



Media, Culture and Social Change in Asia

QUEER MEDIA IN CHINA

Hongwei Bao



ROUTLEDGE



Queer Media in China

This book examines different forms and practices of queer media, that is, the films, websites, zines, and film festivals produced by, for, and about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people in China in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. It traces how queer communities have emerged in urban China and identifies the pivotal role that community media have played in the process. It also explores how these media shape community cultures and perform the role of social and cultural activism in a country where queer identities have only recently emerged and explicit forms of social activism are under serious political constraints. Importantly, because queer media is ‘niche’ and ‘narrowcasting’ rather than ‘broadcasting’ and ‘mass communication,’ the subject compels a rethinking of some often-taken-for-granted assumptions about how media relates to the state, the market, and individuals. Overall, the book reveals a great deal about queer communities and identities, queer activism, and about media and social and political attitudes in China.

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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
BBS	Bulletin Board System
BGHEI	Beijing Gender Health Education Institute
BJQFF	Beijing Queer Film Festival
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CCMD-3	<i>Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders (Third Edition)</i>
CCTV	China Central Television
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDC	Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
CSSSM	Chinese Society for the Study of Sexual Minorities
COVID	Coronavirus disease
DV	Digital video
DVD	Digital versatile disk
ET	Extra-terrestrial
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIS	Geographic information system
GPS	Global positioning system
GoNGO	Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisation
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IDS	The Institute of Development Studies
ILGA	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association
IRC	Internet Relay Chat
LGBT/Q/I	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/queer/intersex
MSM	Men who have sex with men
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PFLAG	Parents, families, and friends of lesbians and gays
PAR	Participatory action research
PRC	People's Republic of China
PX	Para-xylene
SARFT	State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television
SARS	Severe acute respiratory syndrome

SAPPRFT	State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television
STD	Sexually transmitted diseases
Q&As	Questions and answers
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNWCW	United Nations World Conference on Women
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USP	Unique selling point
VPN	Virtual private network
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Notes on translation, transliteration, and names

All the translations from Chinese to English in this book are mine unless otherwise stated.

I use the *hanyu pinyin* system of transliteration for Chinese words, names, and places, except in cases where a different convention or preferred spelling or pronunciation exists.

The ordering of Mandarin-language names usually follows their conventional forms; that is, family names first, followed by given names, unless a different convention exists.

In presenting people's names, I use the names that my interlocutors chose for themselves, some of which are pseudonyms, to protect their identity.

Acknowledgements

Back in 2010, in Sydney, while I was writing up my PhD thesis, Stephanie Hemelryk Donald asked me about my research plan after graduation. For a PhD student struggling to complete a PhD thesis on time, the question of a postdoctoral project seemed immensely remote at the time. I replied that perhaps I could study China's queer media, vaguely sensing the importance of the topic from my fieldwork in China. I subsequently applied for a postdoctoral fellowship in Australia proposing to study the topic; I did not get the position. But the project unexpectedly took me to another part of the world, to Goldsmiths College, University of London, as a British Academy Visiting Fellow to study under the mentorship of Chris Berry. Chris was very supportive and helpful, but I still could not finish the project within the limited six-month period of the fellowship. Later, I was fortunate to secure an academic job first at Nottingham Trent University and then at the University of Nottingham. Little did I anticipate that the queer media project would take more than ten years to complete. I was not able to deliver a research output ten years ago, but I hope this book can fulfil my promise to some of my teachers and friends. Better late than never, as people say.

Looking back, I realised that I had wildly underestimated the breadth and depth of this project ten years before. I could not have completed the project back then due to the limitations of my knowledge, experience, and expertise. Ten years after my graduation, I am still struggling to work out what may constitute queer media and how they work. I have therefore strategically limited the scope of my study to digital and community forms of queer media to make this project more manageable. The rapid development of the queer communities in China in the past ten years was a catalyst for this project: documenting China's rapidly developing and fast disappearing queer media history has become not only possible but also necessary. Due to continuing media censorship, constant technological takeovers, and sometimes understandable human negligence, there is an urgent need to archive the queer community history, together with the media platforms, texts, and practices used in China's queer communities. In fact, a few queer community members and organisations have started queer oral history and archiving projects in recent years. This book is my modest contribution to this long-term, collaborative queer history project.

This book also marks my more explicit scholarly contribution to the field of media and communication studies, and especially to the subfield of Chinese media and communication studies. Having graduated with a gender and cultural studies degree, I was delighted to find media studies a welcoming intellectual home to conduct my interdisciplinary queer research – from literature to contemporary art, from music to theatre, from film to digital media, from historical research to ethnographic study, and from medical humanities to social movement studies. But where can one find ‘media’ in all these things I study? Everywhere and nowhere, I contend, depending on how one defines media and media studies. After all, I have been adopting a cultural studies approach to media studies and pursuing a ‘non-media-centric media studies’ (Moore 2012). But for those who uphold a narrow definition of media and media studies, I hope this book can help justify that I do have something relevant to say about media and communication and that what I do is indeed part of media and communication studies.

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Introduction

It was a hot summer afternoon in August 2013. At the Beijing LGBT Centre, a community space converted from a one-bedroom apartment tucked away inconspicuously inside an ordinary residential neighbourhood in Northeast Beijing, more than 40 people had gathered in the cramped space. Most of them were members from Beijing's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. They had come to the place to participate in a group discussion provocatively titled *Ku'er lilun: gao shenme gao?* (Queer Theory: What the F*?) (Bickers 2013). I was moderating the discussion on that day, but I had not planned on this. I was in Beijing during that summer conducting my fieldwork on queer communities and cultures in China. Together with two other queer scholars, Elisabeth Engebretsen and William Schroeder, I had just attended a national LGBT conference as an ethnographer (although the conference organiser had kindly assigned us the role of 'academic observers'). While we were in town, a debate about queer theory was going on in Beijing's queer communities. Knowing that we all work in the field of queer studies, a friend from the Beijing LGBT Centre asked if we would be interested in participating in a group discussion there. We responded by saying that we would be happy to exchange ideas with the local communities, not as experts but as 'comrades' (*tongzhi*, a Chinese term for gay or queer). Being a native speaker of Chinese and a queer-identified scholar at the same time, I was given the role of a discussion moderator at the last minute.

The community discussion on queer theory was nicknamed the 'Sailor Moon Warriors Lala' (*meishangnü zhanshi lala*, aka 'Pretty Fighters') debate, after a social media account bearing the same name. The debate erupted on China's social media website Sina Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, in May 2011. It was between Aibai, a gay organisation which advocates gay identity politics, and 'Sailor Moon Warriors Lala,' an anonymous group of *lala* (lesbian) identified people who espouse queer theory. Following on from that, the debate extended offline to community spaces, including at the 2013 national LGBT conference that preceded the Beijing LGBT Centre discussion. The debate primarily revolved around the applicability of queer theory in the Chinese context; or rather, if gay identity politics would be a more apt activist strategy for China's LGBTQ movement. The debate was academic in nature, but it also concerned the strategies and directions of China's LGBTQ movement. This happened at a critical historical

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uncture when international human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) funding was gradually diminishing, and the then new Xi Jinping administration was strengthening its political control over China's civil society. With limited resources and a shrinking public sphere, where would China's LGBTQ movements go?

