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# Mapping the Antecedents, Conditions, and Consequences of Family Pressure that Drives Chinese Queer People into Heterosexual Marriage: A Systematic Review

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## ABSTRACT

Family pressure pushes a considerable proportion of Chinese queer individuals into heterosexual marriage. Few investigations have been solely devoted to examining family pressure. For a comprehensive picture of the issue, this study presents the results of a systematic review that identified 32 relevant papers to answer three research questions: (1) What are the antecedents (i.e., the drivers and sources) of family pressure to enter into heterosexual marriage? (2) What conditions shape the different manifestations of this pressure? (3) What are the consequences of being exposed to family pressure? Analysis revealed 10 drivers (reproduction, performing heteronormativity, maintaining face, experiencing stigmatized homosexuality, fulfilling familism, later-life care expectations, financial leverage, satisfying parental expectations of marriage, protecting parental emotions, and inquiries about marriage) and four sources (queer people themselves, parents, important others, and society); four conditions (gender, age, living arrangements, and family structure); and five consequences (resignation to heterosexual relationships, negativity toward queer identity, familial distancing, adjusted negotiation strategies for sexual autonomy, and emotional distress). Findings were used to formulate an extended definition of family pressure and to tentatively propose a conceptual model of family pressure for antecedents. The strengths and limitations of the study are also presented.

## KEYWORDS

Queer people;  
family pressure;  
heterosexual marriage;  
China

## Introduction

In contemporary China, a considerable number of queer people engage in heterosexual marriage that contradicts with their queerness. One study claimed that entering formality marriage (i.e., the marriage between gay men and lesbian women) had become increasingly popular among Chinese queer people (Choi & Luo, 2016), showed as the significant growth in membership of one famous online matchmaking website for formality marriage (ChinaGayLes.com). In October 2021, the site had 450,000 registered members seeking marriageable candidates. Liu and colleagues (2015) estimated that at least 14 million heterosexual women were married to gay men without realizing the queer identity of their husbands. Another study suggested that between two and four million heterosexual men had unknowingly married lesbian women, although the actual number is thought to be higher (Tang & Yu, 2014).

The previous studies reveal three distinct types of heterosexual marriage that queer people may engage in: formality marriage (Xinghun), gay's wife marriage (Tongqi), and lesbian's husband

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marriage (Tongfu). In formality marriage, biologically opposite-sex people who are both same-sex oriented get married, with both partners having disclosed their queer identities to one another prior to marriage. Conversely, gay's wife marriage (Tongqi) describes the partnership between a queer man and a heterosexual woman, in which the queer identity of the husband is concealed for the woman. Similarly, lesbian's husband marriage (Tongfu) refers to the marriage between a queer woman and a heterosexual man, in which the queer identity of the wife is concealed.

Heterosexual marriage is held in high esteem in Chinese culture (Blair & Madigan, 2016; Higgins et al., 2002; Yeung & Hu, 2016). Marrying at a socially appropriate age symbolizes personal self-worth and adulthood (SanShi ErLi) (D. Chen & Tong, 2021; Higgins et al., 2002). Moreover, the importance of marriage is heavily influenced by patriarchy in Chinese society, which requires specific responsibilities and prescribed gender roles to be performed. According to the patriarchy in China, men are expected to fulfill prescribed responsibilities associated with the core figure of the family and continue the family line, while women are subject to their husbands and assume a new domestic identity in their transition from daughters to wives. Hence, entering marriage is regarded as a significant life course event for Chinese people, constituting one aspect of the twin goal of ChengJia LiYe (getting married and starting a career).

Studies have shown that marriage in China is not only an internal family affair but also an affair in which individuals from outside the family interfere, for instance, through inquiries or judgments (Choi & Luo, 2016; W. Zhang, 2000). Neighbors and villagers are particularly influential figures found to interfere in people's personal affairs (Choi & Luo, 2016; W. Zhang, 2000). External people may serve as important sources of marriage pressure on families, subsequently increasing family pressure on queer people. As a socio-familial responsibility, getting married in Chinese culture attracts concerns both core family members and individuals external to the family (Choi & Luo, 2016; W. Zhang, 2000).

Homosexuality is not regarded as absolutely and entirely wrong nor supported as a part of Chinese cultural and social norms (Yeo & Chu, 2018). Nevertheless, queer people still experience discrimination and stigmatization from inside and outside their family on their queer identity and marriage issues (Wang et al., 2019, 2020), resulting in the growing importance of entering heterosexual marriage to give the appearance of heterosexuality (Choi & Luo, 2016). For example, Wang et al. (2020) found that self-perceived discrimination from family and society was severe for queer people. Research among 10,932 respondents showed that unfavorable attitudes toward homosexuality and queer children could still be found in 11.1% of heterosexual participants (Wang et al., 2019). Further, studies have also revealed hostile public attitudes toward same-sex marriage. One investigation of 415 students discovered that 53% of respondents regarded same-sex marriage that occurred in non-family members as acceptable. However, only 29.88% would accept the same-sex marriage of a family member (A. Zhang, 2019). In an earlier study, 70% of 400 respondents opposed the legalization of same-sex marriage in mainland China (Li & Zheng, 2013).

### **The current study**

There is a growing body of research discussing the pressure on Chinese queer people to conform to marital norms (Chang, 2015; Choi & Luo, 2016; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Hildebrandt, 2019; Jing et al., 2014; Y. Wang, 2014; Steward et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2020). Hildebrandt (2019) thematized the pressure of entering heterosexual marriage as family pressure. This pressure is exerted in family settings by family members and experienced by queer people as the obligation to enter into heterosexual marriage. Specifically, Hildebrandt (2019) theorized family pressure as "both explicit and implicit expectations that originate in the family and require queer people to conform to traditional heterosexual norms, notably the demands of entering opposite-sex marriage and reproduction." Family pressure has been studied as a behavioral incentive within the context of a range of interrelated topics, including same-sex relationships, attitudes toward queer identity (e.g., identity disclosure, identity acceptance), heterosexual marriage (e.g., incentives

for engaging in heterosexual marriage and associated consequences), and health (e.g., psychological wellbeing, HIV/STDs) (Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Koo et al., 2014; Ren et al., 2019; Rich et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020; Yeo & Chu, 2018). Within these topics, family pressure is researched from three distinct angles: how it is formed; how it is experienced; and what are its consequences.

The formation of family pressure is primarily explained by sociocultural factors (Hildebrandt, 2019). Among these, Confucianism is cited prominently (Ren et al., 2019; Rich et al., 2019; K. Zhang et al., 1999). Confucianism is a set of values and morals about interaction and conduct, operated through personal behaviors, gender roles, sexual morality, and collectivism/familism (Adamczyk & Cheng, 2015). As a leading ideology in China, Confucianism supports a clear hierarchical society and emphasizes social dominance and obedience (Ren et al., 2019). Within families, upholding harmonious relationships (especially with parents) and sustaining family interests by fulfilling family duties (e.g., reproduction, caring for parents) function as important interpersonal dynamics (Choi & Luo, 2016; Ren et al., 2019; Rich et al., 2019; M. Zhang, 2019). Moreover, one study found that people in Confucian societies were less tolerant toward homosexuality than people living without Confucian influence (Adamczyk & Cheng, 2015), leading to social stigma around same-sex relationships.

In addition, studies have revealed that family pressure in favor of heterosexual marriage is experienced differently by gender. For gay men, the pressure is manifested as expectations for reproduction, defining the continuation of the family bloodline as the male's responsibility (M. Liu, 2013; Ren et al., 2019; S. Wang et al., 2015). In contrast, lesbian women face pressure to conform to domestic roles (e.g., caretakers) and to submit to patriarchal values (Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Jhang, 2020; M. Liu, 2013).

As regards the consequences, family pressure negatively affects the psychological wellbeing of queer people, making them feel anxious and guilty to the point that they give in (Huang & Brouwer, 2018; S. Wang et al., 2015). Put simply, in response to family pressure, queer people are required to balance their desire for a same-sex relationship with their familial obligations by engaging in heterosexual marriage (Choi & Luo, 2016; Steward et al., 2013).

The current state of research suggests there are two gaps: First, few investigations on queer people and heterosexual marriage have examined family pressure as the main topic. It tends to be discussed as a subtheme within the context of a wider issue. Second, due to this lack of focused attention, findings related to family pressure are disconnected across different papers and topics. These gaps might prevent scholars and policymakers from comprehensively and profoundly understanding family pressure; and, more importantly, from recognizing how normative influences construct marital intention and how sexuality is shaped/maintained in the context of family.

To produce a comprehensive study on family pressure that drives Chinese queer people into heterosexual marriage, we conducted a systematic review to answer three research questions: (1) What are the antecedents of family pressure to enter into heterosexual marriage? (2) What conditions shape the different manifestations of this family pressure? (3) What are the consequences of being exposed to family pressure? After analyzing 32 papers located in Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, and CNKI, we identified ten drivers with four sources (antecedents), four conditions, and five consequences.

