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Beyond Homonegativity: Understanding Hong Kong People's Attitudes about Social Acceptance of Gay/Lesbian People, Sexual Orientation Discrimination Protection, and Same-Sex Marriage

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### **Abstract**

This study examined attitudes about social acceptance, discrimination protection, and marriage equality for gay/lesbian people with a representative sample of 1,008 Hong Kong Chinese adults via a telephone survey. Despite majority endorsement of homosexuality (52.29% positive vs 34.12% negative) and discrimination protection (50.72% favorable vs 14.64% opposed), attitudes toward same-sex marriage diverged (32.79% favorable vs 39.41% opposed). There was a sharp distinction in accepting gay/lesbian people as co-workers (83.57%) and friends (76.92%) versus relatives (40.19%). Having more homosexual/bisexual friends or co-workers contributed to greater endorsement of social acceptance and discrimination protection but not same-sex marriage. Age, religion, political orientation, and homonegativity consistently predicted attitudes toward social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage whereas gender-role beliefs, conformity to norms, and cultural orientations had varying impacts. This article informs theory and advocacy by disentangling homonegativity from attitudes about gay/lesbian issues and highlighting the centrality of family-kinship and relative-outsider delineation in Chinese societies.

*Keywords:* Chinese values, homophobia, social acceptance, discrimination protection, same-sex marriage, Hong Kong

## **Beyond Homonegativity: Understanding Hong Kong People's Attitudes about Social Acceptance of Gay/Lesbian People, Sexual Orientation Discrimination Protection, and Same-Sex Marriage**

A considerable body of research has examined factors of homonegativity (also referred to as “homophobia” or “sexual prejudice”) (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Detenber, Ho, Neo, Malik, & Cenite, 2013; Herek, 2000, 2004; Hopwood & Connors, 2002; Mestvirishvili, Zurabishvili, Iakobidze, & Mestvirishvili, 2017) and how these negative attitudes about same-sex attraction and behaviors contribute to stigma and discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) people (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Herek, 2009; Lau & Stotzer, 2011; Yeo & Chu, 2017) as well as unfavorable positions on LGBT issues such as same-sex marriage (Herek, 2011; Moskowitz, Rieger, & Roloff, 2010; Sherkat, Powell-Williams, Maddox, & de Vries, 2011). However, questions regarding the consistency of individuals' attitudes toward homosexuality vis-à-vis different LGBT issues have remained underexamined. Does social acceptance of LGBT people necessarily extend to support for anti-discrimination laws and same-sex marriage? Why would some people support legal protection against sexual orientation discrimination but not marriage equality for same-sex couples? Would factors associated with homonegativity exhibit the same influence on different LGBT issues? In this study, we seek answers to these questions by considering the differentiated nature of Hong Kong Chinese people's acceptance of gay/lesbian people and their varied positions regarding discrimination protection and same-sex marriage.

Hong Kong is an interesting case in the study of societal attitudes about LGBT equality and acceptance. Having been under British colonial rule for 156 years, this special administrative region of China provides a sociopolitical context infused with Chinese and

Western cultural influences. Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy—including various freedoms and rights unavailable elsewhere in China—under the “one country, two systems” constitutional doctrine of its Basic Law, the territory’s mini-constitution. Although the Hong Kong Bill of Rights enshrines residents’ entitlement to rights without distinction and was recognized by the local courts to protect against sexual orientation discrimination, it only applies to public sector discrimination. Current laws in Hong Kong only explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, disability, family status, and race but not sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status. LGBT individuals in Hong Kong have reported experiencing discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation or sexual identity in areas such as employment, education, and access to services (Suen et al., 2016). Yet, previous attempts at erecting a sexual orientation discrimination ordinance were stalled amid strong opposition from Christian and parental groups such as Parental Rights Alliance and Society for Truth and Light. Underlying these oppositional voices is a fusion of Chinese and Western cultural values. As Chan (2008) argued, the inherently anti-gay rights culture in Hong Kong—which the government uses to stonewall social policies concerning sexual minorities—stems from the “primacy of Confucianism aligned with Christianity” (p. 75).

Compared to other Chinese-majority societies outside of mainland China such as Taiwan and Singapore, Hong Kong lies in the mid-range of the trajectory of LGBT rights. Legalization of same-sex marriage is planned in Taiwan whereas sexual activities between men in Singapore remained illegal. In Hong Kong, private sexual acts between adult men were decriminalized in 1991 and the age of sexual consent between men were equalized to that between men and women (16 year-old) since 2006. Sexual activities between women have never been outlawed. However, same-sex relationships are only accorded limited recognition in cases of domestic violence, claiming cremated remains, and substitute decision-making regarding medical treatments when a partner is incapacitated. Because

neither same-sex marriage nor civil union is legally recognized, same-sex couples face several legal challenges. For example, the foreign same-sex partner of a Hong Kong resident is not entitled to dependent visas even if the couple is legally married elsewhere.