A large part of the discussion on that day centred on the notion of *shequn* (or *shequ*, meaning community): is there an LGBTQ community, or are there different communities? Is the concept of community useful in understanding LGBTQ people, their lives, and China's social movements? Should community be seen as a repressive regime manipulated by a few privileged social groups to further marginalise other minority groups, or should it be seen as a strategic move to a coalition politics for all gender and sexual minorities? These are complex questions with no easy answers. They are as likely to unite as they are to divide queer people in China and elsewhere. But bringing these questions to the fore for public discussion was an important milestone for China's queer identities and communities.

As ethnographers, we were interested in hearing what people had to say on the topic. We could tell that a pro-queer and post-identitarian political stance was shared by most people at the Beijing LGBT Centre on that day who made up a self-selected audience for the event. Most of them agreed on one thing: gender and sexual minority groups or communities – in their plural form to highlight diversity and difference – do exist in China; otherwise, the idea of having a group discussion at the Beijing LGBT Centre on that day would not have made sense. Most people had come to the event because they recognised the existence and importance of community, but the nature of that community seemed unclear and debatable.

Often translated into Chinese as *shequn* or *shequ*, the term 'community' has gained an increasing popularity among LGBTQ people. For example, on its website and social media account, the Beijing LGBT Centre describes itself as a community space. Aibai, the gay organisation which started the debate, calls itself a community organisation. The now defunct 'Sailor Moon Warriors Lala' social media account claimed to represent lesbians and other gender and sexual minority groups marginalised by gay men. Participating in the discussion on that day were primarily LGBTQ people who frequented the Centre, including some veteran queer activists such as Fan Popo, He Xiaopei, Shi Tou, and Wei Xiaogang, all of whom make queer films and organised the Beijing Queer Film Festival and the China Queer Film Festival Tour. After the discussion, Wei Tingting, a queer and feminist activist and subsequently one of the 'feminist five' detained in 2015 for their feminist activism, came up to me and introduced the Bianbian Dushu Xiaozu (Marginality Reading Group); she also asked me to contribute an article to their newly founded e-zine called *Kula shibao* (*Queer Lala Times*). Wei told me that she had made a digital video documentary titled *Shuang* (*BiChina*), which would soon be livestreamed on the queer community website Tongzhi yi Fanren (Queer Comrades).

This account of my fieldwork in Beijing captures an important moment in the formation of queer identities and communities in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Although 'hooliganism' – a label often used to prosecute gay people – was only removed from China's Criminal Law in 1997 and the 'ego-syntonic' (*ziwo*

hexie) type of homosexuality was declassified from the *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders* (Third Edition) (CCMD-3) in 2001, LGBTQ identities and communities have grown exponentially in the past two decades.¹ This rapid development was partly shaped by a relatively relaxed political atmosphere for queer issues and the abundance of HIV/AIDS-related funding which spawned hundreds of queer non-governmental organisations (NGOs) throughout the country in the 2000s. The first two decades of the twenty-first century were characterised by an increasing LGBTQ rights consciousness, expanding queer-friendly spaces and a burgeoning ‘pink economy’ in urban China. In this process, community members also learned to depart from the once stigmatised terms and identities such as *tongxinglian* (homosexual) or men who have sex with men (MSM). They turned to more positive words to describe themselves such as *tongzhi* (comrade, meaning gay or queer), *lala* (lesbian), *shuangxinglian* (bisexual), *kua xingbie* (transgender), *kua'er* (trans), *ku'er* (queer), and *xingbie ku'er* (genderqueer). With the proliferation of these identities, communities reflecting gender and sexual differences also mushroomed. They include *tongzhi shequn* (gay community), *lala shequn* (lesbian community), *kua'er shequn* (trans community), *nuelian yizu* (the sadomasochistic tribe), and *xiongzu* (the ‘bear’ tribe), to name a few. In the ‘Sailor Moon Warriors Lala’ debate, although LGBTQ people disagreed on how to define a community and how a queer community might accommodate individual differences, there was little doubt about the actual existence of various groups of people with diverse identifications, that is, different types of communities.

From the aforementioned event at the Beijing LGBT Centre, we get a glimpse of the emergence and proliferation of queer identities and communities in the PRC in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. We also see the emergence of media forms and practices associated with these identities and communities: from the gay website Aibai to the lesbian feminist zine *Queer Lala Times*; from Wei Tingting’s digital video documentary *BiChina* to the community webcast Queer Comrades; from Beijing Queer Film Festival to China Queer Film Festival Tour. They are media platforms, events, practices, and initiatives led by LGBTQ-identified people. The contents of these media encompass a broad range of topics pertaining to identities, communities, and rights. Most of these topics are primarily of interest to the communities they address rather than a general – heterosexual by default – public. These contents are mostly self-generated and do-it-yourself; and the readers of these contents are often their authors and contributors. The contents come into being as a result of the extensive interactions between readers and writers; producers and consumers. These media contents are often disseminated by and to the queer communities free of charge or at a production cost, with little or no commercial incentive in mind. How do we understand this type of media?

These diverse types of media – often known as community media, citizen media, or alternative media – challenge our understandings of the media as tools for mass communication ‘broadcasting’ information to a general public, often as an industry and for commercial purposes. They should be more appropriately described as ‘niche media,’ ‘narrow-casting,’ or participatory communication. Because of these features, they do not have to assume the same political and

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economic responsibility at a national or transnational level as mainstream or commercial media do. And therefore, many of the statements and arguments about mass media, broadcasting, and mass communication may not entirely apply to community media, or they would have to be significantly revised in the light of community media.

For example, in the PRC context, it is well known that Chinese media are trapped between the Party's political line and the commercial bottom line, and between political censorship and commercialisation (Zhao 1998, 2008), that they have evolved from propaganda to hegemony (Zhang 2011), that they are characterised by 'consensus and contestation' (Meng 2018) or 'shifting dynamics of contention' (Liu 2020), and that they serve as a form of soft power in China's globalisation strategy (Thussu, de Burgh, and Shi 2017; Voci and Luo 2018). But most of these statements are based on the observation of and empirical research on China's mainstream, political, and commercial media, which inevitably have to be burdened with political and commercial remits. However, if we look beyond national and transnational projects and focus instead on grassroots and citizen initiatives at local and translocal levels (e.g. Sun and Chio 2012), we begin to appreciate the diversity and complexity of China's media landscape. In this way, we may feel less pessimistic about the hegemonic powers of the Chinese state and the capitalist market which seem to overwhelm every citizen initiative and effort of human resistance. And we may even find new hopes and promises in a Chinese society where ordinary people play a crucial role in shaping the society. A study of queer community media in China not only fills a lacuna in the field of media and communication studies but also serves as a timely correction to the widespread patriarchal and heteronormative assumptions in media and communications studies overall (Yep 2004).