## Method

We followed PRISMA guidelines to report this systematic review (Moher et al., 2009).

### *Inclusion criteria*

To be included, papers had to meet the following criteria: (i) empirical research on heterosexual marriage in queer people addressing family pressure. The research should report on explicit or

implicit expectations regarding marriage that required queer people to conform to traditional heterosexual norms (Hildebrandt, 2019); (ii) for this review, we understood Chinese as a national category and included studies conducted in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan.; (iii) written in English or Chinese; (iv) published in a peer-reviewed journal; (v) conducted from a social science perspective.

### **Search strategy**

We undertook a search of title, abstract and key words of papers indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO from inception up to July 2021, and a total of 126 papers were identified. We also searched in CNKI with adjusted Chinese search strings. The CNKI search yielded 294 papers.

We combined search strings for each of the five components of the research questions: queer people, family, pressure, marriage, and China. For each component, multiple related terms were included, and some equivalent Chinese terms were also included in the English strings. For example, *Jilao* is a common colloquial term for gay man, which is widely accepted in academic papers. *Xinghun* is also a prevalent expression for formality marriage in academia. Chinese terms were used for with adjusted Chinese search strings translated by native speaker JZ.

The following search strings were used and combined:

*Queer people: LGB\* OR MSM OR "sexual minority" OR homosexual OR Gay OR Lesbian OR jilao OR tongzhi OR lala*

AND

*Pressure: pressure OR stress OR tension OR burden OR attitude OR "social norm" OR opinion OR expectation OR impression OR reaction OR feeling OR conflict*

AND

*Marriage: marriage OR partnership OR "gay's wife" OR homowife OR "lesbian's husband" OR xinghun OR tongqi OR tongfu*

AND

*Family: family OR parent OR sibling OR relative OR father OR mother OR brother OR sister*

AND

*China: China OR Chinese OR "mainland China" OR "Hong Kong" OR HK OR Macau OR Taiwan*

Database searching produced 420 records. After duplicates were removed, a total of 383 papers remained for title-abstract screening. A total of 317 papers were filtered out due to their irrelevance in research topics. We identified 66 papers for full-text screening and included 32 papers in the evidence synthesis. In total, 34 papers were excluded due to an unrelated research question (N=19) (e.g., health and sexual behaviors, same-sex parentships, disclosure of homosexuality, or social stigma of homosexuality); an ineligible research sample (N=12) (i.e., heterosexuals); an ineligible document type (N=2) (e.g., published speech); or incomplete information (N=1; Missing both data collection and analysis methods). The screen process was depicted in [Figure 1](#).

### **Paper characteristics**

Most of the included papers (N=30) reported research conducted in mainland China. Also, 27 of the 32 papers used qualitative methods, with interviews most frequently used in data collection (N=23). About a third (N=10) of the study samples included both gay men and lesbian women, while samples of 11 studies exclusively included lesbian women. Four studies included

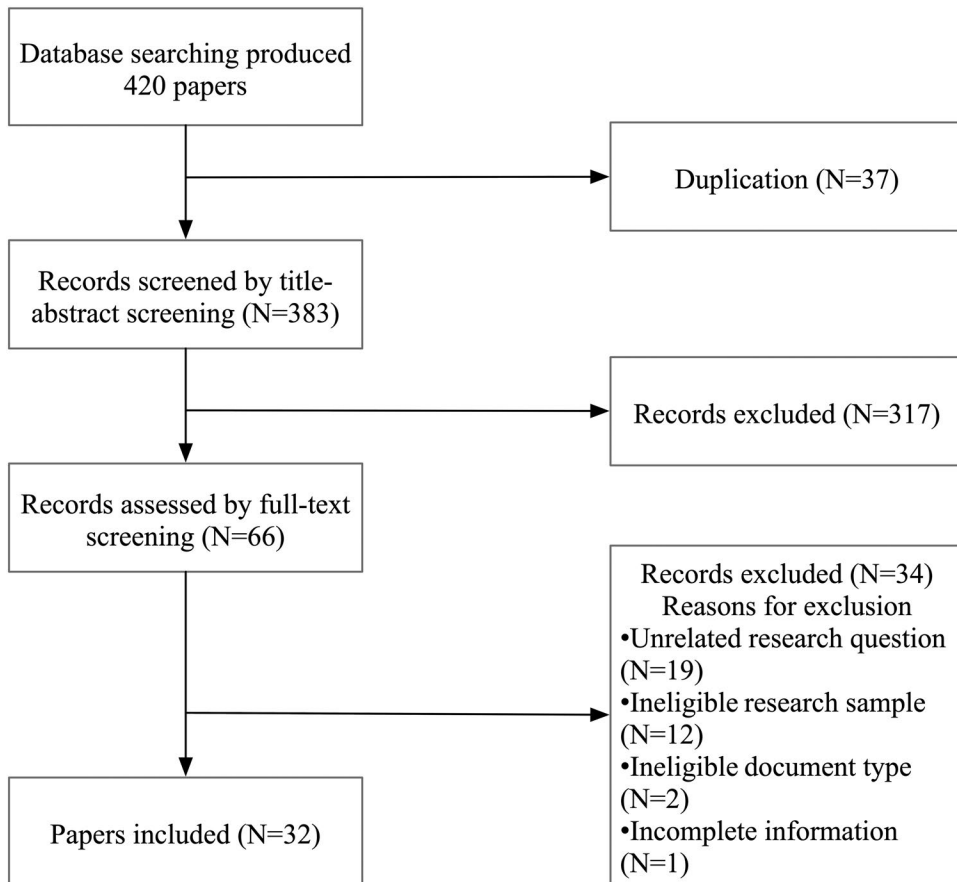


Figure 1. Diagram of screening process.

samples of MSM (N = 3) or MSMW (N = 1), respectively, and four studies enrolled queer people in general. Two studies investigated gay men, and one study focused on gay men and bisexual people.

### Data extraction

The Chinese data were translated into English by native Chinese speaker JZ. The translations were verified by a social science scholar who is native speaker of Chinese and fluent in English. No disagreement regarding translations occurred. Data extraction was performed by JZ and validated by MS. To validate the quality of data extraction, MS randomly selected five papers and extracted data with the following criteria. The results showed high inter-rater reliability: 88% of the data were extracted by both researchers for the same research question. There was some lack of agreement in instances where one piece of data could be used to answer several questions. All disagreements were resolved by discussions between the researchers.

We extracted general information about the papers, including title, author, date of publication, research location, method of data collection, sample size, and sample identity. We also extracted information related to the three research questions of evidence synthesis, guided by predefined criteria. For the first research question, examining antecedents of family pressure, relevant data to be extracted should pertain to reasons or factors that result in family pressure on queer people to engage in heterosexual marriage. For the second research question, the extracted data should describe factors that trigger manifestations of family pressure experienced by queer people

or the conditions under which this pressure presents. For the last research question, the extracted data should describe the consequences for peer people of exposure to family pressure to engage in heterosexual marriage.

As we sought to synthesize findings across individual studies, we extracted author descriptions of findings and conclusions, and illustrate these with author quotes, that is, narrative statements of authors to describe and summarize their results. We also extracted a small proportion of participant quotes from qualitative research (e.g., conversations) to elaborate the evidence underlying corresponding authors' conclusions. For example, to clarify what caused the pressure of marriage and the father to lose face, we extracted the participant quotes: "Has your son gotten married yet? ..... And people just think, 'So old and still not married.' It must cause my father to lose face in front of his old companions." (Steward et al., 2013)

### **Quality appraisal**

Quality appraisal helps ensure that a review synthesizes findings from robust studies, reducing the risk of bias. The Standard Quality Assessment Criteria (SQAC) (Kmet et al., 2004) was employed for the quality assessment, which consisted of three steps. First, we checked the abstract and method sections to identify the research method (i.e., qualitative or quantitative), allowing us to choose the relevant SQAC checklist. Second, we examined the papers against items on the selected checklist and graded the score for each item. Third, the final score was calculated using the grading scale provided by the tool. Once these steps were completed, we assessed the 32 included papers, and the results are presented in [Tables 1 and 2](#) in [Appendix A](#). The paper by Chang (2015) was assessed by the two checklists because both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this paper. As recommended, a SQAC score  $\geq 0.55$  was considered as the inclusion threshold. However, as only two papers had a SQAC score  $< 0.55$ , we decided to include these to provide a comprehensive overview of available research. We address this limitation in the discussion section.

### **Evidence synthesis**

Thematic analysis was employed to synthesize the findings. We inductively analyzed and organized the data into results with the following steps: First, the raw data were coded by JZ, using line-by-line coding in NVivo 12 to generate initial codes. Next, we searched for patterns arising from the initial codes. The codes that shared common patterns were put into groups, from which analytical themes emerged. Following that, we investigated all analytical themes to build possible core themes. Then, we examined all themes to ensure they reflected the raw data and were coherent. Finally, the themes were named based on patterns, and the coding was checked by MB, MS, and JdW. Examples of coding can be found in [Tables 3, 4 and 5](#) in [Appendix A](#).