### **Societal Attitudes about Homosexuality and LGBT Issues**

Most conceptualizations of homonegativity suggest that individuals' negative thoughts and feelings about same-sex attraction and behaviors represent some form of boundary maintenance: to reinforce one's sense of self (e.g., protect against threats to masculinity) or adherence to gender roles and social norms that perpetuate heterosexual male superiority (Nagoshi et al., 2008). Factors associated with homonegative attitudes include religion, gender, age, education level, and socioeconomic status (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). Several studies have highlighted gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuality: heterosexual women tend to be generally less homonegative than heterosexual men (Nagoshi et al., 2008; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000) whereas heterosexual men may discriminate their support of certain rights between lesbian women and gay men (Moskowitz et al., 2010). A major source of intolerance and negative attitudes toward homosexuals in Western societies is the Judeo-Christian ideology of homosexuality as unnatural, perverted, and ungodly, including associating particularly male homosexuality to promiscuity (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Ford, Brignall, VanValey, & Macaluso, 2009). In addition to religiosity, individuals with more conservative political ideology, greater conformity to norms, and endorsement of gender role beliefs tend to hold more negative attitudes toward gay/lesbian people and their rights (Detenber et al., 2013; Guittar & Pals, 2014; Sherkat et al., 2011; Suen et al., 2016; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). Conversely, prior contact with gay or lesbian persons may motivate heterosexual individuals to reduce their sexual prejudice (Detenber et al., 2013; Lau, Lau, & Loper, 2014).

Our study extends this line of research by advancing two arguments about societal attitudes toward homosexuality and LGBT issues. Firstly, there is a need to disentangle attitudes about homosexuality and endorsement of LGBT issues. Although homonegative attitudes and opposition to LGBT rights are closely related, one cannot assume that they are the same not least because it is possible for people to accept gay/lesbian people or rights without being positive about homosexuality and vice versa. For example, a study found that although 64.5% of Singaporeans reported homonegative attitudes, only 44.9% were unaccepting of gay/lesbian people (Detenber et al., 2013). One danger in treating them as equivalent is the automatic assumption that the same sources of homonegativity will affect positions on LGBT issues, thereby neglecting the influence of other determinants. Secondly, there is a need to recognize how specific cultural, social, and political contexts affect public attitudes toward LGBT issues. While religious norms were identified as a prominent source of homonegativity in certain places (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009), scholars have argued that sexual prejudice in Chinese societies stems from local secular norms concerning family life (Chou, 2001; Chow & Cheng, 2010; Lau et al., 2014).

### **Chinese Societal Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian People**

Homosexuality has a liminal status in Chinese societies. While Chinese culture does not regard homosexuality as intrinsically wrong or sinful, it is neither supported nor accepted as part of the social norm. Same-sex desire and activities were not thought of as constituting a separate identity or generic personality in traditional Chinese kinship-structured society (Chou, 2001). The patriarchal Confucian notion of filial piety dictates that a man must marry and produce a male offspring to carry on the ancestral line. Homosexuality is tolerated as long as this duty is fulfilled, which was less problematic in the past when arranged marriages were the norm. Marriage was regarded as the bonding of two lineage groups rather than the romantic union of two individuals, which promoted a sexual dichotomy between duty and

desire (Hinsch, 1990). It was not until the practice of arranged marriages began to be replaced by more “modern” principles of monogamy, love, and free choice of marriage partners that same-sex attraction began to emerge as an identity for those rejecting to fulfil the traditional familial obligation.

Chinese cultural politics is characterized by its tacitness and the centrality of the family-kinship system which emphasizes filial piety and social relationships—in contrast to the Western style of individualism and confrontational politics such as the discourse of rights and prioritizing sexual identity as the core of selfhood (Chou, 2001). An exemplar of these differences is how Chinese gay men prefer to discreetly “go home” with their boyfriends, hoping to gain tacit parental approval of their same-sex relationships, rather than openly “come out” (Tan, 2011). The problem for Chinese parents is not just the acceptance of their child’s sexuality but how to “face” their relatives—wronged and shamed through the loss of social standing—that they have not brought up their child well, which is a key duty as a parent. To be sure, Chinese culture is contested, continuously changing, and not necessarily in binary opposition to Western culture (Wong, 2007). The tension between sexual identity and family relations, nevertheless, remains a key issue for Chinese gay and lesbian people across different societies (Chow & Cheng, 2010; Tan, 2011).

