian and queer movements. My early interest in queer studies was stimulated by participating in university student politics and, specifically, making a commitment to feminism both in academic and activist circles (Gamson 2000). Feminist ethnography has alerted us to the fact that research processes are full of power differentials and subjectivities. Self-reflexivity can be perceived as a way of minimizing the power imbalance. The debates on insider and outsider positions are not new to feminists, sociologists and ethnographers (Smith 1987; Collins 1990, 1991; Naples 2003). Researchers have heated discussions about whether being an insider with common experiences can provide deeper insight into the

researched community. Commonality can be defined by racial/ethnic, class, and health status, sexuality, age and other social backgrounds that might help a researcher develop a closer understanding of the researched.

For example, feminist theorists Dorothy Smith (1987), Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Sandra Acker (2000) have been concerned with issues that deal with the insider/outsider discussion. Dorothy Smith, in her groundbreaking feminist project on problematizing our everyday lives, claims that women have historically been excluded from sociological discourse. As a result, Smith suggests that women's standpoint is "designed in part by our exclusion from the making of cultural and intellectual discourse and the strategies of resorting to our experience as the ground of a new knowledge, a new culture" (Smith 1987, 107). Positioning women back into the sociological discourse is not to take a woman's standpoint as the starting point for all analysis. It is more about filling a gap where women's voices have been neglected and situating those voices within the context of their everyday worlds. Patricia Hills Collins (1990) developed an "outsider within" position to describe black women working as domestic workers with white families. Placed inside families as domestics yet exploited by the dominant society, black women have a distinct view about how power and authority is manifested. Similarly, Collins describes black academics as "outsiders within", since they operate in an environment where black feminist voices have often been excluded in scholarship yet are situated within academic institutions.

Oscillating between Roles

So I found myself oscillating between the positions of researcher, friend, festival director, peer counsellor, workshop organizer and foreigner who had just returned to Hong Kong. The oscillation may not be from a complete left or right, but perhaps more in the sense of straddling in-between, not sure how to present myself or what roles the participants allocate to me. At times I picked a certain role during the interviews. Janice L. Ristock (Ristock and Pennell 1996), in her research on abuse among lesbian relationships, often takes on the role of counsellor in her interviews.

She describes:

> But tensions often rose between my role as interviewer and the temptation to take on the power of the counsellor's role. This was a fine line to walk. Women were telling me stories that many had never told anyone before. (Ristock & Pennell 1996, 75).

I recall an interview where the participant's eyes would often swell up with tears when she talked about her relationship with her parents. She would repeatedly apologize while I handed her tissues to wipe her tears. I found myself consoling her and feeling the need to allow her as much space as possible to release her emotions. By including the importance of her silence in between responses and her sad emotions, I run counter to positivistic values of emotions and subjectivity as detrimental to research, hence in opposition to the scientific understanding of reason. As feminist philosopher Alison Jaggar (1989) argues, "far from precluding the possibility of reliable knowledge, emotion as well as value must be shown as necessary as such knowledge" (157). Jaggar further asserts that whereas we cannot treat all emotions as uncontested knowledge, feminist researchers can develop a "critical reflection on emotion" (164). By taking emotions seriously, we can justify self-reflexivity as theorists and turn our critical eye towards ourselves. More so, Jaggar urges us to "examine critically our social location, our actions, our values, our perceptions, and our emotions" (ibid.).

Identifying as a queer researcher, I was expecting interview participants to ask me about my own coming out processes. True enough, I was asked a number of times about my personal experiences and in return, my views on their accounts. Participants might have assumed that I have had similar difficulties with family, peers and colleagues as a woman with same-sex desires. On another note, they also wanted to hear if I had had a positive experience of coming out. There were many differences between myself and the participants over social factors, political beliefs and relations to systems of oppression. Sherry Gorelick (1996), in her research on Jewish feminists' responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, shares a similar story. Using a Marxist framework on oppression as "complex of many determinations" (Marx 1970, 206), Gorelick comments:

> That might be because I am myself very much like them and subject to some of the same social forces, some of the same distortions and limitations. There are hidden determinants in my life also, and I am both the worst and the best person to uncover them. (Gorelick 1996, 39)

She reminds us that since as researchers, we are also embedded within oppressive structures, we are prone to forget that we have various relations with oppression as well. I would have to be continuously aware of my class assumptions in the everyday world. The fact that I have been educated abroad also suggests a privileged economic status. What do I have in common with the participants other than self-identifying as a lesbian or queer? Apart from

a common language, what other traits would help to facilitate the research process better? Even if my Cantonese conversational skills could make up for these interviews, I still have a lot of catching up to do in terms of local knowledge.