With meticulous attention paid to grassroots initiatives and activist strategies in a burgeoning civil society, the study of queer community media also opens up a democratic and egalitarian political vision. Mark Fisher describes the contemporary historical moment as saturated by 'capitalist realism' – that is, 'the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it' (2009: 2). Living in such a time, it is difficult not to be pessimistic and even cynical about where democracy lies, whether a socialist vision is possible, and what people can do to achieve more equality and social justice. By paying attention to marginalised people and communities, together with their grassroots media and cultural practices, this book documents emerging identities and communities, innovative media and cultural practices, new transnational and translocal alliances, and more importantly, already existing democratic practices and socialist visions. They are what we need to overcome pessimism and fear in neoliberal times and under Xi Jinping's hegemonic vision of a 'Chinese dream.'

In this introductory chapter, I first define some key terms featured in the book title: queer, media, China, and community, along with discussions about queer media and community media. This is then followed by a discussion of my research data and methodology, with a focus on how I use my queer research as an archiving

practice and why I choose participatory action research (PAR) as a method. I end this introductory chapter with a brief summary of the main chapters and key arguments of this book.

Queer, media, and China

Queer, community, media, and China are commonly used words and their meanings often seem self-evident. However, these words – together with the different combinations of them – require rethinking because they pose some challenging and yet exciting questions for scholars in queer studies, media studies, and China studies. An inquiry into queer community media in China thus helps us interrogate how gender, sexuality, and identity can contribute to a better understanding of the media landscape in China, as well as how media can help construct gender, sexuality, identity, and community.

The term ‘queer’ – as an umbrella term for gender and sexual minorities and as a post-identitarian mode of sexual politics – has been increasingly used in international contexts despite its North American origins (de Lauretis 1991). There have been many discussions regarding what ‘queer’ is, and how it should be translated into different linguistic and cultural contexts, together with the potential hopes, promises, and pitfalls of these translations (Mesquita, Wiedlack, and Lasthofer 2012; Tellis and Bala 2015). Chapter 6 of this book deals specifically with the issue of the politics of translation. In short, I find ‘queer’ a productive term to think about gender, sexuality, and identity, and that is why I opt to use the term throughout this book. I understand ‘queer’ as an umbrella term to describe non-heteronormative genders and sexualities, including LGBTQ people. I also use the term to encompass different – sometimes indigenous and often hybrid – types of marginalised gender and sexual subjectivities in a transnational Chinese context. In doing so, I underscore the complexity of gender, sexuality, and identity formation, which cannot be pinned down to fixed and clear-cut identity categories. By using the term ‘queer’ in this book, I also hope to open up critical dialogues with queer theorisations and cultures in other parts of the world, including but not limited to the West and the Global North. Refusing to reduce different expressions of gender, sexuality, and desire to exoticised and orientalist stereotypes, I articulate queer to a transnational, intersectional, and coalitional Leftist politics in order to unravel its radical and democratising potential.

It is useful here to contextualise queer politics in the PRC. Queer politics in China is the result of cultural translation and transcultural practice. A transliteration of ‘queer’ from English, *ku'er* literally means ‘a cool kid’ in Mandarin. The term was first used in Taiwan and other parts of the Sinophone world before it was introduced to the PRC through transnational and regional cultural exchanges (Lim 2008; Chiang and Heinrich 2013). In the PRC context, the term was first endorsed by Li Yinhe (2000), a famous sociologist who pioneered China’s queer research, in her edited collection *Ku'er Lilun (Queer Theory)* published in 2000. It soon gained popularity among filmmakers, artists, and university students in the PRC because of its connotation of ‘coolness’ and its relative lack of political

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sensitivity. Beijing Queer Film Festival adopted the term *queer/ku'er* in their festival title in 2007 because few people knew what the term meant at the time, and this helped the festival circumvent government censorship of issues pertaining to homosexuality. (The translingual and transcultural politics of the Beijing Queer Film Festival will be further discussed in Chapter 6.) The term *queer/ku'er* was used by LGBTQ groups in the early 2000s to build a coalition among gender and sexual minorities. In the late 2000s, largely because of an uneven distribution of HIV/AIDS funding, gay groups and lesbian groups began to separate from each other: while many gay groups endorsed a homonormative identity politics, lesbian groups mostly turned to queer politics. The debate between identity politics and queer politics eventually culminated in the 'Sailor Moon Warriors Lala' debate in China's queer communities.

By using the term 'queer' consistently throughout this book, I do not wish to rule out other terms. In this book, I sometimes turn to terms such as *tongzhi*, LGBTQ, and even MSM to highlight their historical and cultural specificities; the meanings of these terms will hopefully become clear in the contexts of their use. Overall, my use of the term LGBTQ denotes a type of identity politics and the term 'queer' a post-identitarian politics, although the lines between the two terms – along with the two types of politics – are often blurred in the PRC context because of the uneven and combined development of global queer politics.

Widely used in academic research and everyday life, the term 'media' can encompass a wide range of cultural forms, texts, and practices, which all disseminate symbolic content and are necessarily mediated. The term often refers to technological and symbolic means of communication to a public, as the term 'mass media' implies. In this book, I understand media as social and cultural practices. That is, I focus on 'what people are doing in relation to media in the contexts in which they act' (Couldry 2012: 35), rather than media as objects, texts, or technology. This book is essentially about what ordinary queer people do with and in relation to media – especially digital media and films – in their everyday life and social activism. I am as much interested in what these forms of media represent as how queer filmmakers and activists in China create these representations. My emphasis on the production culture of media also has methodological implications. This book departs from a conventional media and screen studies approach of textual analysis; it draws primarily on my fieldwork in China's queer communities and my interviews with queer media producers. However, I also acknowledge the importance of texts and representations and do not wish to reject them all together. After all, media texts are part and parcel of social practices; media practices are symbolic, and they produce representations in textual forms. A moderate amount of textual analysis is therefore used to shed light on the mutual constitution of cultural texts and social practices. I will discuss my methods and methodology in detail later in this introductory chapter.

In recent decades, the terms 'China' and 'Chineseness' have been the subject of intense debates in academia, especially in transnational and diasporic contexts. These debates reflect a complex and changing global geopolitics. Shu-mei Shih proposes using the term 'Sinophone' to refer to 'a network of places of cultural

production outside of China and on the margins of China and Chineseness, where a historical process of heterogenising and localising of continental Chinese culture has been taking place for several centuries' (2007: 4). In Shih's theorisation, the PRC is excluded from the Sinophone as if everything happening within the PRC borders is immediately hegemonic and automatically uncritical. Other scholars, including Sheldon H. Lu (2014) and David Der-wei Wang (2015), argue for the inclusion of the PRC in the discussion of the Sinophone in order to take into account the heterogeneity, and often contested nature, of cultures within the PRC. The debate about whether to include China in the Sinophone sphere is also manifested in queer studies: Howard Chiang and Ari Larissa Heinrich's (2013) edited collection on queer Sinophone cultures already starts to deal with the question of whether to 'include China' with an article discussing the mainland Chinese novelist Chen Ran. The works of Alvin K. Wong (2014, 2018) and John Wei (2020) demonstrate the productivity of including the PRC in the queer Sinophone critique. In my work on queer culture and social activism in the PRC context (Bao 2018, 2020), although I do not explicitly use the term 'Sinophone,' I concur with the Sinophone scholars that the term can be a useful critical tool to critique a hegemonic notion of Chineseness both inside and outside of the PRC. My critique of 'Chineseness' from a queer diasporic subject position is therefore akin to the Sinophone critique (Bao 2013). In this book, I continue to use the term 'China' to refer to the PRC, otherwise known as mainland China. However, both China and 'Chineseness' here should not be seen as fixed geographical and cultural entities with essential traits; they are social constructs shaped by hegemonic power relations, but they are also unstable categories open to negotiation, subversion, and critique.