Despite the frequent commentary about Chinese culture and attitudes toward homosexuality, the prevalence and impact of adherence to traditional Chinese sociocultural values and beliefs on attitudes toward gay and lesbian people have rarely been explicitly tested with the general adult population in Chinese societies. Previous studies conducted with representative samples of the Hong Kong general population were aimed at measuring levels of public awareness, attitudes, knowledge, and understanding of the issues of concern in Hong Kong (Home Affairs Bureau, 2006; Lau et al., 2014; Suen et al., 2016). Through subgroup analyses, divergence in Hong Kong people’s attitudes about homosexuality and

related issues of policy concern were found according to differences in age, education, income, religion, and personal contact with gay/lesbian people (Home Affairs Bureau, 2006; Lau et al., 2014; Suen et al., 2016). Building on these prior works, the present research entails an analytical survey aimed at explicating the sources, dynamics, and power of contributing factors underlying societal attitudes about gay/lesbian people and issues.

### **The Present Study**

The empirical contribution of this study is to identify and evaluate the salience of sociocultural values and beliefs associated with Hong Kong Chinese people's attitudes toward different gay/lesbian issues using a representative sample. Gender identity and intersex status are not within the scope of this study. In addition to subgroup analyses, hierarchical regression analyses will be conducted to identify the salient determinants. The outcome variables in the hierarchical regression models are (a) social acceptance of gay/lesbian people, (b) support for legal protection against sexual orientation discrimination, and (c) support for legalization of same-sex marriage. Three types of sociocultural variables are tested as predictors, corresponding to factors at the societal, individual, and interpersonal levels: sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, education, income, political affiliation, and religious affiliation); attitudes, values, and beliefs (homonegativity, gender role beliefs, conformity to norms, Chinese orientation, and Western orientation); and personal contact (number of homosexual/bisexual friends or co-workers). We expect that all the sociocultural variables examined will have a significant bivariate association with each of the three outcome variables, but the strength of association will differ according to the type of outcome variable. The statistical significance and strength of the association between each predictor variable and outcome variables are expected to be influenced by the inclusion of other sociocultural variables in the hierarchical regression models. Homonegativity is expected to be the most salient predictor of the outcome variables.

## Method

### Sample

Data for this study came from a telephone survey conducted in Cantonese with 1,008 adult Chinese Hong Kong residents from late June to early July 2016. The survey instrument obtained ethical review clearance from the Ethics Review Panel, School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University. An external public opinion polling service was used to recruit respondents and conduct the telephone interviews. Respondents were contacted through random-digit dialing from a pool of residential fixed line telephone numbers using known prefixes provided by the Office of the Communications Authority. Residential fixed line numbers were used as the sampling frame of the telephone survey because it could potentially reach a large number of the adult resident population. As of March 2016, the penetration rates of residential fixed line telephone and mobile telephone in Hong Kong were 95% and 228.3% respectively (Office of the Communication Authority, 2016). Using mobile telephone numbers as the sampling frame would have included non-residents and over-represented those who own more than one mobile telephone. If a household has more than one Chinese Hong Kong resident aged 18 or older, interviewers would ask to speak with the one with the closest birthday from today. The response rate, calculated as the number of successfully completed interviews divided by the sum of successfully completed interviews plus incomplete interviews and refusals by eligible respondents, was 70.6%.

### Measures

**Outcome variables.** *Social acceptance of gay/lesbian people* was measured by asking respondents if they will accept or not accept the following situations: working with a homosexual, making friends with a homosexual, your family member is a homosexual (Home Affairs Bureau, 2006). Responses to the three items were given on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = “strongly unacceptable” to 5 = “strongly acceptable” and averaged to derive a

composite score ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .80$ ). *Support for legal protection against sexual orientation discrimination* was measured using a single question, "Generally speaking, should legal protection against discrimination be provided for people of different sexual orientation?" *Support for same-sex marriage* was measured by the question, "Do you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?" For these two questions, responses were given on a 5-point scale (from 1 = "strongly oppose" to 5 = "strongly favor").

### **Predictor variables.**

*Attitudes, values, and beliefs.* *Homonegativity* was measured using three items ("Homosexuality is abnormal", "Same-sex sexual activity is wrong", and "Homosexuality is inborn") adapted from the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (Herek, 1998). Rated on a 5-point scale (from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"), the items specifically measure respondent's judgments regarding the normalcy, morality, and controllability of homosexual orientation rather than homosexual persons. Responses to the third item were reverse coded so that higher numbers indicate negative attribution before averaged with responses to the other two items to create a composite score ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .60$ ). *Gender role beliefs* were measured using five items rated on a 5-point scale (e.g., "Women should have as much sexual freedom as men", "The husband should be regarded as the legal representative of the family group in all matters of law";  $M = 2.41$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .58$ ) from Brown and Gladstone's (2012) short version of the Gender Role Beliefs Scale. The items indicate respondents' prescriptive beliefs about appropriate behaviors for men and women as well as the extent to which they believe that such differences between the sexes should exist. *Conformity to norms* was measured using two items rated on a 5-point scale ("One should not deviate from familial and social norms" and "Following familial and social expectations is important";  $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .60$ ) adapted from the Asian Values Scale (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999).