This review acknowledges political and sociocultural differences between the four Chinese societies from which we aimed to include research. However, of the included papers, 30 reported research conducted in mainland China and two papers reported research conducted in Taiwan; no included papers reported research conducted in Hong Kong or Macau. Also, findings from the studies conducted in mainland China and Taiwan were largely similar. We hence considered it was appropriate to combine the studies from these societies.

### **Results**

This systematic review set out to answer three research questions. The aim of the first research question (RQ1) was to identify the antecedents of family pressure to enter into heterosexual marriage. The second question (RQ2) sought to uncover the conditions that shape the different manifestations of this pressure. Finally, the purpose of the third question (RQ3) was to discover



the consequences of exposure to family pressure. Our findings for each question will be discussed in turn below.

### ***Antecedents of family pressure***

In this paper, “antecedents” is used as an umbrella term encompassing both the drivers and sources of family pressure. Our review identified ten drivers in all: reproduction, performing heteronormativity, maintaining face, experiencing stigmatized homosexuality, fulfilling familism, later-life care expectations, financial leverage, satisfying parental expectations of marriage, protecting parental emotions, and inquiries about marriage.

Results showed that different drivers had different sources. Hence, to comprehensively map antecedents, it was also necessary to determine the sources. This review found four sources of family pressure: queer people themselves, parents, important others, and society. For example, queer people functioned as a source in protecting parental emotions, while parents and society interacted with later-life care expectations. The important others category combines family members, friends, relatives, and neighbors. Multiple sources that exerted influence from the societal level were categorized as society, and the sources could be explicit (e.g., patriarchy, filial piety) or implicit (e.g., Chinese culture, social expectation). Fu and Zhang (2013) cited patriarchy as an explicit source that fostered an overwhelming responsibility to sustain family interests. Koo and colleagues (2014) described Chinese culture as an abstract and implicit source stigmatizing singlehood.

In the paragraphs that follow, we will present each driver and its corresponding source or sources. Possible connections will be further developed in the Discussion section.

### ***Reproduction***

Reproduction refers to the cultural or social expectations and individual actions to produce offspring. Society (through filial piety), parents, and queer people themselves influenced the need or desire for reproduction. First, a total of 11 papers found that family pressure in favor of hetero-marital relationships was associated with a parental desire for grandchildren (Chang, 2015; Y. Chen, 2009; Choi & Luo, 2016; Ji et al., 2021; Koo et al., 2014; M. Liu, 2013; Ning et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2019; Steward et al., 2013; Y. Wang, 2014; Zheng et al., 2020). Second, six papers demonstrated the connection between reproduction and the fulfillment of filial piety (Choi & Luo, 2016; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Koo et al., 2014; Ren et al., 2019; S. Wang et al., 2015; Q. Wang, 2011). Filial piety speaks to the generational bond that attaches importance to procreation and requires children to show gratitude and respect toward their parents. In the study by Huang and Brouwer (2018), filial piety was a recurring notion cited by informants, while remaining childless was considered the most serious violation of this duty. Another study showed how the birth of grandchildren was a sign of success and a mark of filial piety (Ren et al., 2019). Finally, two papers discussed queer people’s own desire for blood-related children and how this might influence their decision to get married (Wu et al., 2020; M. Liu, 2013).

### ***Performing heteronormativity***

Performing heteronormativity relates to the execution of cultural, systemic, and individual practices that normalize opposite-sex attraction and behaviors (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Sadika et al., 2020). Parents, queer people themselves, and society functioned as significant sources behind these practices and expectations. The two particular aspects of heteronormativity reflected in the data were heterosexual behaviors and heterosexual marriage. Five papers described how queer people were required to behave heterosexually by their parents (Cheng, 2018; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Lo, 2020; Ren et al., 2019; Kam, 2007). Such requirements were associated with heterosexual performances regarded as normal and appropriate (Ren et al., 2019). Parental



intervention to ensure that children live orthodox, heteronormative lives was also a feature (Kam, 2007). Four papers demonstrated how heterosexual marriage was regarded as an inevitable obligation by queer people (Jing et al., 2014; Koo et al., 2014; Lo, 2020; Kam, 2007). Kam (2007) found that queer people looked upon heterosexual marriage as an inevitable personal duty that every member of society should fulfill regardless of sexual orientation. Four papers added that it was unacceptable and unthinkable for parents to imagine their children not being in a conventional, heterosexual marriage (Choi & Luo, 2016; Y. Hu, 2017; Ji et al., 2021; Kam, 2007).

### ***Maintaining face***

Maintaining face alludes to performed or planned actions to preserve the reputation and dignity of individuals and the family. Parents, queer people themselves, important others, and society were sources of this driver, highlighting the significance of preserving face for parents, queer people, and family. Queer people were motivated by the desire to preserve the face of their parents (Chang, 2015; Lo, 2020; Steward et al., 2013). Lo (2020) found that many informants were concerned about their parents losing face should the queer identity of their child be disclosed, compelling them to enter into heterosexual marriage. In addition, queer people wished to preserve family face (Jing et al., 2014; Lo, 2020; Ning et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2019); although “family face” was undefined in the papers, it may refer to collective family reputation. Importantly, queer people also concealed their sexual orientation and entered formality marriage to preserve their own face and relieve pressure on themselves (Engebretsen, 2009; Jing et al., 2014; Ren et al., 2019). Parents also were concerned about saving face, both for themselves and their family (Kam, 2007; Ren et al., 2019). It was the fear of losing face that prompted parents to react drastically to same-sex relationships (Kam, 2007). Similarly, parents asked children to marry to maintain face for the family (Ren et al., 2019). It was also possible that family members and queer people worked together to conceal individuals’ homosexuality due to the cultural concern of preserving face (Ren et al., 2019).

### ***Experiencing stigmatized homosexuality***

Experiences of stigmatized homosexuality are negatively connoted actions and beliefs toward queer behaviors and identity. Society was a significant source of this driver, which affected queer people, their parents, and family members. Above all, queer individuals suffered from stigma around homosexuality (Koo et al., 2014; Lo, 2020; Niu & Wang, 2012; Ren et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020; Ning et al., 2019). Ren and colleagues (2019) posited that queer people entered formality marriage to avoid the shame imposed by stigmatized homosexuality. Parents also encountered stigma due to the same-sex orientation of their children (Choi & Luo, 2016; Lo, 2020). One informant mentioned that their mother believed homosexuality should be kept as a taboo subject within the wider family (Lo, 2020). Another study described how queer individuals engaged in nominal marriages to protect their parents from experiencing stigma (Choi & Luo, 2016). In addition to parents, there were also reports of family members feeling shame due to the stigma and discrimination around homosexuality (Ren et al., 2019).

### ***Fulfilling familism***

Familism is defined as the attachment to nuclear and extended family. It is also understood as the notion that family interests took precedence over individual concerns (Campos et al., 2014). Fulfilling familism therefore is the expectation that this family dynamic should be upheld, with society functioning as a source. Our review found that individuals were held collectively responsible for bringing either honor or shame on the family, with the result that queer people accepted heterosexual marriage and parents actively intervened to protect family interests (Choi & Luo, 2016; Kam, 2007). Many participants expressed the sentiment that personal feelings were expected

to be sacrificed for the greater good of the family, and that parents had the prerogative to impose marital and reproductive demands on their queer children (Fu & Zhang, 2013; Jing et al., 2014; Ren et al., 2019).

### ***Later-life care expectations***

Queer people themselves, parents, and society functioned as sources of this driver, which refers to individual desires and social expectations associated with care arrangements in old age. First, parents expected care arrangements for queer children and themselves. Three papers described how the pressure to get married was born out of parental concern that homosexual children would have no one to care for them in their older years (Choi & Luo, 2016; Y. Hu, 2017; Ji et al., 2021). One paper explicitly stated that parents also expected later-life care for themselves (Y. Hu, 2017). Echoing parental desires, societal norms dictated that children take care of their aging parents. In response to this duty, queer people saw heterosexual marriage as a way of finding a partner who could provide assistance to older parents and reduce the care burden (Choi & Luo, 2016; M. Liu, 2013).

### ***Financial leverage***

Financial leverage describes the financial strategies used to make individuals conform and the subsequent dependence they experience as a result. Parents functioned as a distinct source of this driver. Choi and Luo (2016) suggested that parents deployed financial strategies on their queer children. These strategies, especially the purchase of property, reinforced parental controls over marriage issues and commanded conformity from children (Choi & Luo, 2016). Moreover, this parental support often generated situations of ongoing financial dependency, leaving queer children with no other choice than to comply with the marital wishes of their parents (Choi & Luo, 2016; Y. Hu, 2017; Lo, 2020). One informant explained how the fear of losing this source of income forced them to sacrifice their sexual autonomy (Choi & Luo, 2016).