This book primarily focuses on the queer community media within the PRC in the first two decades of the twenty-first century.² Readers of this book will find that the object of enquiry in fact goes beyond the geographical borders of the PRC. For example, Chapters 4 and 7 situate queer documentaries *We Are Here* and *The Lucky One* in transnational contexts: one is set in transnational women's histories and movements; the other is situated in the context of international development industries. Chapter 6 examines the Beijing Queer Film Festival as transnational and transcultural practices; Chapter 8 is dedicated specifically to the Queer University video training workshops that took place in Africa, featuring interviews with queer filmmakers and activists from both Ghana and Zimbabwe. Just as the category of 'China' should be understood and contested in a transnational context, so must queer cultures and queer media practices. After all, Chinese and Sinophone queer identities and cultures have always been translocal, transnational, and even transregional (Chou 2000; Martin 2003; Sang 2003; Lim 2006; Rofel 2007; Kang 2009; Ho 2010; Rofel and Liu 2010; Martin 2010; Yau 2010; Huang 2011; Kong 2011; Tang 2011; Chiang 2012; Yue and Zubillaga-Pow 2012; Kam 2013; Chiang and Heinrich 2013; Chua 2014; Engebretsen 2014; Kong 2014; Engebretsen, Schroeder, and Bao 2015; Liu 2015; Pecic 2016; Tang 2016; Lavin, Yang, and Zhao 2017; Chiang and Wang 2017; Bao 2018; Chiang 2018a, 2018b; Kong 2019a; Bao 2020; Chao 2020; Chiang and Wong 2015, 2017, 2020; Phillips 2020; Wei 2020; Zhao and Wong 2020). Media are often known for

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their deterritorialising role in crossing geographical boundaries, especially with the conglomeration of global media companies and the transnational circulation of media content (Thussu 2000; Flew 2007; Chakravarty and Zhao 2008; Hamelink 2015; Miller and Kraidy 2016; Thussu, de Burgh, and Shi 2017; Voci and Luo 2018). The geographical signifier ‘in China’ in the book title should thus be understood as ‘in and beyond China,’ recognising the transnational and non-essentialised nature of ‘Chineseness’ and the deterritorialising role of queer identities, communities, and media practices. I hesitate to use terms such as ‘*Chinese* queer community media’ precisely for this reason – not wishing to essentialise queer community media practices by tying them to an ethnic signifier and attributing them with some imagined cultural traits, while at the same time cutting them off from transnational media landscapes and cultural flows.

Queer media

‘Queer media’ is often a confusing term; it encompasses a wide range of media platforms, formats, and content made for different users. There are many types and formats of queer media, including zines, hotlines, dating, and hook-up apps. There are also numerous commercial and popular media made for a general public, often with a bit of ‘queerbaiting’ (Brennan 2018); that is, implicitly targeting the queer market in order to benefit from the ‘pink economy’ but simultaneously carefully treading the official line of media censorship by not touching upon issues of identity and rights. These commercial and popular forms of queer media have been extensively researched in the Chinese and Sinophone contexts. They include the interconnections between political, cultural, economic, and the private realms of the sexual experience on the Chinese dating app Momo (Liu 2016); the emerging digital infrastructures of community-based care for queer women on the lesbian dating app Lesdo (Liu 2017); the negotiation of cultural norms on the lesbian dating app Butterfly (Tang 2017); the use of lesbian dating app Rela in a transnational and diasporic context (Li 2020); the technological construction of gay identity through queer social media such as Jack’d, Douban Group, and Feizan (Zhou 2018; Wei 2020); the online marketing of a celebrity gay couple (Jia and Zhou 2017; Zhou 2019); the commodification, datafication, and even gamification of queer identities and desires through gay dating app Blued (S. Wang 2018, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Cummings 2020); online queer discussion forums (Schroeder 2018); queer fanfiction (L. Yang 2009 2017; Yang and Bao 2012; Yang and Xu 2015, 2016; Xu and Yang 2013; Zhao 2014; Bao 2020); and queer television and musical fandom (Tang 2012; Li 2015, 2017; Zhao 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020; Song 2020; Sun and Yang 2020). These queer media forms and texts, often available on mainstream and commercial media platforms, increase queer visibility among the general public and make them relate to queer people empathetically or voyeuristically. They also offer opportunities for queer audiences to seek ‘disidentification’ (Muñoz 1999), that is, identifying with queer characters and affects partially and contingently. It is important to note that in almost all these studies, queer and media articulations are far from being

political, communitarian, and activist; their impact for queer identity and community formation is often limited.

This book focuses on the less popular, less commercialised, more politicised, and overtly activist types of queer media in China: queer community films and digital videos. Three keywords – digital, participatory, and activist – sum up the emphasis of the media form. This book is dedicated to the study of queer community and activist media, in particular the use of digital video and films for identity construction, community-building, and rights advocacy. The development of queer community media has coincided with the trajectory of queer activism in the PRC. As identities take shape and communities develop, there is also an increasing demand for equal rights. Media produced by, for, and in the queer communities have emerged in this historical context.

The media texts and events I document in this book are primarily from the first two decades of the twenty-first century. From a longer historical perspective, this is a significant period for the formation of queer identities and communities in the PRC. In the immediate aftermath of the decriminalisation and partial depathologisation of homosexuality, queer identities and communities have emerged with several concomitant developments: ‘(1) the pursuit of civil rights, (2) the claiming of cultural citizenship, and (3) the political manoeuvring of social space’ (Chiang 2019: 187). Elisabeth Engebretsen describes the early 2000s, in particular the period leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, as ‘a particular period of relative political permissiveness and relaxed political censorship in Beijing, a focal point for new *lala* [lesbian] and gay communities and discourses’ (2014: 4). After 2008, especially since the start of the Xi Jinping administration in 2013 and the legal enforcement of the Foreign NGO Law in 2017, the civil society space in the PRC has shrunk significantly. This has had a significant negative impact upon NGO work and queer activism in China. The permanent hiatus of the biggest and longest running queer public event in China, the ShanghaiPRIDE, in August 2020 was a heavy blow to China’s queer communities, demonstrating the tremendous challenge and risk of doing activist work in China (ShanghaiPRIDE 2020). Despite the difficulties, the development of queer communities has not stopped. Intensified media censorship and tight restrictions over China’s civil society have shaped queer activism in a specific way: one that is less obsessed with political rights but more reliant on cultural activism; that is, the use of art, culture, and media in expressing queer identities and in shaping queer communities. Such an approach functions as a context-specific and culturally sensitive type of political activism; they also shape distinct types of queer identities (Bao 2020).