*Chinese orientation* was measured using three items rated on a 5-point scale (e.g., “I attach great importance to traditional Chinese values”;  $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .73$ ) adapted from a scale to assess Chinese people’s cultural orientations (Shell, Newman, & Xiaoyi, 2010). *Western orientation* was also measured using three items rated on a 5-point scale adapted from Shell et al. (2010) (e.g., “I appreciate the context of western culture that emphasizes on freedom and taking ease in life”;  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .69$ ).

***Other sociocultural variables.*** *Personal contact* was measured by asking respondents if they have any homosexual/bisexual friend or co-worker and if so, how many homosexual/bisexual friends or co-workers they knew personally. The number of homosexual/bisexual contacts was recorded on a 4-point scale (1 = “0”, 2 = “1 to 2”, 3 = “3 to 10”, and 4 = “more than 10”). *Sociodemographic characteristics* (gender, age, highest education level, monthly household income, political orientation, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation) of respondents were asked at the end of the telephone interview.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were conducted to ascertain the sample characteristics and levels of endorsement on social acceptance of gay and lesbian people, legal protection against sexual orientation discrimination, and legalization of same-sex marriage. One-way MANOVA was used to test the means differences in endorsements of social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage across groups within each sociodemographic category. Bivariate correlations were calculated to examine the associations between predictor variables and outcome variables. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to assess the independence of predictor variables and relative influences of sociodemographic characteristics (entered in block 1), attitudes, values, and beliefs (entered in block 2), and personal contact (entered in block 3) in predicting social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage.

## Results

### Sociodemographic Characteristics

All respondents in the sample were Cantonese-speaking Chinese Hong Kong residents aged 18 or older. Distributions of age ( $M = 46.71$ ,  $SD = 18.17$  years) and gender (54.9% female, 45.1% male) in the sample were comparable to the census population. Only 28.3% of respondents reported having college (including associate degree and higher diploma) education, the remaining 71.8% educated up to Form 7 (senior high school). The most common monthly household income was HK\$10,000 to HK\$29,999 (37.9%), followed by HK\$30,000 to HK\$50,000 (25.8%), above HK\$50,000 (19.8%), and below HK\$10,000 (16.5%). Most respondents (64.3%) reported no religious affiliation, 19.3% Christianity, and 13.9% Buddhism. A majority of respondents (52.6%) reported no political orientation, 22.5% pan-democratic, 8% pro-establishment, and 16% centrism. When asked about their sexual orientation, 96% of respondents self-identified as heterosexual, 1.2% homosexual, and 2.8% bisexual.

### Levels of Gay Friendliness

A majority of respondents (61.01%) do not personally know any friend or co-worker who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual, 20.10% reported 1 or 2 personal contacts, and 18.89% reported 3 or more contacts. Most respondents (46.9% to 56.83%), nevertheless, endorsed positive judgments about homosexuality. Despite overwhelming acceptance of gay/lesbian people as colleagues (83.57%) or friends (76.92%), comparatively more respondents could not accept them as family members (44.13% unaccepting vs 40.19% accepting). By the same token, majority support for sexual orientation anti-discrimination legislation (50.72% favorable vs 14.64% opposed) did not extend to same-sex marriage (32.79% favorable vs 39.41% opposed). The distributions of responses to measures of homonegativity and questions about social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage are reported in Table 1.

### Differential Endorsements across Sociodemographic Groups

The mean values of endorsement levels on social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage across different sociodemographic groups are presented in Figure 1. Gay and lesbian people were accepted (i.e.,  $M \geq 3$ ) across all sociodemographic groups except low income and pro-establishment. Similarly, discrimination protection based on sexual orientation was favored (i.e.,  $M \geq 3$ ) across all sociodemographic groups except for pro-establishment. However, same-sex marriage was opposed (i.e.,  $M < 3$ ) across most sociodemographic groups except among post-80s and 90s (i.e., those born during 1980s and 1990s), pan-democratic, middle income, non-religious, and college educated. Pro-establishment respondents reported the strongest negative attitudes toward social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage.