### ***Satisfying parental expectations of marriage***

Unsurprisingly, parents were the source of this driver, which alludes to the assumption that children will meet their parents' expectation of marriage. Six papers described the need for queer people to satisfy their parents' expectation that they would enter heterosexual marriage (Chang, 2015; Choi & Luo, 2016; Ji et al., 2021; Kam, 2007; Ning et al., 2019; S. Wang et al., 2015). Choi and Luo (2016) found that 20 respondents who had chosen or were seeking a nominal marriage cited the need to meet parental expectations. Additionally, Ning et al. (2019) concluded that satisfying parents ranked as the top reason for submitting to heteronormative marriage pressure.

### ***Protecting parental emotions***

This driver concerns the actions and desires connected with protecting parents from negative feelings. Eight papers found that queer people, who functioned as the source in this driver, performed actions and expressed desires to protect their parents from distress, with the result that the queer individuals themselves experienced family pressure (Cheng, 2018; Choi & Luo, 2016; Y. Hu, 2017; Jing et al., 2014; Lo, 2020; Ning et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2019; Q. Wang, 2011). For example, one study reported that the major reason behind informant decisions to engage in contract marriage was concern for parental psychological wellbeing (Lo, 2020). One participant explained how they accepted heterosexual marriage to spare their parents from the hurt of having to endure malicious gossip (Cheng, 2018).

### ***Inquiries about marriage***

Inquiries about marriage are questions and judgments about an individual's marital intention or status. Important others, including relatives, friends, family members, and neighbors, asked questions and made comments to parents and queer people at family gatherings and festivals. Parents were on the receiving end of these constant inquiries about their offspring's marital intentions, further exacerbating family pressure (Choi & Luo, 2016; Ren et al., 2019; Ning et al., 2019). Their queer children also faced interrogation about marriage plans from important others (Choi & Luo, 2016; Engebretsen, 2009; Ji et al., 2021; Ren et al., 2019; Q. Wang, 2011). One informant recalled feeling harassed by the questions, to the extent that these were impossible to ignore (Ren et al., 2019).

### ***Conditions shaping different manifestations of family pressure***

In response to RQ2, our review uncovered four conditions that shape different manifestations of family pressure; these are gender, age, living arrangements, and family structure.

#### ***Gender***

Both the nature and extent of family pressure were influenced by the gender of informants. Regarding the nature of the differences, six papers found that gay men experienced more family pressure associated with reproduction, as they were considered responsible for continuing the family lineage (Chang, 2015; Choi & Luo, 2016; Koo et al., 2014; M. Liu, 2013; Ren et al., 2019; S. Wang et al., 2015). In contrast, lesbian women experienced more family pressure associated with conforming to patriarchal control and meeting heteronormative ideals of femininity (Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Y. Hu, 2017; Jhang, 2020; Y. Wang, 2014). According to Huang and Brouwer (2018), lesbian women were subject to patriarchal control over marriage issues, while such submission was rarely reported by male interviewees. Moreover, deviant gender expressions in lesbian women (i.e., masculine lesbians) were unacceptable for parents (Y. Hu, 2017). Lesbian women endured intense family pressure to conform to socially recognized concepts of womanhood that were typically aligned with heteronormative standards (Huang & Brouwer, 2018). Regarding the extent of the differences, four papers concluded that gay men experienced higher levels of family pressure and reported greater intention for marriage (Chang, 2015; X. Hu & Wang, 2013; M. Liu, 2013; Ren et al., 2019). For example, Liu (2013) found that this added stress motivated more gay men to engage in contract marriage.

#### ***Age***

Age refers to the age of individuals and how getting older affected the amount of family pressure experienced. Eleven papers found that family pressure to get married intensified with age, increasing the likelihood of heterosexual unions (Choi & Luo, 2016; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Y. Hu, 2017; Ji et al., 2021; Kam, 2007; M. Liu, 2013; Ning et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2019; Steward et al., 2013; Shi et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). As queer people reached a marriageable age, they were frequently interrogated by other people about their marriage plans. Moreover, research suggests that this pressure became even stronger for the individuals at an advanced age (X. Hu & Wang, 2013; Jiang et al., 2013).

#### ***Living arrangements***

There were differences in family pressure depending on where informants lived and with whom. Queer people living with parents experienced increased family pressure (Y. Hu, 2017; Ji et al., 2021; K. Wang, 2020; Y. Wang, 2014; Wu et al., 2020). Wu et al. (2020) compared MSM living alone with MSM living with parents and found that those who lived with their parents were

subjected to greater pressure. Further, compared with their urban counterparts, queer people living in rural areas experienced higher levels of family pressure and were more likely to report their intention to marry (Chang, 2015; Wu et al., 2020).

### ***Family structure***

The level of pressure was also influenced by the queer person's family structure, which refers to whether they grew up in a single-parent or in a one-child household. Queer people who were only children experienced greater family pressure (Chang, 2015; Jing et al., 2014; Koo et al., 2014; M. Zhang, 2019). In contrast, family pressure was less intense in single-parent households (Ji et al., 2021). One paper demonstrated that queer people whose parents were divorced experienced less pressure, which supported the finding that queer people raised in one-parent families reported weaker intentions for formality marriage (Chang, 2015; Jiang et al., 2013).

### ***Consequences of being exposed to family pressure***

In response to RQ3, the review revealed five consequences of exposure to family pressure: resignation to heterosexual relationships, emotional distress, negativity toward queer identity, familial distancing, and adjusted negotiation strategies for sexual autonomy.

#### ***Resignation to heterosexual relationships***

Resignation to heterosexual relationships describes actions, expectations, and consequences related to engaging in different phases of heterosexual relationships. First, 14 papers highlighted that family pressure had led queer people to engage in heterosexual marriage (Choi & Luo, 2016; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Jiang et al., 2013; Ji et al., 2021; Kam, 2007; Koo et al., 2014; T. Liu, 2019; Lo, 2020; Niu & Wang, 2012; Ren et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2020; Steward et al., 2013; Q. Wang, 2011; M. Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, eight papers showed that queer people endured blind dates arranged by parents and important others (Chang, 2015; Choi & Luo, 2016; Y. Hu, 2017; Jing et al., 2014; Kam, 2007; Ren et al., 2019; Steward et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2020). Moreover, three articles discussed how personal mate-seeking standards were adjusted due to family pressure (Y. Chen, 2009; Kam, 2007; Xu, 2019). The standards were based on parental instructions that determined suitable spouses (Xu, 2019). Specifically, lesbian women attached importance to decent occupations and home ownership for marriageable gay men. Gay men, however, were more concerned with fertility and appropriate gender expressions (i.e., lesbians were expected to be feminine) in marriageable candidates (Y. Chen, 2009). Two articles added that queer people were required to maintain fake marriages by fabricating details about married life and deflecting questions about plans to start a family in the face of interrogations from relatives at family gatherings (Choi & Luo, 2016; Fu & Zhang, 2013). As a result, family pressure damaged the fragile union and reduced emotional support between marriage partners (M. Zhang, 2019).

#### ***Emotional distress***

Emotional distress refers to experiencing negative feelings of anxiety, guilt, selfishness, fear, depression, and stress. In three papers, participants recalled how a feeling of anxiety in fulfilling their filial obligation was behind their decision to get married (S. Wang et al., 2015; Y. Wang, 2014; Zheng et al., 2020). The guilt associated with unfilial acts and failing to meet the parental expectation of heterosexual marriage was discussed in five of the articles (Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Ji et al., 2021; Lo, 2020; Engebretsen, 2009; Q. Wang, 2011). Ning and colleagues (2019) found that exposing parents to social pressure made queer people feel selfish. S. Wang and colleagues (2015) described informants' feelings of fear about risking social prestige and

dissatisfying family expectations. Moreover, three papers described how visits home triggered family pressure that made informants feel depressed (Chang, 2015; Niu & Wang, 2012; Zheng et al., 2020). Perceived pressure to get married also induced feelings of stress among queer people (Zheng et al., 2020).

### ***Negativity toward queer identity***

Negativity toward queer identity describes negative changes in how queer people perceive their queer identity, both behaviorally and psychologically. Eleven papers found that exposure to family pressure had led informants to disguise their queer identity (Cheng, 2018; Choi & Luo, 2016; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Jing et al., 2014; Koo et al., 2014; T. Liu, 2019; Lo, 2020; Ren et al., 2019; Kam, 2007; Q. Wang, 2011; M. Zhang, 2019). Indeed, the force of family pressure prevented queer people from coming out to their families (Huang & Brouwer, 2018). Additionally, it was suggested that family pressure caused queer subjects to have negative feelings toward their queer identity (X. Hu & Wang, 2013; Ji et al., 2021).