Community and community media

Community (*shequn*) – a term used to designate a group of people sharing certain non-geographical and non-kinship-based commonalities (such as gender and sexuality) – is a relatively new term in the PRC history. In early queer research published in the Chinese language, a group of queer people have been variously referred to as *qunluo* (Li and Wang 1992; Fang 1995), *shequ* (Zhang 2006; Friends



Figure 0.1 ShanghaiPRIDE tenth anniversary logo

Source: Screen capture from shpride.com.

Project 2009; Tongyu 2011; Wei 2012), *renqun* (Tong et al. 2008a; Friends Project 2009), *qunti* (Tong 2005; Guo 2018), and *shequn* (Tong et al. 2008b; Gay-spot 2012; ShanghaiPRIDE 2018, 2020; China Rainbow Media Award 2020). Although these words all translate the English term ‘community,’ each has its own emphasis. Most of these terms are borrowed directly from mainstream discourses and used by mainstream media to describe queer people as a group, often casting them under a sociological, clinical, voyeuristic, and sometimes othering gaze. In around 2010, queer communities in the PRC increasingly started to use the term *shequn* (literally ‘social group’) to refer to themselves. This was captured by the official slogan of the tenth anniversary of the ShanghaiPRIDE: *women de shequn, women de rentong, women de jiaobao* (our community, our identity, our pride) (ShanghaiPRIDE 2018) (Figure 0.1). The community use of the term *shequn*, which has not yet been widely adopted by mainstream media at the time of writing, suggests an increasingly acute sense of identity and community on the part of queer people; it also represents queer people’s self-conscious efforts to take control of the discourse about themselves.

Community is often seen as a controversial term in politics; this is exemplified by the perennial debate between the ‘liberals’ and ‘communitarians’ (Mulhall and Swift 1996). Despite being a relatively new term, the concept of community has also been debated in China’s queer communities. This was represented by the ‘Sailor Moon Warriors Lala’ debate mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, which eventually demarcated queer politics from gay identity politics in the PRC context. In the debate, some queer people saw the need to work together as a community, or as communities, whereas others regarded community as a hegemonic term used by gay men to suppress the voices of lesbians and other gender and sexual minorities (Bao 2018). I am not so naive as to see communities through rose-tinted glasses, but I do see communities as potentially useful

political grounds for identity construction, coalition building, and anti-hegemonic struggles. Political struggles against state violence, capitalist exploitation, racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and many other structural inequalities and injustices are only possible through people of different affiliations and interests working together towards shared goals, meanwhile respecting each other's differences. I think of community, or communities – as is often used in the plural form in this book – as results of contingent articulation with discourses, politics, and ethics under specific social circumstances. Community in this context should not be seen as a homogeneous entity that erases individual and group differences or that further creates hierarchies. It is more productive to think of communities as groups of people with incommensurable differences and shared lives, practices, politics, and ethics: 'being singular plural,' in the words of Jean-Luc Nancy (2000); or 'the coming community,' in the words of Giorgio Agamben (1993). Drawing on Spinoza's (1996) notion of the common, Agamben argues:

All bodies . . . have it in common to express the divine attribute of extension. And yet what is common cannot in any case constitute the essence of the single case. Decisive here is the idea of *inessential* commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence. *Taking place, the singularity of singularities in the attribute of extension, does not unite them in essence, but scatters them in existence.*

(1993: 18–19, original emphasis)

Indeed, if we recognise both the singularity and plurality of the community, we can articulate community with context-specific politics and ethics, through which concerted efforts and shared anti-hegemonic struggles are rendered viable. Brian Masumi suggests thinking about human relatedness in terms of affect, which denotes

ways of connecting, to others and to other situations. They are our angle of participation in processes larger than ourselves. With intensified affect comes a stronger sense of embeddedness in a large field of life – a heightened sense of belonging, with other people and to other places.

(2015: 56)

Thinking about communities in terms of affect, or 'affective attunement' (Masumi 2015), is a useful way to go beyond the essentialised notion of community as based on a fixed identity or shared personal traits. Bodies relate to each other, move together, and activate creative energies and intensities under contingent circumstances – sometimes because of shared goals and politics, other times simply because of their coequality in a particular social context or geographical location. It is, therefore, best to think of communities as the constantly moving together of bodies in specific ways – often unconsciously and preconsciously but this can happen intentionally and strategically for political purposes as well.

The notion of a community is not an a priori, and it has to be developed over time. The feeling of community often involves a heightened sense of personal

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and collective belonging at specific personal and historical moments. Queer filmmaker and activist Fan Popo recalls his experience with the concept of community in an interview:

I learned to use the western term ‘community’ from the activities I was involved with over these years, but I didn’t really understand it until the Beijing LGBT Centre was established. At the start, I just thought it was a place for gay people to have fun, but later I realised it’s also a social sphere where we are very dependent on its spirit and psychology, a community with social interaction and inherent relevance.

(Cited in E-International Relations 2015)

Here, community becomes spatialised, embodied by the physical space of the Beijing LGBT Centre. But community is also a social space: a place of social interaction and a form of political practice. A community is undoubtedly social: when people meet online or offline to discuss shared concerns and undertake actions together, a community comes into being, concomitant with its associated identity and politics. For Fan, the realisation of the existence of the community becomes an important impetus to make queer films, organise queer film festivals, and become a queer activist. This experience is shared among many other queer media producers and activists. Media – and community media in particular – have become important ways for queer people to imagine identities and communities in China, where physical spaces for queer people – such as the Beijing LGBT Centre – are limited, unstable, and often subject to serious political and economic constraints.

This book documents and critically analyses efforts such as Fan’s to imagine queer communities and to engage in transnational coalition building through working with media. An emphasis on collective action and community building – together with the role that media play in these processes – distinguishes this book from many other books in Chinese queer studies, the latter of which predominantly focus on queer individuals’ struggles with family, society, the state, and globalisation (e.g. Ho 2010; Kong 2011; Rofel 2007; Wei 2020). In this book, most queer filmmakers and media producers are aware of the communities they belong to and work with. Their identification with the communities inspires the media work they undertake, which in turn shape the identities and communities they imagine. In other words, identities and communities should not be seen as *a priori*, waiting passively for media producers to represent them. They are products of imagination, enactment, and contestation, becoming rather than being, social practices rather than fixed entities. Media producers constantly engage with media to articulate queer media assemblages and to shape queer and media cultures in open, flexible, and non-deterministic ways.

Community media usually refer to media forms, texts, and practices produced in, by, and for specific communities. Queer community media are thus the media produced in, by, and for queer communities. They include a wide range of forms: leaflets, zines, books, pagers, telephone hotlines, Internet chatrooms, websites,

dating apps, and many more. These media forms and platforms are usually not specifically designed for queer people; they are shared by queer and heterosexual-identified people alike and constitute part of the media ecology of a society at a given time. But when queer people have appropriated them and used them to build friendships and relationships, explore sex and lifestyle, conduct interpersonal and group communication, and even engage in political activism, these media forms and practices become queer community media.