Several inconsistencies in patterns of endorsement were observed. Firstly, there were statistically significant differences in mean values of endorsements of social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage between groups within every social category except in two cases. Although women were more accepting of gay/lesbian people than men ( $F [1, 947] = 15.34, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ ), there were no statistical differences in endorsements of discrimination protection ( $F [1, 947] = 0.21, p = .65, \eta^2 = .00$ ) and same-sex marriage ( $F [1, 947] = 2.78, p = .10, \eta^2 = .00$ ) between men and women. Secondly, endorsement levels were generally the highest with social acceptance ( $M = 3.57, SD = 0.94$ ), followed by discrimination protection ( $M = 3.49, SD = 1.10$ ), and lowest with same-sex marriage ( $M = 2.80, SD = 1.30$ ). However, endorsement levels of discrimination protection were higher than that of social acceptance among men ( $M_{\text{social acceptance}} = 3.56$  vs  $M_{\text{discrimination protection}} = 3.49$ ), low income group ( $M_{\text{social acceptance}} = 3.09$  vs  $M_{\text{discrimination protection}} = 2.92$ ), pre-60s ( $M_{\text{social acceptance}} = 3.24$  vs  $M_{\text{discrimination protection}} = 3.02$ ) and Buddhists ( $M_{\text{social acceptance}} = 3.29$  vs  $M_{\text{discrimination protection}} = 3.25$ ). Finally, while there was an upward trend in endorsement of

discrimination protection and same-sex marriage with increasing household income, endorsement levels tapered off with the high income group ( $M_{\text{discrimination protection}} = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 1.06$  and  $M_{\text{same-sex marriage}} = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ).

### **Predictors of Social Acceptance and Support for Discrimination Protection and Same-Sex Marriage**

The zero-order correlations and results of hierarchical regression analysis for each outcome variable are presented in Table 2. Among the background variables, age, religious affiliation, and political orientation were independent predictors of all three outcome variables. More specifically, older age, Christian affiliation, and pro-establishment political orientation had negative associations whereas pan-democratic political orientation had a positive association. Higher education and income levels had positive relationships with all three outcome variables but were only independently associated with social acceptance. While women reported greater social acceptance than men, which was statistically significant and consistent with previous studies, gender was not an independent predictor of social acceptance or any other outcome variables when other sociodemographic and background variables were taken into consideration.

In terms of attitudes, values, and beliefs, homonegativity was the only independent predictor of all three outcome variables. The influence of homonegativity increased across social acceptance ( $\beta = -.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ), discrimination protection ( $\beta = -.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and same-sex marriage ( $\beta = -.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Although gender role beliefs and conformity to norms had negative bivariate relationships with all three outcome variables, gender role beliefs was only independently associated with social acceptance ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and conformity to norms was only independently associated with same-sex marriage ( $\beta = -.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Western orientation was positively correlated to all three outcome variables whereas Chinese orientation was negatively correlated. However, both Chinese ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Western

( $\beta = .10, p < .05$ ) orientations had an independent relationship with discrimination protection but not social acceptance. Only Chinese orientation had an independent relationship with same-sex marriage ( $\beta = -.08, p < .05$ ).

Interpersonal contact was positively correlated to all three outcome variables but was not an independent predictor of same-sex marriage. It had statistically significant influences on social acceptance ( $\beta = .19, p < .001$ ) and support for discrimination protection ( $\beta = .10, p < .05$ ) albeit adding only about 3% and 1% of the variance explained in the two outcome variables respectively. The variance in social acceptance, support for discrimination protection, and support for same-sex marriage explained by all the predictor variables in the regression models were 41.4%, 26.5%, and 46.1% respectively.

### **Discussion**

This study sought to ascertain and explain the attitudes of a representative sample of Hong Kong Chinese people regarding social acceptance, discrimination protection, and marriage equality for gay and lesbian people. Our results suggest that Hong Kong people are relatively gay-friendly. While 61.01% of respondents reported no gay, lesbian, or bisexual personal contact, there were considerably greater endorsements of positive statements about homosexuality and acceptance of homosexuals in our sample compared to a representative sample of adult Singaporeans (Detenber et al., 2013). Not only did a majority of respondents (50.72%) support sexual orientation discrimination protection, the support was forthcoming across all sociodemographic groups except pro-establishment. Only a minority of respondents (39.41%) opposed same-sex marriage despite outnumbering those who supported it (32.79%). The levels of Hong Kong public support for discrimination protection and same-sex marriage observed were consistent with the findings of recent studies (Chung, Pang, Lee, & Lee, 2013; Loper, Lau, & Lau, 2014; Suen et al., 2016).