### ***Familial distancing***

Familial distancing is the act of psychologically or physically disconnecting oneself from family members. First, to mitigate family pressure, queer people purposely disconnected and maintained minimal contact with family or family members (Chang, 2015; T. Liu, 2019; Lo, 2020; Niu & Wang, 2012). Second, creating a comfortable physical distance from family members was employed to relieve pressure and reduce family control (Chang, 2015; T. Liu, 2019; Lo, 2020; Jiang et al., 2013; Ji et al., 2021; Kam, 2007; Q. Wang, 2011). Informants usually left hometowns, emigrating or moving to large cities. As Kam pointed out, parents had a good excuse to explain why their daughter was not married if she lived outside China. The physical distance alleviated the pressure for both parties (Kam, 2007).

### ***Adjusted negotiation strategies for sexual autonomy***

Adjusted negotiation strategies for sexual autonomy are actions and plans to negotiate sexual autonomy with families or family members. Four papers found that adequate financial resources were a way to control family pressure (Y. Hu, 2017; T. Liu, 2019; Lo, 2020; K. Wang, 2020). Lo (2020) suggested that lesbians relied on “economic power” to overcome parental disapproval of queerness. T. Liu (2019) also proposed that adequate income empowered lesbians to negotiate family pressure. Pretexting singlehood was another negotiation strategy (Y. Hu, 2017; Lo, 2020; Kam, 2007). Informants perceived singlehood to be much more acceptable than homosexuality as a socially recognized “life-style”, and thus told their family they were single to stave off marriage pressure. A further option was to disclose their queer identity strategically to family and justify homosexuality as innocent and normal to parents (Fu & Zhang, 2013; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Jiang et al., 2013; K. Wang, 2020). Some informants even problematized heterosexual marriage by highlighting its disadvantages, notably a decreased quality of life (e.g., burden of a mortgage, less time to pursue personal interests) (Y. Hu, 2017; Ning et al., 2019). Last, two papers demonstrated how some queer people chose to establish clear interpersonal boundaries to negotiate with their parents (Ji et al., 2021; Ning et al., 2019). According to this strategy, marriage issues were defined as personal matters that parents should refrain from intervening in.

## **Discussion**

This systematic review analyzed the antecedents (i.e., drivers and sources), conditions, and consequences of family pressure that influence Chinese queer people to engage in heterosexual

marriage. Family pressure was found to be fueled by ten drivers and four sources (RQ1): the drivers were reproduction, performing heteronormativity, maintaining face, experiencing stigmatized homosexuality, fulfilling familism, later-life care expectations, financial leverage, satisfying parental expectations of marriage, protecting parental emotions, and inquiries about marriage. The identified sources of pressure to marry were parents, queer people themselves, important others, and society. Furthermore, we found that the manifestations of family pressure were shaped by several factors: gender, age, living arrangements, and family structure (RQ2). In addition, exposure to family pressure was found to result in five consequences (RQ3): resignation to heterosexual relationships, negativity toward queer identity, familial distancing, adjusted negotiation strategies for sexual autonomy, and emotional distress.

### ***Limitations and strengths***

Our review has a limitation that need to be taken into account when drawing: We included two “low-quality” papers (SQAC score <0.55). The study by Y. Wang (2014) achieved an SQAC score of 0.50; Jiang et al. (2013) scored 0.45. A low score might indicate that the papers failed to meet the SQAC standards for performing research. It might also question the quality of the findings under SQAC standards. Including the “problematic findings” might also undermine the quality of this review. We included the papers as we wanted to provide a comprehensive overview of available research. We included 32 papers, 28 of which achieved “high-quality” scores by SQAC standards (SQAC score  $\geq 0.60$ ). Thus, the problem appears limited, and the “high-quality” papers firmly support the trustworthiness of the extracted data.

This review also has specific strengths: We analyzed results from both Chinese and English studies and integrated insights from both qualitative and quantitative papers, contributing to a comprehensive overview of family pressure. We examined three aspects of family pressure—antecedents, conditions, and consequences—to delineate a holistic picture of family pressure. Hence, this review provides a comprehensive and in-depth overview of research that contributes to understanding why Chinese queer people enter heterosexual marriage as a result of family pressure.

### ***Contributions of the review***

This review extends previous findings regarding the antecedents, conditions, and consequences of family pressure. For drivers in antecedents, previous studies identify that the formation of family pressure has been explained primarily by sociocultural factors, especially Confucianism (Hildebrandt, 2019; Ren et al., 2019; Rich et al., 2019; K. Zhang et al., 1999). This review identified and specified several sociocultural drivers that might be associated with Confucianism (e.g., fulfilling familism, reproduction), further explaining how Confucianism contributes to family pressure. This review further added individual factors as drivers of family pressure, extending antecedents for including both sociocultural and individual factors. For sources in antecedents, we discovered four sources from both inside and outside the nuclear family, chiming with previous findings that heterosexual marriage was a multipartite affair that aroused both internal and external concerns (Choi & Luo, 2016; W. Zhang, 2000). This review also extends the previous findings of conditions (i.e., gender) and consequences (i.e., psychological distress and resignation to heterosexual marriage) by adding more elements (e.g., living arrangements and familial distancing).

The findings of the review enable us to extend the existing definition of family pressure. Hildebrandt (2019) defined family pressure as follows:

Family pressure can include (but is not limited to) the explicit or implicit expectation to conform to traditional norms, notably opposite-sex marriage and procreation. Failure to do so can mean LGB people



are subject to constant nagging from family members, but, more seriously, it can result in being isolated and disowned. (p. 592)

The previous definition identifies the “expectation to traditional norms” as antecedents and “constant nagging from family members” together with “being isolated and disowned” as consequences. The definition also shows some limitations for limiting antecedents to “expectations to traditional norms” and consequences to “nagging from family members” together with “being isolated and disowned”. Moreover, we lack information about the sources of drivers and conditions that resulted in differently experienced family pressure. The findings identified by this review call for an extended definition.

On the basis of our review, we propose the following extended definition of family pressure:

Family pressure comprises individually and socio-culturally constructed actions and expectations exerted in family contexts and perceived by queer people as a motivation to engage in heterosexual marriage. The actions and expectations are driven by personal concerns, traditional Chinese culture, and heterosexual social norms. Queer people of different ages, genders, living arrangements, and family structures experience different actions and expectations, which result in negative changes in behaviors, emotions, and identity.

Our new definition adds to the previous version in four key aspects. First, it includes actions as well as expectations, expanding the types of family pressure from desires to both behaviors and desires. Second, it specifies “traditional norms” by explicating family pressure and its drivers. In this respect, instead of listing only reproduction and opposite-sex marriage, the definition summarizes drivers as “individually and socio-culturally constructed actions and expectations”, which highlights its joint construction and allows for a more comprehensive interpretation of drivers. Furthermore, it could accommodate more drivers emerged in further developments as the phenomenon advanced. Third, it includes conditions, clarifying what contributes to different manifestations and highlighting the contextualized nature of family pressure. Last, it qualifies “being isolated and disowned”, through reference to negative changes in behaviors (e.g., resignation to heterosexual relationships), emotions (e.g., emotional distress), and identity (e.g., negativity toward queer identity).

The findings of our systematic review hold several practical implications. Firstly, the findings underscore the importance of interventions contributing to the empowerment of queer people by providing social support to cope with marriage pressure as well as actionable strategies to navigate parents’ marriage expectations. Secondly, our review found that family pressure reflects various social drivers, highlighting the importance of population-wide education and campaigns to promote more positive social attitudes regarding same-sex attraction and lifestyles. Activities are also needed to facilitate discussion of socially shaped marriage expectations that put undue pressure on queer and heterosexual people alike. Thirdly, interventions may be needed to provide social support to parents who are aware of the queer identity of their children in dealing with pressure from important others and adverse attitudes in society at large. For instance, support groups could be established for parents of queer people, enabling them to exchange experiences.

### ***Conceptual model of family pressure for antecedents***

The analysis of antecedents shows possible stratified drivers and connections among grouped drivers, suggesting a hypothetical model of antecedents. We tentatively conceptualize the model based on the differential pattern theory (ChaXu GeJu) proposed by Xiaotong Fei (2012, pp. 49-62), echoing with the socio-ecological model (McLeroy et al., 1988). The socio-ecological approach emphasizes that multiple-level factors, together with intrapersonal behavioral factors, influence the specific behavior in question (Mehtälä et al., 2014). In particular, the differential pattern theory aims to conceptualize how Chinese people perceive interpersonal relationships. Specifically, Chinese interpersonal relationships are individual-centered but also interact with



different people/groups. The significance of relationships with different people/groups is differentiated according to blood ties, professional relationships, and geographical relationships. The theory enlightens the interactions and embeddedness among individuals and society in Chinese contexts, presenting as individual–family–society (Ma, 2007). Our model is developed on the embeddedness of sources (i.e., embedded sources) from the differential pattern theory and the idea of multiple-level factors (i.e., multiple-level drivers) from the socio-ecological model. We will provide details in the following paragraphs for background, relevance, principles, and the model.