Also called ‘radical media’ (Downing 2001), ‘alternative media’ (Atton 2002, 2019; Couldry and Curran 2003; Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2008), or even ‘citizen media’ (Baker and Blaagaard 2016) – each term with its distinct emphasis – community media encompasses ‘a wide range of community-based activities intended to supplement, challenge, or change the operating principles, structures, financing, and cultural forms of practices associated with dominant media’ (Howley 2010: 2). Community media fill the gap left by state media and commercial media; they are often considered ‘alternative’ to mainstream media. This is especially the case for queer community media in China: in a country where queer content is often censored in state media and commodified for mainstream consumption in commercial media, queer community media serve the LGBTQ communities in a predominantly non-commercialised, and less spectacularised, voyeuristic, and exploitative form. Queer community media can be political and activist; they are often used by queer activists to articulate community concerns and to pursue issues pertaining to identity and rights.

‘Community media’ in Chinese media studies

As an interdisciplinary project, this book hopes to make critical interventions in the fields of queer studies, media studies, and Asia/China Studies. It does not see these fields of study as disparate areas of enquiry, but as inter-connected networks and assemblages of critical enquiry that actively engage with the social world. By bringing together perspectives from these scholarly fields, this book hopes to unsettle some of the underlying premises of these academic fields. However, this book situates itself first and foremost in media and communication studies.

Having diverse roots in European critical theories, the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, and North American communication studies, media and communication studies as a scholarly field has long had a Western and Global North focus. In recent decades, media and communication studies from non-Western and Global South contexts have started to challenge the West-centrism of the field and to imagine an international, transnational, and even global media studies (e.g. Curran and Park 1999; Chakravarty and Zhao 2008; Abbas and Erni 2005; Chen and Huat 2007; Goggin and McLelland 2010). Mark Balnaves, Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, and Brian Shoesmith (2009), for example, advocate a ‘global media studies’ approach: ‘A genuine global media studies programme, therefore, is not just about the rich, North, view of the world,’ they contend, ‘the modern global landscape is rich and complex and often contradictory’ (2009: xviii). At least two special journal issues have been dedicated to the mapping of Chinese media and

communication studies as a scholarly subfield within media and communication studies: the 2010 issue of the *International Journal of Communication* (volume 4) and the February 2011 issue of the *Media International Australia* (volume 138, issue 1). In these special issues, Yuezhi Zhao (2009) proposes to examine the dynamic relationship between communication and China, two central issues that shape the global political economy today. Stephanie Hemelryk Donald (2011: 62) argues that ‘in some sense a dedicated field of Chinese media studies is no longer optional’ as a response to the changing world geopolitics as well as the role of Chinese media in this context. For Zhao, Donald, and other scholars working on media and communication in the Chinese context, China is seen as a productive analytical lens to transform media and communication studies, rather than being simply treated as a place where primary data are gathered to test the universality of Western media and communication theories.

Commenting on media studies as a field and addressing primarily the UK context, Nick Couldry (2006) identifies three forms of ‘roadblocks’ – or dominant theoretical paradigms – in the study of media: functionalism, centrism, and spectacularism. Haiqing Yu (2011) successfully applies these three paradigms to the study of Chinese media, highlighting some recurring themes and popular trends in Chinese media studies. The propaganda model – that is, media as the Communist Party’s ‘mouthpiece’ – is popular in the study of Chinese media and is a good example of functionalism. The focus on unusual and spectacular events (such as the Olympic Games and the outbreak of coronavirus) serves as a synecdoche to spectacularism. Centrism, in contrast, places emphasis on people’s relationship to large media organisations such as China Central Television and the *People’s Daily*. While these are perfectly legitimate avenues of analysis and they rightly deserve critical attention, a sole focus on them is not sufficient if we hope to understand the complexity of the media landscape and the diversity of people’s experience in relation to media. Yu suggests:

One under-researched field relates to the agency, connection, scope and mode of knowledge in the mediated lives and media-oriented practices of ordinary Chinese in a highly fragmented society, whose primary goal is to better their lives. Peripheral forces, alternative media forms and any other non-mainstream media such as local media, community media, minority media and micro media remain little studied areas.

(Yu 2011: 71)

Yu accurately identifies some blind spots in Chinese media studies, and they include ‘peripheral forces, alternative media forms and any other non-mainstream media such as local media, community media, minority media and micro media.’ Ten years after Yu conducted the above analysis, the situation in the field has improved significantly, with ground-breaking work on children’s media (Donald 2005; Donald, Anderson, and Spry 2010), working-class media (Cartier, Castells, and Qiu 2005; Qiu 2009), rural and ethnic minority media (Chio 2012, 2017a, 2017b), translocal media (Sun and Chio 2012), migrant-workers’ media (Sun 2009, 2014;

Wallis 2013), and diaspora media (Sun 2002; Sun and Sinclair 2015). All these works shed important light on the lives of marginalised people and communities, together with how they engage with media in their everyday lives. More work in these areas needs to be done, in particular with regard to the use of media for identity construction, community formation, as well as social and political activism.

Although not explicitly labelled as ‘community media research,’ the study of community media has been an undercurrent in Chinese media studies in the past two decades. Yuezhi Zhao’s (2003) study of the use of media by *falun gong* practitioners and supporters is an example. In this study, Zhao pays meticulous attention to the discursive politics of the media; she also examines the production and dissemination of media content inside and outside China. Through a historical mapping of the Chinese-language newspapers in Australia, Wanning Sun et al. (2011) convincingly demonstrate the centrality of the Chinese-language press in the historical formation of the Chinese community in Australia. Sun’s (2014) ground-breaking work, *Subaltern China*, documents media and cultural productions among rural migrants in Chinese cities. The photography, videos, poetry, and *dagong* literature produced by migrant workers become important ways for migrant-workers to empower themselves and to construct their subjectivities. The ‘village videos’ – that is, videos produced by the villagers themselves about their weddings and festival celebrations and circulated primarily for their own consumption – in Jenny Chio’s (2012, 2017a, 2017b) study ‘participate in the larger negotiations and re-significations of ethnic identities and rural livelihoods’ in rural and ethnic Guizhou in Southwest China (Chio 2012: 80). My own work – including *Queer Comrades* (Bao 2018) and *Queer China* (2020) – documents a diverse range of queer media and cultural practices – including literature, contemporary art, film, digital media, theatre, and performance – in constructing sexual identities, communities, and politics in contemporary China. Although very few of the works mentioned earlier explicitly use the term ‘community media’ or engage with the community media scholarship in media and communication studies, they all highlight the proliferation of identities, communities, and community media practices in contemporary China.

In this book, I examine queer films and digital videos, using the community media perspective in order to conduct intellectual dialogues with the community, radical, alternative, and citizen media scholarship in media studies (Downing 2001; Howley 2005, 2010; Atton 2002, 2019; Couldry and Curran 2003; Rennie 2006; Cammaerts and Carpentier 2006; Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2008; Baker and Blaagaard 2016; Fenton 2016; Carpentier 2017) and critical scholarship in international communication and communication for social change (Thussu 2000; Wilkins 2000; Mody 2003; Chakravarty and Zhao 2008; Manyozo 2012; Hamelink 2015; Tufte 2017). This book thus marks an effort to engage with, and to bridge, the often-estranged fields of media studies and communication studies. In doing so, it explores the possibility of a Chinese media studies beyond the British/American and media/communication divide. By explicitly naming China’s queer digital videos and films ‘community media,’ this book enriches Chinese media studies by introducing identity and community-based

media practices with activist and political orientations, and with often neglected perspectives on gender and sexuality.