As with previous studies, Hong Kong people's attitudes about homosexuality and attendant issues were found to vary across sociodemographic groups such as age, education, and religion (Home Affairs Bureau, 2006; Lau et al., 2014; Suen et al., 2016). The analysis in this study provides a more precise understanding about the salience of these sociodemographic variables. Our findings indicate that older, less educated, and pro-establishment respondents were consistently less favorable across all the issues examined whereas younger, college educated, and pan-democratic respondents were consistently more favorable. These findings are not unexpected given that younger, college educated, and pan-democratic people were likely to be more open to liberal views such as equal rights whereas older, less educated, and pro-establishment people were likely to hold more conservative views and favor the preservation of the status quo or existing social structures. The influence of Christianity on attitudes were more pronounced concerning discrimination protection and same-sex marriage than on social acceptance. MANOVA analysis indicated that Christians were more accepting of gay/lesbian people than Buddhists and Christianity did not make a statistical difference to social acceptance levels once other predictors were included in the regression model. Unlike prior research conducted elsewhere (Guittar & Pals, 2014; Hicks & Lee, 2006; Moskowitz et al., 2010; Nagoshi et al., 2008), gender did not emerge as a salient predictor in this study. While there was a statistical difference in mean values of social acceptance between men and women, gender had no significant zero order correlation with social acceptance or any of the other two outcome variables. One plausible explanation is that although women are generally less homonegative than men, women in Hong Kong are over-represented in older age groups and lower education levels which are associated with more conservative views.

A major theoretical contribution of this study is to disentangle people's attitudes about homosexuality and their endorsement of gay/lesbian issues. Our findings show that

homonegativity cannot fully account for Hong Kong people's positions on social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage even though negative judgments about homosexuality had a strong negative association with endorsements of those issues. Similar to previous findings (Detenber et al., 2013), the number of respondents (average  $n = 659$ ) accepting gay/lesbian people was 31.80% greater than those (average  $n = 500$ ) who endorsed positive judgments about homosexuality. The incremental contribution in this study was to examine the attitudinal outcomes of homonegativity concerning gay/lesbian rights. The number of respondents ( $n = 142$ ) who opposed sexual orientation discrimination protection was only 43.56% of the number of respondents (average  $n = 326$ ) who endorsed negative judgments about homosexuality. Yet, the number of respondents ( $n = 387$ ) who opposed same-sex marriage was 18.71% greater than those who endorsed negative judgments about homosexuality. These findings support the argument that acceptance of gay/lesbian people and support for their rights do not always follow from one's positive attitudes about homosexuality or vice versa (cf. Lau et al., 2014).

The results in this study further highlight the influence of different determinants other than homonegativity in Hong Kong people's attitudes on social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage. The regression models indicate that non-acceptance of gay/lesbian people was linked to gender role beliefs whereas opposition to same-sex marriage was about conformity to norms. Respondents who agreed with maintaining the social qualities traditionally associated with men and women, particularly patriarchal norms, were less accepting of gay/lesbian people. Respondents who agreed with the importance of following the norms and expectations of family and society, especially Chinese traditions, were more opposed to same-sex marriage. However, neither gender role beliefs nor conformity to norms predicted attitudes about discrimination protection. Rather, Chinese and Western orientations emerged as positive independent predictors of discrimination protection

after controlling for the influence of other factors. This finding suggests that discrimination protection may be congruent with both Chinese and Western cultural orientations.

An important finding in this study is the divergence in attitudes toward discrimination protection vis-à-vis same-sex marriage which underscores the centrality of family-kinship for Chinese people. Despite relatively low homonegativity and majority support for discrimination protection, there was a substantial reversal in attitudes regarding same-sex marriage. The number of respondents supporting same-sex marriage was 34.55% lower than those supporting discrimination protection and 35.60% lower than those endorsing positive judgments about homosexuality. The ratings for same-sex marriage were polarized and there were fewer neutral ratings compared to discrimination protection. There are two plausible explanations for this divergence in positions concerning these two issues. Firstly, discrimination protection is likely to entail a different set of considerations or viewed as an issue of different nature from social acceptance and same-sex marriage. Comparing the three regression models, the same set of factors which explained 41.4% of the variance in social acceptance and 46.1% of same-sex marriage only explained 26.5% of the variance in discrimination protection.

Secondly, same-sex marriage is far more controversial than discrimination protection because it concerns a fundamental change in social structure, particularly the family-kinship system which is the central pillar of Chinese society. The threat to the family-kinship system might be why age, pro-establishment, conformity to norms, and Chinese orientation emerged as independent negative predictors of same-sex marriage given that these factors are all related to the preservation of the status quo. The sacrosanctity of the family-kinship system and delineation of family members from outsiders might also explain the sharp distinction in social acceptance of gay/lesbian people as co-workers (83.57%) and friends (76.92%) versus family members (40.19%) as well as why being friends or co-workers with gay/lesbian

people did not influence Hong Kong people's views on same-sex marriage. By contrast, the percentages of US adults, surveyed in late 2014, who were uncomfortable with LGBT co-workers (23%), close friends (27%), and family members (32%) are far more consistent (GLAAD, 2017).