In an interview, Anne described her university life in Hong Kong and how excited she was to be involved in student organizations.

> Anne: Think of it, when you first get into university, it's really exciting, with many new things and new friends that attracted you right away. But for the first entire year, I went home right after class to Sheung Shui to be with her. I did that for the whole year every day. When I got into the second year, it was time to *sheung chong*, right? *Sheung chong* made me super busy. I think it's after orientation camp, we as *chong yuen* have some misunderstandings. But actually as *chong yuen*, we are pretty close friends but . . .
>
> Interviewer: What are "*chong yuen*"?
>
> Anne: "*Chong yuen*" refers to committee members! Are you a foreigner? You don't even know these terms?
>
> Interviewer: I really don't know. I left Hong Kong fourteen years ago.
>
> Anne: Really? I see. Anyway, we were happy at that time to organize student activities together but it was not a good thing when it turned out to ruin our friendships . . .

Being Cantonese-speaking and having been brought up in Hong Kong might have granted me some insight into the local culture, yet I remain in motion somewhere between an insider and an outsider. I have certainly used it to my advantage when I asked for clarification from participants on unfamiliar issues or community politics. As a result, I find myself learning about the place and its people with a renewed sense of interest. My departure from Hong Kong for most of my life has made me more concerned about what actually goes on in this city. I have relied on being a lesbian or a queer as an introductory warm handshake with participants. As Sandra Acker puts it aptly,

> Our multiple subjectivities allow us to be both insiders and outsiders simultaneously, and to shift back and forth, not quite at will, but with some degree of agency. (Acker 2000: 205)

Wary of Approaching a Sensitive Topic

Asking questions about sex in the interview may not be the easiest thing to do but tiptoeing around the topic does not help either. Identifying as a queer researcher might have been more convincing for participants but I cautioned myself against treating sex as a uniform practice. As a former safer sex educator for HIV/AIDS organizations and feminist groups, discussions about sex, let alone safer sex, has never been a priority among government-funded organizations for lesbian populations. Since governments rarely give out funding on lesbian health research to community organizations, it is common for lesbian health to be secondary priority for mainstream health organizations. Therefore, my community and work experience in discussing lesbian sex are limited. Similarly, researchers have slowly ventured into areas of sex and erotic matters but not without certain wariness. Travis Kong, Dan Mahoney and Ken Plummer offer the following insight on approaching sex:

> Here we turn to the hidden dimensions of romance, passion, and sexuality that must impinge on some, maybe much, research, even if rarely spoken about. It is curious, not to say disingenuous, to find that most research is written as if such experiences quite simply never happen in people's lives. From fieldwork to interviews, as people come and go, nothing much ever appears to unfold in erotic mold. Just where is it? (Kong et al. 2002, 251)

The key questions remain: How far should I go in asking about their sex lives? How different should I imagine a participant's sexual experience from mine? Am I ready if a participant discloses abuse and traumatic accounts? Would I be responsible for the consequences afterwards? How personal should I get? Would a disciplined amount of self-disclosure be necessary for a conversation with a certain reciprocity? How should I proceed? The following interview with Julia, whom I had met for the first time, demonstrates some of the difficulties I had in approaching a sensitive topic.

> Interviewer: How are your sex relations with your girlfriends? Sex life?
>
> Julia: It's ok.
>
> Interviewer: What do you mean by ok?
>
> Julia: I don't know how to answer you if you don't ask more specifically.

> Interviewer: Let me rephrase the question. In your first relationship, your girlfriend came over to give you a hug and then she kissed you. You mentioned that you were much younger then. After she initiated her kisses to you, did you initiate to have sex with her?
>
> Julia: No.
>
> Interviewer: Did you have sex with her eventually?
>
> Julia: Yes, I think my first experience with her should be after three or four months into the relationship. I initiated having sex with her that time.
>
> Interviewer: Can you recall how you know what to do sexually?
>
> Julia: I cannot really explain it. It's inborn, similar to how boys do it with girls since civilization began. I didn't take anything for reference. I really don't know.
>
> Interviewer: Do you feel that it's very natural?
>
> Julia: Seemed like it. But I'm not sure if it really was. I'm not sure if I looked at something and hid it subconsciously and pulled it out when I needed to use that information, but I didn't do any research or look for any references.
>
> Interviewer: I see. What did you do exactly when you initiated sex?
>
> Julia: Used my hand at that time.
>
> Interviewer: Do you mean using your hand to insert?
>
> Julia: No.
>
> Interviewer: Just to caress?
>
> Julia: Yes, mutually.

