

Extended Abstract:

The shift of lesbian mothers' attitude after legalizing same-sex marriage in Taiwan

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This research builds upon a prior project completed in Taiwan in 2013 and aims to answer whether lesbian parents' attitudes toward marriage changed after Taiwan legalized same-sex marriage in 2019. The prior research, which I conducted in 2013, found that not all lesbian parents embraced same-sex marriage or longed for it before Taiwan legalized it because of their different personal histories, family configurations, and social backgrounds. The current research adds a longitudinal component to the prior study to interview the same group of lesbian parents to find if there is any attitude change in their attitudes toward same-sex marriage now that it has been legalized and to analyze how the law's passing has contributed to these changes.

The research tries to answer whether lesbian parents' attitudes toward marriage changed after Taiwan legalized same-sex marriage. There has been a heated debate about how same-sex marriage will lead the sexuality movements. Some queer scholars claim that marriage could replicate and privilege the form of marriage and marginalize other forms of relationships because marriage institution is basically based on the heterosexual patriarchy monogamy. At the same time, some feminists argue that marginalized same-sex families would be disproportionately influenced if they do not have legal protections to protect their family because they earn less and are more likely to raise children. My prior research in 2013 in Taiwan showed that different personal histories of sexuality, family types, and socio-economic status influence lesbian parents' intention to enter the marriage institution if and when marriage became legally available to them. Following the findings, the current research will interview the same group of respondents ten years later to collect longitudinal data to answer how legalizing same-sex marriage in Taiwan in 2019 has influenced lesbian parents' choices, attitudes, and practices toward marriage and through what mechanisms legalizing same-sex marriage made (or did not make) changes to their attitudes and beliefs, and why.

Literature Review

With the LGBTQ movement's prosperity these several decades, the society of the United States has become more tolerant regarding same-sex issues. After several years and efforts, same-sex marriage became the agenda of the LGBTQ movement and was legalized in 2015. A lot of research shows that same-sex marriage plays an important role in improving the mental and physical health of individuals, facilitating family ties and identity, and strengthening the interests of the child(ren) within the family. Marriage has been seen as a protection to a family because legal marriage provides married couples several advantages such as "Social Security survivor benefits, Medicaid spend-down protection, and worker's compensation;" however, "since same-sex partners could not get married, they are not eligible for 1,138 federal protections and benefits" (Cahill, 2009). Besides legal advantages, marriage has powerful symbolic meanings to asking society to recognize the same-sex relationship (Brooks, 2017), and it facilitates family identities and solidarities because same-sex marriage increases same-sex couples' feeling of legitimacy, security, and social support for their relationships (Badgett 2011; Lannutti 2008, 2011). Because

of these practical reasons and significant social meanings of marriage, legalizing same-sex marriage became an important LGBTQ movement agenda in the early 2000s.

However, some scholars argue that same-sex marriage could be a short-term strategy of the movements that, in the end, consolidate the hegemony of the marriage-family institution and make it harder to break the marriage-family structure.

However, there have been many debates and critics surrounding the marriage institution during the way of pursuing legalizing same-sex marriage. Feminists have criticized that marriage is inherent patriarchy and systematically oppresses women in many aspects, including making women economically dependent on men and worthy themselves as caretakers and mothers (Diamond, 2017). For queer theorists, marriage institution is controlled by the state as a means to regulate people's private lives. The reward for those following the rule is the benefits for legal families. By excluding all families that do not want to or are not allowed to enter the institution of marriage, the state gives privileges to a certain kind of partnership and family style. That is, marriage is a hierarchical, state-sanctioned institution, a divisive mechanism that is controlled by the state to categorize good and bad, the "'deserving' insiders (those willing to conform to heterosexual norms) and 'reprehensible' outsiders (queer resisters to conformity)" (Cahill & Tobias, 2007: 88). Solidarity is a concern of queer theorists. They worried that supporting marriage "would be privileging their identity as spouses over their other identities" and therefore "forge an alliance with the 'mainstream' rather than with the 'deviants' at the margins of society—including those LGBT individuals who resist conforming to dominant social norms and expectations" (Cahill & Tobias, 2007: 89). Also, the argument emphasizes that marriage is important for protecting children in the family may "reinforce persistent inequalities between normative, nuclear families and other forms of caregiving and kinship" and upholds the traditional notions of family (Mason 2018: 95).

My prior research (2013) finds that not every lesbian parent has the same idea about same-sex marriage or is willing to get into a same-sex marriage institution. The research showed that some lesbian parents were eager to advocate legalizing same-sex marriage, but some lesbian parents clearly rejected marriage institutions based on their prior experiences, no matter the prior heterosexual marriage or the unhappy relationships with their ex-same-sex partner who planned to have a child together. Significant differences related to their prior experiences of having a child with their partners. Furthermore, there were clear differences in the attitudes toward marriage between lesbian parents who have diverse economic and cultural capitals. Lesbian mothers who have high economic and cultural capital tended to address legal issues such as tax and inheritance, while others jokingly said they had nothing to inherit. The other distinguishing difference was between the different ages of their children. Lesbian parents who have children younger than junior high school wanted same-sex marriage more than those who have grown-up children. It means that children's age is important for lesbian parents' attitudes toward marriage. The research demonstrates the nuance of lesbian parents' attitudes toward same-sex marriage and demonstrates how several contextual facts impact lesbian parents' attitudes toward same-sex marriage.

Based on the prior research, this research discusses how these lesbian parents change or not change their attitude toward marriage institutions ten years later, along with same-sex marriage being legalized within these ten years. How does the marriage institution open to same-sex couples

influence their thoughts about marriage? How do different stages of their family life cycle impact their attitudes toward same-sex marriage? The research will analyze the mechanism of how and why they change or do not change their belief toward same-sex marriage.

Research Methods

Data for this study will be collected via one-time, individual interviews with lesbian parents. Since the study is a longitudinal research, the PI will contact the participants from the previous research project and invite them to participate in a follow-up interview.

Participants will be asked to complete one approximately 120 minute interview. Topics covered in the interview will include the following: What family type are they in? Whom do they live with? How old are their child[ren]? Are they in a romantic relationship? How old is/are their partner[s]? How long have they been together? Are they married? If they are not married, is anyone encouraging (or putting pressure on) them to get married? If they are married, do they disclose their marriage status to some people? Do they find any changes in different aspects of their life after they get married? Has anyone they are familiar with (friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbors) entered into a same-sex marriage? From their observation, is there anything different about their friends after their friends got married? Do they feel any changes in the atmosphere in different social environments (such as workplaces, restaurants, neighborhoods, etc.)? Have they changed their opinion toward marriage since same-sex marriage was legalized? I will also ask them for basic demographic information.

The results of this research will help us to understand how policies impact its target populations that are marginalized. But beyond this, the study will help sociologists understand how same-sex marriage influences the social atmosphere, how lesbian parents experience same-sex marriage in the institutional and symbolic aspects, whether same-sex marriage shifts lesbian parents' opinions about marriage institution, and through what mechanism.

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