When analyzing results from the review, we noticed that drivers of family pressure were on different levels of abstraction. For example, “inquiries about marriage” was considered a concrete driver at a lower level of abstraction, whereas “fulfilling familism” tended to be at a higher level of abstraction. We also noticed that there might be connections, even hierarchies, among the drivers. It should be noted, however, that the connections among drivers have been built tentatively, no ample and direct evidence confirms causality in the original articles.

Conceptualizing the aforementioned connections is crucial to understanding how the different drivers interact with each other. A lack of awareness about driver interactions could prevent scholars and policymakers from deepening their knowledge of the dynamic interplay and thus from identifying the core cause(s) of family pressure. This situation would further obstruct policymaking and service provision to mitigate family pressure. On the basis of our review, we propose the permeation model of family pressure to tentatively conceptualize interactions.

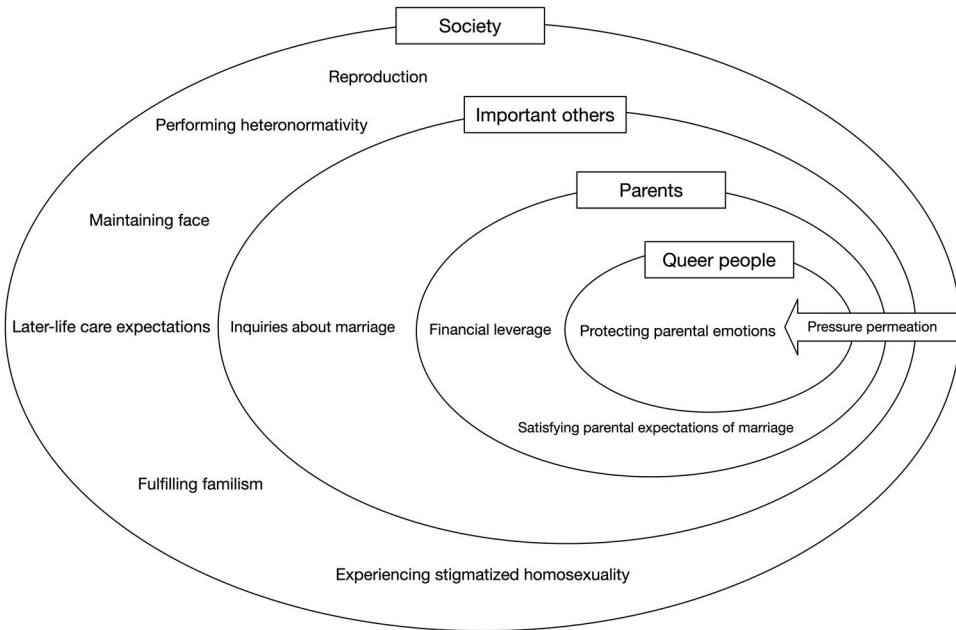
The model is based on three principles. First, our results showed that different drivers had different sources, suggesting groupable drivers. Hence, we categorized the drivers into four groups according to their source(s)—that is, queer people, parents, important others, and society. If a driver had multiple sources, it was categorized under societal drivers for two reasons. First of all, society functioned as an essential source in these drivers, leading to socially or culturally ascribed attributes. To reinforce the grouping method, we also checked the nested drivers with respect to their features and the level of abstraction. Specifically, the societal drivers manifest as social norms and cultural ideologies, showing high-abstract characteristics. Hence, the societal drivers can be nested for its sociocultural nature. The drivers propelled by individuals are personal actions and expectations, showing relatively lower-abstract attributes. We checked the grouping of the drivers with the consideration of their personal features on a lower-abstract level.

The second principle maintained that sources were embedded. Developed on our analysis results and the differential pattern theory, the sources were embedded as queer people, parents, important others, and society.

Lastly, the third principle assumed that drivers could be positioned according to the embeddedness order of the sources. Hence, we ordered the drivers as follows: drivers propelled by queer people, parents, important others, and society.

Figure 2 shows our conceptual model of family pressure for antecedents. Drivers are grouped and embedded as aforementioned order. Notably, in our findings, the “protecting parental emotions” driver is propelled by queer people and therefore located in the center of our model, emphasizing that the model is based on the experienced pressure of queer people. The centered position of this driver, however, does not imply that “protecting parental emotions” is the core driver.

The model also depicts a possible cross-section mediational dynamic, which we have named pressure permeation. Pressure permeation refers to the idea that drivers at the outer circles have the potential to exert influence over drivers at the inner circles. For example, “fulfilling familism” might motivate important others to make inquiries about marriage with parents. Parents could respond to such inquiries by making their queer children conform to the parental expectation of entering marriage. The dynamic of pressure permeation is proposed to connect the drivers across the different sources, from queer people right through to society, resulting in socially and individually ascribed family pressure.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual model of family pressure for antecedents.

While the model is based on the findings of this review, it should be pointed out that it is still a tentative version for further development. Future investigations should test interactions among drivers (e.g., Does “reproduction” drive “inquiries about marriage”? How does experiencing “inquiries about marriage” result in “protecting parental emotions”?) and expand the model by including more antecedents if necessary.

## Conclusion

This review shows that family pressure to get married grows out of both interpersonal dynamics and sociocultural influences and varies among queer people in different circumstances. Family pressure to get married leads to queer people entering a heterosexual relationship. It can also induce adverse emotional experiences and changes in queer identities and connections with family members. We hope that this systematic review of research on family pressure among queer people in China is a catalyst for further research examining how heterosexual marriage expectations shape queer people and how they may affect changes in those culturally engrained practices.

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Noras on the Road Family and Marriage of Lesbian Women in Shanghai	2	2	2	1 (Link to the study method is not clear)	1 (Sampling strategy is not justified)	2	0 (Missing data analysis method)	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.6
Socio-cultural influences on the transmission of HIV among gay men in rural China	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.9
Examining Cultural Discourses in Taiwanese Gender and SexualMinority/hongzhi Family-of-Origin Relationships	2	2	2	2	1 (Sampling strategy is described, but justification and relevant settings are missing)	2	2	2	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.85
Intimate Practices, Conjugal Ideals: Affective Ties and Relationship Strategies Among Lala (Lesbian) Women in Contemporary Beijing	2	2	2	2	1 (Sampling strategy is not justified)	1 (Data collection procedures are not explicitly described)	2	1 (Analytic methods are not fully described>Data provided is insufficient)	2	2	0.85
The empowerment of rural migrant lalas: Contending queerness and heteronormativity in China	2	2	2	2	1 (Sampling strategy is not justified)	2	2	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	2	0.85
A tale of three cities: distinct marriage strategies among Chinese Lesbians	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Two Gay Men Seeking Two Lesbians: An Analysis of Xinghun (Formality Marriage) Ads on China's Tianya.cn.	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.9
The price of salt: the capable self in the face of heteronormative marriage pressure in the discourses of the "post-90s" Chinese lesbians	2	2	2	2	0 (Sampling strategy is not described; Justification and relevant settings are missing)	2	2	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.7
Family formation among lalas (lesbians) in urban China: Strategies for forming families and navigating relationships with families of origin	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.8

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued)

Title	Question / objective sufficiently described?	Study design evident and appropriate?	Content for the study clear?	Connection to a theoretical framework / wider body of knowledge?	Sampling strategy described, relevant and justified?	Data collection methods clearly described and systematic?	Data analysis clearly described and systematic?	Use of verification procedure(s) to establish credibility?	Conclusions supported by the results?	Reflexivity of the account?	Total
Negotiations Between Chinese Gay Men and Lesbians and Their Parents About Marriage	2	2	2	2	1 (Sampling strategy is not justified)	2	2	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.75
Hezuo hunyin chutan: Nan nv tongzhi de hunyin dongji yanjiu [A primary investigation of formality marriage: Marital motivations of queer people]	2	2	2	1 (Link to the study method is not clear)	0 (Missing sampling strategy)	1 (Data collection procedures are not clearly described)	0 (Missing data analysis method)	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.5
Tongxinglianzhe de changsuo zhuanhuan [Locale conversion of homosexuals]	2	2	2	1 (Link to the study method is not clear)	1 (Sampling strategy is not fully described)	1 (Data collection procedures are not clearly described)	0 (Missing data analysis method)	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.55
"85 hou" nv tongxinglianzhe yixing hunyin yali yingdui celue tanjiu- dui 14 ming nv tongxinglianzhe de shendu fangtan [Coping strategies of marriage pressure used by lesbians born after 1985s- based on 14 in-depth interviews]	2	2	2	0 (Theoretical framework is not well described nor informing method)	0 (Missing sampling strategy)	1 (Data collection procedures are not clearly described)	0 (Missing data analysis method)	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0 (No Reflexivity)	0.45
Nv tongxinglianzhe zai xingshi hunyin zhong de juese renzhi yu guanlian yinsu fenxi [The role cognition and related factors of lesbians in marriage of convenience]	2	2	2	1 (Link to the study method is not clear)	1 (Sampling strategy is not fully described)	2	0 (Missing data analysis method)	0 (Verification procedure is not evident)	2	2	0.7