By explicating the sources and dynamics of people's attitudes about the different issues concerning gay/lesbian people, this study has implications for advocacy of sexual minorities' rights in Hong Kong. Although educating the public about prejudice against sexual minorities and dispelling negative stereotypes based on sexual orientation remain important, our findings suggest that addressing homonegativity may be insufficient to sway a majority of Hong Kong people's attitudes about social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage. Similarly, a discourse of equality or individual rights would not cut it for a majority of Hong Kong people—especially on accepting gay/lesbian people as family members or same-sex marriage. Beyond messages about respect for individual rights, efforts to promote greater acceptance of people of different sexual orientations should emphasize social and familial integration. Furthermore, the sharp attitudinal distinction toward gay/lesbian people as family members versus non-family members exhibited in this study suggests that the type of personal contacts would matter more in changing Hong Kong adult's attitudes than the number of contacts. While same-sex marriage was found to be a divisive issue among Hong Kong people, our findings suggest that Hong Kong society is fully ready for the legislation of sexual orientation discrimination protection which had broad support even among sociodemographic groups known for holding more conservative views. Despite the vocal opposition from Christian organizations, this study found that resistance against anti-discrimination legislation did not come distinctively from Christians but from pro-establishment individuals—which makes the push for legislation no less politically

challenging because the pro-establishment camp forms the political base of the Hong Kong government.

There are several limitations in this study that warrant caution when interpreting the findings. Telephone surveys are relatively prone to social desirability bias which, along with heightened acquiescence concerning controversial issues, could result in an underestimation of negative attitudes in the sample. Owing to the difficulty in posing long or repetitive questions over the phone, shorten versions of scales were used which may have contributed to lower internal consistencies of certain measures. Nevertheless, the use of these scales and their Cronbach alpha values were largely consistent with similar studies. People were asked about their judgments of homosexuality without distinguishing between male and female homosexual orientations. Furthermore, we only asked about personal contact with gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends and co-workers but not relatives or the closeness of the relationship. Future studies should investigate whether and how personal contacts with gay/lesbian relatives would affect their attitudes about same-sex marriage.

In this study, we unpacked Hong Kong people's attitudes about gay/lesbian people and demonstrated that the centrality of family-kinship and social delineation of family members from outsiders provide a more nuanced understanding of Chinese societal attitudes on gay/lesbian issues. The limitations of homonegativity as an explanatory factor of gay/lesbian issues were illustrated. Positive judgments of homosexuality and favorable views on one issue regarding sexual minorities did not automatically translate into support on another issue. Yet, support for some rights for sexual minorities were forthcoming even among those holding homonegative views or non-accepting of gay/lesbian people. Moreover, factors directly related to homonegativity—notably personal contact with sexual minorities—did not exhibit a uniform influence on attitudes across different gay/lesbian issues. Taken together, we argue that while homonegativity does influence people's attitudes about

gay/lesbian issues, its influence should not be overestimated lest other salient determinants become sidelined. Furthermore, the focus on homophobia or sexual prejudice tends to promote a more confrontational discourse of individual rights which is unhelpful in swaying public attitudes toward sexual minorities in non-expressive cultures and collectivist societies.

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Table 1

*Frequency Distributions of Responses on Homonegativity, Social Acceptance, Legislating Sexual Orientation Discrimination Protection, and Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage*

	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M(SD)</i>
Homonegativity			2.76(1.00)
Homosexuality is abnormal			
Agree or strongly agree	332	34.19	
Neutral	123	12.67	
Disagree or strongly disagree	516	53.14	
Same-sex sexual activity is wrong			
Agree or strongly agree	360	38.46	
Neutral	137	14.64	
Disagree or strongly disagree	439	46.90	
Homosexuality is inborn			
Agree or strongly agree	545	56.83	
Neutral	129	13.45	
Disagree or strongly disagree	285	29.72	
Social Acceptance			3.57(0.94)
Working with a homosexual			
Acceptable or strongly acceptable	829	83.57	
Neutral	91	9.17	
Unacceptable or strongly unacceptable	72	7.26	
Making friends with a homosexual			
Acceptable or strongly acceptable	760	76.92	
Neutral	107	10.83	
Unacceptable or strongly unacceptable	121	12.25	
Family member is a homosexual			
Acceptable or strongly acceptable	387	40.19	
Neutral	151	15.68	
Unacceptable or strongly unacceptable	425	44.13	
Legislating Sexual Orientation Discrimination Protection			3.49(1.10)
Favor or strongly favor	492	50.72	
Neutral	336	34.64	
Oppose or strongly opposed	142	14.64	
Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage			2.80(1.30)
Favor or strongly favor	322	32.79	
Neutral	273	27.80	
Oppose or strongly opposed	387	39.41	