It is imperative to study community media to yield a more complex and nuanced understanding of the media landscapes in China. For a long time, the study of Chinese media has been preoccupied with the dichotomy between the state and the individuals. On the one hand, we see the powerful control and strict censorship of Chinese media by the state (Lee 1990, 1994, 2000, 2003; Zhang 2011; Repnikova 2017; Hong Yu 2017); on the other, ordinary citizens mobilise themselves online and offline to articulate their own concerns and build a public sphere (Yu 2009; Qiu 2009; Qiu and Chen 2019; G. Yang 2009, 2015; Wallis 2013; Rawnsley 2015; deLisle, Goldstein, and Yang 2016; Kent, Ellis, and Xu 2017; Meng 2018; Wang 2019; Liu 2020). Amid all these brilliant insights, a community perspective seems regrettably missing. It has long been accepted that media construct imagined communities, and this usually takes national and transnational forms (Anderson 1983; Appadurai 1996). Sun and Chio (2012) have demonstrated that media of different scales construct various place-based communities – local, provincial, regional, and translocal, among others. Communities are usually thought of as place-bound entities functioning on multiple scales. Can communities revolve around identity, politics, and social issues? Queer communities, for example, are connected in a range of ways: similarities in gender and sexual identification, affinities in politics, shared beliefs in equality, diversity, and inclusion, and even contingent issues such as appeals for same-sex marriage rights or against media censorship of queer content. If we recognise that there is a proliferation of identities and communities in contemporary China, and that strong communities are crucial to a well-developed civil society, it is crucial to study the role of media – especially community-based media – in constructing and mobilising communities. Queer community media therefore serve as a good entry point to understand the processes and dynamics of identity construction, community building, and the role of media in facilitating the formation of a civil society. They have profound implications for the understanding of Chinese society and even the world because these identities, communities, and media are transnational in nature.

When situating Chinese media in a transnational context, most research to date has focused on the state media, seeing Chinese media abroad as an extension of the power – or ‘soft power’ – of the Chinese state (Rawnsley 2015; Zhang, Wasserman, and Mano 2016; Li 2017; Voci and Luo 2018). While such critical perspectives on the government policy-led ‘major transnationalism’ are undoubtedly useful, they can be complemented with an attention to ordinary people’s media practices and grassroots organisations’ ‘minor transnationalism’ practices (Lionnet and Shih 2005), which may not be completely dictated by the ideologies of the state or logics of the capital. This is a topic I discuss in Chapter 8 as I look at China–Africa grassroots queer film and activist connections.

The end of this book imagines a ‘queer global South’ as a decolonial, anti-imperialist, and anti-hegemonic queer activist strategy; it also opens up new vistas for media and communication studies in the Global South – one that recognises complex power relations between the Global North and the Global South, as well

as within the Global South; one that does not orientalise, eroticise, and isolate itself; one that is both theoretical and methodological; one that is transdisciplinary in nature; one that is attentive to power relations, new emergences, and cultural formations; and one that does not lose hope and optimism despite ‘living in the end times’ (Žižek 2010).

Practice-focused queer studies

This book also situates itself in the field of queer studies, and it hopes to make a scholarly contribution to queer studies by proposing a ‘practice-focused’ approach. Having emerged in elite American universities in the late 1980s with scholars in English studies dominating the field, queer studies has been critiqued for its elitism (Brim 2020), Whiteness (Johnson 2016), Euro- and US-centrism (Cruz-Malave and Manalansan 2002; Martin, Jackson, McLelland, and Yue 2008), and possible complicity with liberalism, neoliberalism, and nationalism (Duggan 2004; Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz 2005; Puar 2007; Eng 2010). Matt Brim (2020) uses the term ‘rich queer studies’ to refer to the type of queer knowledge produced in elite universities: focusing on abstract concepts and theories, deriving primarily from textual and semiotic analysis, and increasingly divorced from social realities and people’s lived experiences. Brim uses the term ‘poor queer studies’ to refer to knowledge projects that are attentive to the lives of marginalised people and groups in society and that still carry strong critical edges and radical potentials. Heather Love also asks: ‘Can we hold onto the critical and polemical energy of queer studies as well as its radical experiments in style and thought while acknowledging our implication in systems of power, management and control?’ (2015: 90).

This book takes up Love’s (2015) and Brim’s (2020) call to challenge a Western-centric and elitist version of ‘rich queer studies’ by situating queer in a non-Western and Global South context. It conceptualises queer as a form of social practice and imagines a type of queer studies focusing on social practices. There have been many definitions of queer, but most of them centre on ontology – that is, what queer is. This is represented by Eve Sedgwick’s widely cited definition: queer designates ‘the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality, aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically’ (1993: 8). Queer can also be used as a verb – ‘queering’ or ‘to queer’ – as a way to challenge the heteronormativity embedded in institutions and society. For example, queering media and communication studies is to challenge the heteronormative assumptions in conventional media and communication theories, methodologies, and epistemologies. In both its noun and verb forms, queer can be productively conceived as a social practice: what people do with queer shapes non-normative identities, communities, and politics.

Practice, according to Pierre Bourdieu (1977), refers to people’s embodied ways of doing things in society. It results from the relation between one’s disposition (*habitus*) and one’s position in a field (capital), within the current state of ‘play’ of the field. Practice, therefore, is not completely determined by social structures,

nor are individuals entirely free in deciding how they should do things. Practice is the result of the complex negotiations between a person's habitus, different forms of capital, and the field of action. Seen in this light, queer can be seen as a form of social practice – however marginal, unconventional, or even transgressive it may be – by a group of people. In a given society and at a specific historical juncture, people relate to gender and sexual norms differently, and they perform gender, sexuality, and identity in various ways. The majority and norm-conforming practices are often referred to as heteronormative practices, whereas the minority and transgressive practices are labelled as 'queer.' Queer-identified people subsequently form communities and demand rights, and over time they may influence and shape social norms and power structures. Seeing queer as a social practice helps us bypass the questions about queer's mysterious origin ('nature' versus 'nurture') and essential traits; it situates queer in historical, social, and cultural contexts, treating it as a contingent outcome of the interplay between society and individual, as well as between structure and agency.

Understanding queer as a form of social practice has significant implications for queer studies. If we see queer not as an essentialised sexual identity, but as what people do in relation to that label, this shifts our object of study from being to doing, and from people to social practices. This book therefore focuses on queer media practices – instead of asking what queer identities and media are and whether they have intrinsic qualities, this book asks what people do in relation to queer identities and media, how they bring identity issues and media practices together, for what purposes, and to what effect. There is no essential nature or inevitability attached to both queer identities and media forms. This shifting understanding of queer has profound implications for how we study queer and with what methods.

Queer methodology

A key scholarly contribution of this book is to bring the issue of methods and methodologies to the centre of queer academic enquiry. This book is one of the first books on Chinese queer media and film to be self-conscious of its research methods and methodologies; it is also one of the first books in the study of Chinese queer film and media to go beyond the analysis of media and film texts and treat them instead as social practices (Turner 1998; Couldry 2004). In making the shift, the book contributes to the ongoing scholarly discussion about queer methods and methodologies, otherwise known as the 'method turn' in queer studies (Browne and Nash 2010; Love 2013, 2016; Brim and Ghaziani 2016; Compton, Meadow, and Schilt 2018; Ghaziani and Brim 2019).