Zai yinxing "hun" yu zhidu hun de bianjie youzou: Zhongguo nan tongxinglian qunti de hunyin xingtai [Travel on the Border of the Implicit Marriage and the Institutional Marriage: Analysis on the Marriage Models among Chinese Gay Population]	2	2	2	2	2	1(Sampling strategy is not fully described)	2	0 (Missing description of data analysis)	2	2	0(No Reflexivity)	0.75
Cong xianshen dao guanxi: Taiwan xingbie shehui bianqian yu nv tongzhi qinzi xieshang [From visibility to relationality: Changing socio- gender structure and lesbian parent-child negotiation in contemporary taiwan]	2	2	2	2	2	1(Sampling strategy is not justified)	2	2	2	2	2	0.95
Weihun qingnian tongxinglian zhe hunyu yiyuan jiqi yingxiang yinsu fenxi [A study on unmarried young queer people's marriage and reproduction intention]	2	2	2	2	2	1(Link to the study method is not clear)	2	1(Analytic methods are not fully described)	2	1(Claim of generalizability is not supported)	0(No Reflexivity)	0.7
Nv tongxinglian zhe de hunyin he jiating qei chuantong hunyin zhidu dalai de tiaozhan [Lesbian women's marriages and families: A challenge to the traditional marriage system]	2	2	2	2	2	0(Sampling strategy is not described)	1(Data collection procedures are not clearly described)	0(Missing data analysis method)	0(Verification procedure is not evident)	2	0(No Reflexivity)	0.55
Tongxinglian de chugui yu jiabenwei de jiuji [The engagement between homosexual's coming out and family standard]	2	2	2	2	2	0(Missing sampling strategy)	2	0(Missing data analysis method)	2	2	0(No Reflexivity)	0.7
Rentong er bu "chugui"- tongxinglian zhe shengcun xianzhuang de diaocha yanjiu [Well-identified but not coming out: contemporary gay minority investigation]	2	2	2	2	2	1(Link to the study method is not clear)	1(Data collection procedures are not clearly described)	0(Missing data analysis method)	2	2	0(No Reflexivity)	0.6

**Table 2.** Quality appraisal of quantitative papers.

Title	Question or objective sufficiently described?	Design evident and appropriate?	Method of subject selection/ source of information/ input variables is described and appropriate.	Subject characteristics or inputvariables/ information sufficiently described?	If random allocation to treatment group was possible, is it described?	If interventional and blinding of investigators to intervention was possible, is it reported?	If interventional and blinding of subjects to intervention was possible, is it reported?
Heterosexual Marital Intention: Effects of Internalized Homophobia, Homosexual Identity, Perceived Family Support, and Disclosure Among Chinese Gay and Bisexual Men	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
LGB Identity Among Young Chinese: The Influence of Traditional Culture	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Potential HIV transmission risk among spouses: marriage intention and expected extramarital male- to-male sex among single men who have sex withmen in Hunan, China	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stressors Based on Sexual Orientation and Mental Health Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals in China: Minority Stress and Perceived Pressure to Get Married	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tongxinglian "xingshi hunyin"de zeou biao zhun ——Jiyu dui guonei mou daxing xingshi hunyin wangzhan zhenghun guanggao de neirong fenxi [The criteria of spouse selection of homosexual "formal marriage" - based on the content analysis of marriage advertisement from a large formal marriage website in China]	2	2	2	1(Subject characteristics are not sufficient described)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Weihun qingnian tongxinglian zhe hunyu yiyuan jiqi yingxiang yinsu fenxi [A study on unmarried young queer people's marriage and reproduction intention]	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

Outcome and exposure measure(s) well defined and robust to measurement / misclassification bias? Means of assessment reported?	Sample size appropriate?	Analysis described and appropriate?	Some estimate of variance is reported for the main results?	Controlled for confounding?	Results reported in sufficient detail?	Conclusions supported by the results?	Total
2	1(Sample size is not justified)	2	2	2	2	2	0.95
2	1(Sample size is not justified)	2	2	2	2	2	0.95
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
N/A (Descriptive case series)	2	N/A (Descriptive case series)	N/A (Descriptive case series)	N/A (Descriptive case series)	2	1(Some interpretations are not supported by results)	0.85
2	1(Sample size is not justified)	2	0(Variance is not reported)	0(Not controlled)	2	2	0.77

Table 3. Coding structure of RQ1.

Analytical theme	Category (Sub-themes)	Quote (Raw data)	Data source	Number of total quotes under the same category	Total data sources of the quotes under the same category	
Face maintenance	Queer people wanted to maintain the face of themselves	220/7 To cope with the pressure, participants entered formality marriage to avoid shame and to save their own face and the face of their family.	Ren et al., 2019	4	3	
	Queer people wanted to maintain the family face	636/4 Thus, (anonym) had taken the initiative to suggest staging a fake wedding to protect the 'face' of the family.	Lo, 2020	4	4	
	Queer people wanted to maintain the face of parents	640/3 (Anonym)'s view about the intense pressure faced by parents was echoed by many informants. They were worried that coming out would threaten the 'face', or prestige, of their parents .....	Lo, 2020	4	3	
	Parents wanted to maintain the face of themselves	96/1 To (anonym), it is the fear of losing face that has led her parents to react so drastically to her same-sex relationship.	Kam, 2007	1	1	
	Parents wanted to maintain the family face	220/3 To maintain face for the family, parents asked their children to marry and have children.....	Ren et al., 2019	1	1	
	Family members wanted to save face	220/5 ..... family members concealed homosexual individuals' sexual orientation due to cultural concerns of preserving "face".....	Ren et al., 2019	1	1	
	Protection of parental emotions	Queer people wanted to protect parents from negative feelings	634/5 Out of 35 informants, 9 had decided to engage in a contract marriage with a gay man, sharing the same belief that the major reason behind this strategy was their concern over their parents' well-being, especially their psychological well-being.	Lo, 2020	12	8
		Queer people were required to behave heterosexually	220/3-4 ..... "They (parents) believe that as a member of society, one should act "normally" and "appropriately."	Ren et al., 2019	5	5
	Performing heteronormativity	Queer people regarded entering heterosexual marriage as inevitable	97/3-4 .....heterosexual marriage is an individual's duty ..... "I have never thought of not being married. There's no one like that. I felt that everyone has to walk this path."	Kam, 2007	4	4
		Parents regarded heterosexual marriage as inevitable	93/3 .....to most parents of my informants, a life without marriage seems unthinkable.	Kam, 2007	5	4
Experiencing stigmatized homosexuality	Parents experienced pressure caused by stigmatized homosexuality	635/3 (Anonym)'s view about the intense pressure faced by parents was echoed by many informants..... and force their parents to bear the burden of keeping their non-conventional identities and family lives secret among relatives and neighbors.	Lo, 2020	4	2	
	Family members experienced pressure caused by stigmatized homosexuality	221/1 ..... Homosexuality differentiated the person from the social norm. The stigma applied not only to lesbians and gay men, but also to their family members.....	Ren et al., 2019	4	1	
	Queer people experienced stigmatized homosexuality	221/1 Many participants specifically mentioned the social stigma surrounding their sexual orientation.	Ren et al., 2019	10	6	