Table 2  
*Hierarchical Multiple Regressions*

Independent Variables	Social Acceptance		Discrimination Protection		Same-Sex Marriage	
	Zero-order Correlation	$\beta$	Zero-order Correlation	$\beta$	Zero-order Correlation	$\beta$
<i>Socio-Demographics</i>						
Gender	-.08	-.04	-.04	.04	-.05	-.047
Age	-.44**	-.24***	-.25**	-.12*	-.38**	-.24***
Education Level	.38**	.12*	.22**	.09	.27**	.063
Household Income	.34**	.15***	.17**	.05	.23**	.066
Sexual Orientation	.01	-.00	.09	-.10*	-.04	-.03
Christian	-.05**	-.10*	-.18**	-.20***	-.29**	-.28***
Buddhist	-.15	-.05	-.08	-.04	-.08	-.07
Pro-Establishment	-.28**	-.17***	-.21**	-.15***	-.20**	-.18***
Pan-Democratic	.20**	.09*	.18**	.13***	.11**	.10***
$\Delta R^2$		.286***		.16***		.271***
<i>Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs</i>						
Homonegativity	-.43**	-.23***	-.44**	-.32***	-.60**	-.44***
Gender role beliefs	-.45**	-.19***	-.28**	-.083	-.34**	-.02
Conformity to norms	-.34**	-.07	-.23**	-.043	-.35**	-.08*
Chinese Orientation	-.30**	-.05	-.13*	.09*	-.33**	-.08*
Western Orientation	.23**	.03	.22**	.10*	.24**	.04
$\Delta R^2$		.115***		.116***		.202***
<i>Interpersonal Contact</i>						
Number of homosexual/bisexual friends or co-workers	.36**	.19***	.20**	.10*	.21**	.05
$\Delta R^2$		.029***		.008*		.002
Total R <sup>2</sup>		.414		.265		.461

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

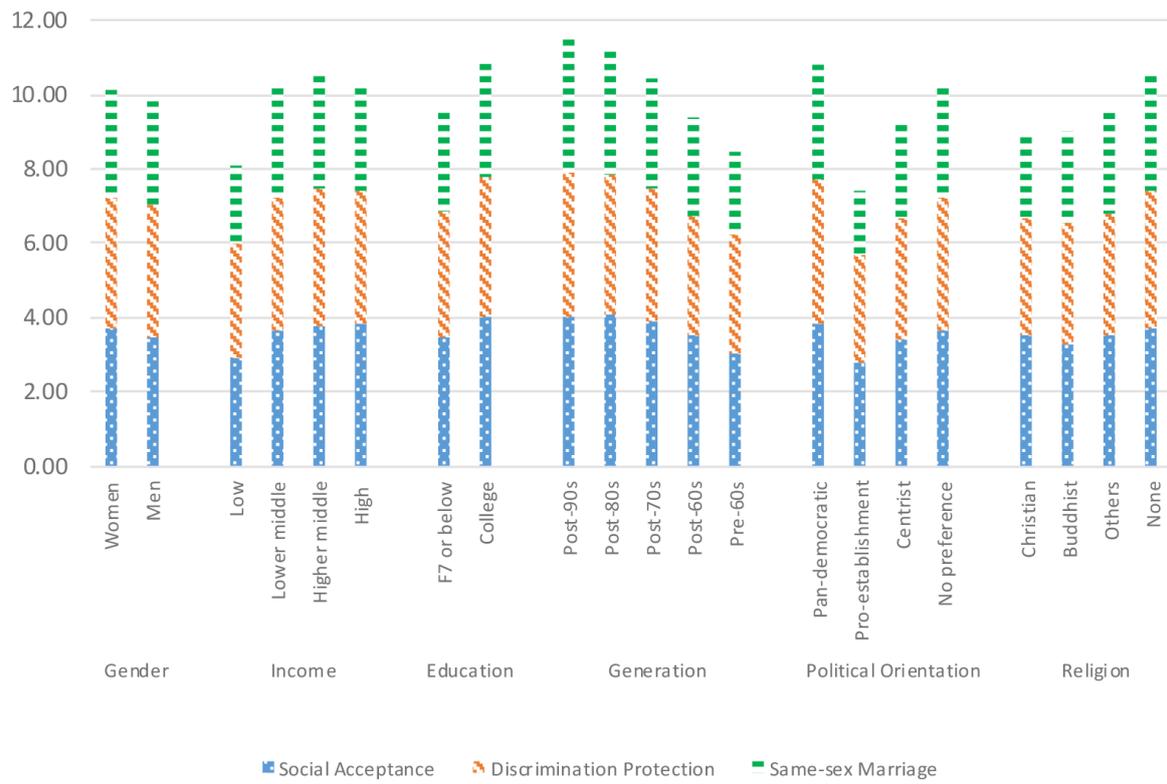


Figure 1. Histogram representation of the mean values of respondents’ endorsements of social acceptance, discrimination protection, and same-sex marriage by socio-demographic groups.