Our conversation continued along the lines of sexual practices and the participant volunteered more information on specific sex acts as the interview continued. Although she struck me as abrupt in her answers, I have also found myself not coping well with being as direct as I could have been. I also queried the reasons for my hesitation if language and cultural perceptions make it difficult for me to articulate on the subject of lesbian sex. It only dawned on me later that I should have noticed my own discomfort in the interaction. If I had actually been as direct with her as she was with me, the interview process might have been more participatory. Interviews are not guaranteed to be cordial and open if rapport is not easily established in the first place. Kong, Mahoney and Plummer (2002) remind researchers:

> There are times during the interview process when subjects do not respond well to an empathic, interactive process, or are not be willing to explore feelings and emotions. There also may be clashes of personalities between the interviewer and interviewee, making the construction of an interactive context impossible (Kong et al. 2002, 253).

In another interview, I was being cross-examined by Jo.

> Interviewer: Is talking about sex embarrassing for you?
>
> Jo: Embarrassing? It's ok to talk about it.
>
> Interviewer: You seemed fine talking about it but it's hard for some people. No matter how I tried or use examples, they still will not talk about it or cannot talk about it but you seemed fine.
>
> Jo: I can talk about it but maybe slightly embarrassed. And you?
>
> Interviewer: Me?
>
> Jo: Will you talk about …
>
> Interviewer: Will I be embarrassed? I think I won't be.
>
> Jo: Two things, do you think it's because you're not embarrassed about it, that is why you can talk more about it or do you think it's the more you talk about it, you've become less embarrassed?
>
> Interviewer: Can you say that again?
>
> Jo: That is, you are open to this topic but not because you have to talk about it all the time?
>
> Interviewer: Yes, I think so. It depends …
>
> Jo: Do you not mind talking about this topic or is it because you have to deliver seminars and share with others all the time that led you to become less embarrassed?
>
> Interviewer: I think it's interesting because if I talk about it during seminars, it feels like work. When it's work, I feel less embarrassed about it.
>
> Jo: But when you are in seminars, you can talk about yourself, too.
>
> Interviewer: Yes, but I can also treat it as work but maybe I'll be different in private conversations.
>
> Jo: So are you in a private conversation now or are you working?
>
> Interviewer: This feels more like work.
>
> Jo: So wait till next time when it's off record. Because I can feel that you are a bit different, so let's find another day to chat.

I was a bit caught off guard by the participant when she asked me about my level of comfort in talking about sex. I remember looking down and then after having caught myself doing that, I immediately looked back up at her and answered her questions immediately. This cross-examination exercise was evidence of my attempt to distance myself from further discussion on sex by blaming it as work. In hindsight, it is a poor methodological endeavour to pull the participant closer for a more in-depth interview which runs contradictory to my own feminist and queer sensibilities. Maybe the personal/research divide became deeper for me when it came to a topic such as sex.

Responsibilities and Representation

Many feminist scholarships have emphasized the importance of women's oral narratives in providing accounts of what it means to live as marginalized subjects (Anzaldúa 1990; hooks 1990; Reinharz 1992; Kennedy & Davis 1993). Filling the missing gap in historical and intellectual discourse, women's voices emerged both in academic scholarship and within community activism. Narratives by sexual minorities, racial subjects, poor people and the disabled, on the other hand, challenged the traditional epistemological understanding of research as objective and impartial. Joshua Gamson comments:

> The lesbian or gay itself, given voice through interviews, ethnographies, autobiography, and historical re-creation, while plainly resting on claims of authenticity, gave the lie to objectivity. (Gamson 2000, 351)

Although lesbian and gay voices started to gain sociological interest in the 1970s and early 1980s, other scholars have started to question the essentialist lesbian or gay subject embedded within such research. Authenticity has its own set of limitations. Just whose voice are we representing and whose voice did not make it to the table?

Michel Foucault (1978) reminds us sternly in *The History of Sexuality* that sexualities are socially constructed discourses with political relations attached. As the late 1980s approached, the influences of post-structuralism and queer theory emerged to challenge sexual identities as fixed categories or categories that reflect a homogenized gay subject who is urban, middle class, European and able-bodied. Although these theoretical strands had their own differences, they represented sexual identities as fluid, unstable, diasporic and incongruous at times. Therefore, our search for marginalized voices had to include those whom we might perceive as ambiguous, undefined and unexpected.