Financial leverage	Parents used financial investments on queer children to make them conform	271/1 The purchase of property signifies the readiness of the younger generation to enter a new phase of life, marriage and childbearing. It also gives parents legitimate grounds for voicing their concerns because, ....., the material conditions for their children to fulfill these traditional obligations are ripe.	Choi & Luo, 2016	3	1
	Queer people were financially dependent on parents	271/2 (Anonym) was financially dependent on her parents and admitted that this dependence had prevented her from coming out....."they would just stop supporting me financially. How am I going to continue studying without their financial support?	Choi & Luo, 2016	3	3
Reproduction	Fulfilling filial piety to parents required reproduction	147/2 The notion of filial piety as affective bond is the most prominent in our data. There were multiple references to the Confucian adage "bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da" ("There are three ways of being unfilial, and to not have an heir is the worst") in our interview data.....	Huang & Brouwer, 2018	10	6
	Parents wanted grandchildren	6/7-8 The second reason that some participants chose nominal marriage as a tactic was for the purpose of reproduction, either through the method of test tubes or through artificial insemination: "The ulterior motive behind my parents pushing me to get married is that they want me to give birth to my own child. They don't care whether I get married or not. All they want is a grandchild." <sup>100</sup>	Ning et al., 2019	14	11
	Queer people wanted children	154/1 The main reported reasons to get married included ..... desire to have their own children (63%) .....	Wu et al., 2020	2	2
Fulfilling familism	Individuals were responsible for family benefits	266-267/1 Outsiders often judge the reputation of a family on the behavior of its members. Individuals are collectively accountable for both the honor and shame of the family.	Choi & Luo, 2016	2	2
	Family benefits overpassed individual's benefits	25/4 ..... no matter it is based on their own will or not, fulfilling responsibility overweighs personal feeling for homosexual people. this responsibility derives from patriarchy that sustains the continuation of family by all means.	Fu & Zhang, 2013	3	3
Elderly care expectations	Parents expected elderly care for queer children	271-272/1 .....For example, (anonym)told us that her parents had wanted her to get married because they worried that when I am old, I would be lonely, I would not have anybody to look after me.	Choi & Luo, 2016	3	3
	Parents expected elderly care for themselves	135/1 Informants were asked to attend several blind-dates"..... They(parents) were scared that they would not be taken care of in their old age."	Y. Hu, 2017	1	1
	Queer people were expected to take care of parents	503/1 This (Showing preference for filial marriage candidates) is understandable because the societal expectation is that children take care of their elderly parent.....	M. Liu, 2013	3	2
Satisfying parental expectations of marriage	Queer people wanted to satisfy parental expectations of marriage	266/1 Twenty respondents..... cited family pressure, and in particular the need to meet parental expectations of marriage .....as the main reason for their decision.	Choi & Luo, 2016	7	6
Inquiries about marriage	Queer people suffered from questions or judgements about marriage	223/3 When people reach a marriageable age, other people, such as family friends, relatives, coworkers, and neighbors, begin to care or wonder about the person's marriage. They constantly ask individuals or their families when they are going to get married.	Ren et al., 2019	6	5
	Parents suffered from questions or judgements about marriage	267/5-6 Parents' social embeddedness may make them subject to strong social pressure, for instance through gossip ..... "It is very annoying that they [neighbors] always gossip and talk about other families' affairs."	Choi & Luo, 2016	4	3

Note. The raw data was formatted as page/paragraph.

Table 4. Coding structure of RQ2.

Analytical theme	Category(Sub-themes)	Quote (Raw data)	Data source	Number of total quotes under the same category	Total data sources of the quotes under the same category
Living arrangements	Living with parents resulted in experiencing increased family pressure	154/3 Similarly, our logistic regression analysis showed that compared with those MSM living alone, living with parents, which might mean experiencing greater pressure, was associated with greater marriage intention.	Wu et al., 2020	5	5
	Living in rural areas resulted in experiencing increased family pressure	100/3-4 Compared with the ones from urban areas, queer people who were born in rural areas reported a higher tendency for heterosexual marriage. "..... family members had been arranging blind dates to me. In order to avoid arranged dates, I left hometown and worked in another city..... 223/3 When people reach a marriageable age, other people, such as family friends, relatives, coworkers, and neighbors, begin to care or wonder about the person's marriage. 677/1 These results suggest that older, male participants tended to endorse the more traditional Chinese values of filial piety, and their parents also tended to hold a stronger belief about marriage.	Chang, 2015	3	2
Age	Family pressure associated with marriage increases with age	228/3 We can see that the gay men experienced more pressure related to producing an heir and maintaining their family line.	Ren et al., 2019	7	6
	Aged queer people experienced heavier pressure	501/2 Though both genders face pressure to marry at a certain age, arguably more men would be pursuing such marriage arrangements due to the added stress of continuing the family bloodline. 147/ 5..... almost every female interviewee articulated the patriarchal control they faced regarding marriage.....	M. Liu, 2013	6	4
Gender	Gay men experienced more family pressure associated with reproduction	148/1 (Anonym) suggests that lesbian women face intense family pressure to conform to a heteronormative ideal of womanhood..... 102/5 Men took more responsibility, which derived from their family role that to carry on bloodline. Especially for the gay men who were the only child in family. Under the heavier family pressure, they tended to follow instructions from parents and raise a child.	Huang & Brouwer, 2018	3	3
	Gay men experienced heavier pressure	101/4-5 Queer people who were raised in the one-parent family reported weaker intention for formality marriage.....	Chang, 2015	3	3
Family structure	Lesbian women experienced more family pressure associated with patriarchal control				
	Lesbian women experienced more family pressure associated with meeting heteronormative femininity				
Family structure	Family pressure was heavier in only-child family				
	Family pressure was lighter in one-parent families				

Note. The raw data was formatted as page/paragraph.



**Table 5.** Coding structure of RQ3.

Analytical theme	Category/Sub-themes	Quote (Raw data)	Data source	Number of total quotes under the same category	Total data sources of the quotes under the same category
Heterosexual relationship engagement	Marital decision of engaging in heterosexual marriage	22/4/7 .....they (Queer informants) chose to manage this issue independently.....and to fulfill their filial duty by entering a formality marriage.	Ren et al., 2019	20	14
	Arranged blind dates	93/2 Meetings with potential partners introduced by relatives or friends of parents are usually arranged for the younger members in a family who have reached the suitable age for marriage.	Kam, 2007	10	8
	Adjusted mate-seeking standards	78/3 ..... lesbians attached importance to social statuses of ideal marriageable partners. In total of 26.2% of lesbians expected their ideal marriageable partners with decent occupations (e.g., employees in governments or state-owned companies). The standards were cited as a demand from parents	Xu, 2019	5	3
	Required marriage maintenance	272/3 Couples in nominal marriages have to fabricate details about their married life in response to the questions of parents and other relatives during family gatherings.	Choi & Luo, 2016	2	2
	Marriage becomes fragile	147/5 .....we found that formality marriage would be the marriage without love if queer people were motivated by either of the following: .....3. The partners choose the marriage to satisfy their parents. 4. The marriage is employed to meet demands from parents.....	M. Zhang, 2019	1	1
Familial distancing	Psychological distancing	635/8 (Anonym)'s experience was typical of the complicated dynamics that came into play in informants' family-building processes as they needed to ..... and distance from parents to varying degrees.	Lo, 2020	6	4
	Physical distancing	95/1 Many of them chose to leave home after they decided to pursue a life that they thought would not be understood by their parents.	Kam, 2007	10	7
Emotional distress	Anxiety	129/2 Participants described being urged (by family members) to marry and raise a younger generation, and they recalled feelings of anxiety .....	S. Wang et al., 2015	3	3
	Guilt	147/2 The notion of filial piety as affective bond is the most prominent in our data..... and the emotion of "guilt" was often associated with such an "unfilial" act.	Huang & Brouwer, 2018	7	5
	Stress	1776/1 The structural regressionmodel demonstrated a good fit with the data..... Factor loadings of stress.....	Zheng et al., 2020	1	1
Selfishness	Fear	129/2 Participants described being urged (By family members) to marry and raise a younger generation, and they recalled .....fear of failing family expectations.....	S. Wang et al., 2015	2	1
	Selfishness	7/4-5 .....They cannot answer, and I cannot always put them under this kind of social pressure, which makes me less of a person and really selfish."	Ning et al., 2019	1	1
	Depression	70/1 "I dare not to visit my parents during Chinese New Year. Once I am home, I will be pressured to seek for a mate and get married. Their complaints really depress me..... I don't know what to do."	Niu & Wang, 2012	3	3

(Continued)

Table 5. (Continued)

Analytical theme	Category/Sub-themes	Quote (Raw data)	Data source	Number of total quotes under the same category	Total data sources of the quotes under the same category
Negativity toward queer identity	Disguised queer identity	147/2 For instance, all our interviewees mentioned the difficulties of coming out to family in mainland China given the force of "family pressure" (jiating yali) .....	Huang & Brouwer, 2018	12	11
	Feeling negative toward queer identity	677/1 These results suggest that the participants who endorsed more traditional Chinese values on filial piety and perceived their parents to be more traditional tended to feel more negative about their LGB identities. 639/4 ..... informants revealed that they needed to devote themselves to securing financial independence ..... in order to conquer parental influence.....	X. Hu & Wang, 2013 Lo, 2020	2 7	2 4
Adjusted negotiation strategies for sexual autonomy	Adequate financial resources facilitated overcoming family pressure	98/4 For many younger informants who are now facing the pressure of marriage, they usually tell their parents they want to stay single.	Kam, 2007	6	3
	Pretexting singlehood was used to cope with family pressure	3/8 ..... gay men and lesbians regarded themselves as a group being normal, harmless, ..... but suffering from misunderstanding and stigmatization in society. By upholding these characteristics, informants tried to persuade their parents that they were no different from heterosexuals .....	Ning et al., 2019	4	4
	Disclosing and justifying queer identity was used to cope with family pressure	4/11-17 The second function of this discourse was to resist the heterosexual marriage mainly by problematizing it.	Ning et al., 2019	2	2
	Problematising heterosexual marriage was used to cope with family pressure	5/10 ..... True filial piety is respecting and loving each other while maintaining a boundary between parents and children, so that both sides do not interfere with each other too much. Because one's life is one's own business, even parents should not intervene too much.	Ning et al., 2019	3	2

Note: The raw data was formatted as page/paragraph.