Reflecting on the search process, I also struggled to find a diverse pool of participants in the interests of representation. Like a hawk's eye, one is always hunting for the best story. Apart from community activists, I was also trying to locate "everyday" individuals for interviews. I was looking for women who did not obviously sport "the lesbian banner" and those whom I might have missed out in my own partiality. By no means do I think my sample is representative of Hong Kong women with same-sex desires, but my goal was to bring up issues that were currently relevant for them. My urge to capture good accounts led me to performing an impatient moment as a researcher, where I was caught for rushing to my own agenda. During the beginning of an interview with Anne, we were chatting about her career and the time she started thinking about opening a lesbian café. After her brief description of why she wanted to open a lesbian café, I jumped right into asking her a question about her attraction towards women.

> Interviewer: Let's see. You said you'd wanted to open up a café since you were very young. Did you then want to open up a café in general or a lesbian café?
>
> Anne: It wasn't a trendy thing to open up cafés during those days. Not like nowadays. Actually I've thought of opening up a coffee shop, not like an upstairs café. But if I told my family about this idea then, they would say that it'll be closed down. It's not a fashionable thing to do then, no one would have thought of it, which is when I was in Form 4 back in the year of 1980-something. Around the early 1990s, no one would have thought of opening cafés in the upper floors of a building. Realistically, how can a street level café make do just by selling coffee? Think of how many cups of coffee you'd have to sell? So this is not easy.
>
> Interviewer: When did you know you that you have attraction for women?
>
> Anne: Wow, suddenly jumped to this question?
>
> Interviewer: (let out a nervous laugh) Ha.
>
> Anne: When do I know? Actually I was quite a bit older when I started dating girls, actually I was already in Form 7, but how did I know? I don't know how I knew, I did not do it on purpose, and it feels like a natural process.

Fortunately, I reckoned the participant knew me earlier from being a regular patron and a festival organizer. In return, she was willing to answer my question without many qualms. I cannot imagine the response I would have got had I done the same thing with other interviewees who had not met me before. I wanted to get to the core of the interview so badly that I was

not listening. What it meant to have a worthy account of being a lesbian in Hong Kong is overloaded with many assumptions. I remain troubled by the fact that conducting queer ethnography in Hong Kong bears a heightened responsibility. Since there is limited scholarship in this area, I felt responsible to present findings with honesty and to a certain extent, validity. This book as an English text would also mean globalizing queer research (Altman 1997). This is not to say that validity does not have its own problems, but it is more about being aware that the research one produces has far-reaching potential, positive and negative. I find Gayatri Gopinath's theorization about a queer diasporic useful in describing current emerging queer scholarship outside of Euro-American geographies:

> A queer diasporic formation works in contradistinction to the globalization of "gay" identity that replicates a colonial narrative of development and progress that judges all "other" sexual cultures, communities, and practices against a model of Euro-American sexual identity. (Gopinath 2005, 11)

If academic research is nonetheless a demonstration of power and privilege, what can we do as researchers to minimize the power imbalance? Susan Krieger (1983, 1991) advises us to acknowledge a researcher's responsibility to situate him or herself in the research process. Almost a decade ago, Judith Stacey warned us of the potentially exploitative nature of feminist ethnography and even mourned her engagement with feminist ethnography as a "loss of ethnographic innocence". Feminist ethnographers have stressed the importance of research as a reciprocal process, an emotional encounter and a learned experience for both the researcher and the researched. Stacey suggests that such intimacy with research objects could potentially place research subjects at "grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer" (Stacey 1988, 23). The representation of subjects and interpretation of data in research findings remain those of a researcher's text. Self-awareness and the downplaying of idealism inherent in feminism might prove to be useful for a feminist ethnography (Stacey 1988).

Conclusion

I have brought up many methodological concerns in this chapter. Many have been dismissed, contested or partially resolved but nonetheless have been taken seriously by feminist researchers, ethnographers and sociologists alike. What is important for me is to take up the social responsibilities of a researcher, to cross-examine my multiple positionalities within structures of

oppression and to present findings with integrity. The solitary exercise of data interpretation and theorization may well be done in a quiet corner. As Jewish peace activist and scholar Sherry Gorelick's puts it, "thus our relationship to oppression, as either privileged or oppressed, has implications for the quality of our research, but our relationship to it is contradictory, complex, and, to some degree, up to us" (Gorelick 1996, 40).

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