What counts as methods and methodologies for queer theory is often unclear. From the outset, queer theory has often celebrated an 'antimethodological impulse' (Love 2016: 347), claiming to be multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and even anti-disciplinary, to such an extent that many queer scholars refuse to talk about issues of methods and methodologies. Similarly, there is an urgent need to interrogate what constitutes an archive for queer studies scholarship. Queer theory

often defines its objects of study as ‘fluid, unstable, and perpetually becoming’ (Browne and Nash 2010: 1). But how can one study these unstable subjects and processes, then?

As queer theory becomes more established in academic institutions in the Global North, there has been an increasing demand to address where its research data come from and how to analyse them. After all, if all academic disciplines carry with them a form of epistemic violence that risks reducing the complexity, messiness, and contingency of the social to knowable and quantifiable ‘social facts’ (Durkheim 1982), queer studies is no exception. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (2010) argue that the field of queer studies needs to be more aware of its epistemology and how it relates to academic disciplines, institutions, and material structures. Heather Love (2019: 30) warns: ‘To see one’s practice as beyond method and utterly undisciplined is a failure to reckon with queer scholar’s position within the university; it fails to recognise the violence of all scholarly research – even its most insurgent and intimate forms.’ Indeed, queer scholarship has methods and methodologies – no matter how implicit and unconventional they may be – and queer scholars therefore need to be more self-conscious and reflexive about the strengths and limits of their own research.

The recent ‘method turn’ in queer theory highlights an urgent need for the field of queer studies to be self-conscious about its own hypotheses, procedures, and protocols; it also points to possibilities for traditional research methods to be ‘queered’ for non-heteronormative purposes. I am fortunate to be situated in a queer-friendly scholarly field – media and cultural studies, which constantly draws on diverse approaches and methodologies. But there are still many taken-for-granted assumptions in media and cultural studies about objectivity versus subjectivity, human versus technology, and theory versus method that can be problematised. A project about queer media and communications is simultaneously an act of mediating and communicating queerness and a process of queering the often-heteronormative media and communications technologies, paradigms, and epistemologies. This book joins a long list of scholarship on queer media and communications in thinking about how queer topics and issues can be approached with conventional media and communications studies methods and how these methods can be ‘queered’ to speak better to queer lives and experiences (Gross 2002; Berry, Martin, and Yue 2003; Yep 2004; Pullen 2006; O’Riordan and Philips 2007; Peele 2007; Pullen 2009; Pullen and Cooper 2010; Yue and Zubillaga-Pow 2012; Pullen 2012; Henderson 2013; McGlotten 2013; Pullen 2014; Carilli 2015; Mowlabocus 2010; Schoonover and Galt 2016; Dasgupta 2017; Griffin 2017; Lavin, Yang, and Zhao 2017; Szulc 2018; Eguchi 2019).

Jack Halberstam’s (1998) notion of ‘scavenger method’ is useful here for us to think about what might constitute a possible queer method and archive. Halberstam mixes methods from different disciplines, often seen as incompatible with each other – including participant and non-participant observation, interview, as well as historical and archival data – to ‘produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behaviour’ (1998: 13). Indeed, for queer subjects who have traditionally been excluded from

official narratives and mainstream representations, it is necessary to mix and match methods, twist and tweak them, raid the archive, read them between the lines, and even burst them open. The dual mandate of queer methods is, after all, ‘to outline the conditions of queer worldmaking and to clarify, but not overdetermine, the conditions that “make life liveable”’ (Ghaziani and Brim 2019: 7).

This book draws on a mixture of methods from humanities and social sciences – including archival research, textural and discourse analysis, industry analysis, interview, participant observation, and even PAR. They disrupt a text-ethnography binary by recognising the social construction of texts and the textual mediation of society. They move constantly between the subjective and the objective, the emic and the etic, as well as the observational and the participatory. Like the different types of documentaries in representing reality (Nichols 1992), this book also relates to the reality and the social in multiple, flexible, and contingent ways. It recognises the roles of human and non-human agents (such as media forms and technologies) in constructing the social; it also celebrates the interconnectedness and openness of the social. It is best to see the social in this book as constituted contingently by technologies, people, discourses, practices, and affects – an ‘assemblage’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2013) *par excellence*, or an ‘intimate assemblage’ (Wijaya 2020) in which human sexuality is produced and plays a part.

This book utilises historical and archival research by delving into queer community media forms, texts, and practices from the past and the present, including documentary films, websites, hotlines, zines, and dating apps. Rather than celebrating the ‘newness’ of digital media and technologies, it considers the residual and remediation of ‘old’ – and even ‘zombie’ – media forms, contents, practices, and affects in the ‘new,’ thus disrupting a historical teleology and technological determinism often celebrated in digital media research. It also pays attention to the ‘ephemeras’ (Muñoz 1996) – that is, media forms, texts, practices, events, affects, and social relations that lasted only a short time, generated through random human encounters, vanishing and forgotten instantly, with only traces of scattered material and anecdotal evidences left in life or memories – and attempts to capture these fleeting moments. Ephemera, according to José Esteban Muñoz, ‘does not rest on epistemological foundations but is instead interested in following traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things,’ and it is ‘a mode of proofing and proofing arguments often worked by minoritarian culture and criticism makers’ (1996: 10). These ‘ephemeras’ are important forms of queer archives that store and generate memories and feelings (Cvetkovich 2003). They resist a dominant, often heteronormative historiography that neglects or even erases queer existence.

In contrast to past Chinese queer media and film scholarship whose primary focus is on film and media texts – even a ‘queer reading’ of texts necessitates a close engagement with texts – this book departs from a text-centred approach. It sees the text as one of the agents – together with people, technologies, discourses, industries, policies, and politics, among other things – that constitute the complex queer media assemblage. This approach therefore diverts the readers’ attention away from texts and to all these other factors in order to find out how they interact with and shape each other. Drawing on Elspeth Probyn’s (1996) focus on the ‘surface’ and Heather

Love's (2013) 'thin description' strategy, this book refrains from the conventional practice to find 'hidden messages' or 'deep meanings' – which often assumes the authority of the critic. Love suggests developing modes of reading that are 'close but not deep':

I play out the possibilities for a mode of textual analysis that would take its cue from observation-based social sciences including ethology, kinetics, ethnomethodology, and microsociology. These fields have developed practices of close attention, but, because they rely on description rather than interpretation, they do not engage the metaphysical and humanist concerns of hermeneutics.

(2010: 375)

Love's 'close reading' and 'thin description' strategy is useful for my study of queer community media. Where I do discuss film and media texts in this book, they are not there to offer transcendental or hidden meanings. When film and media texts are discussed, I describe the texts 'thinly' – that is, by focusing on the visible and obvious things that are presented and with which the audience directly engage – in order to delineate 'patterns of behaviour and visible activity that do not traffic in speculation about interiority, meaning, or depth' (Love 2013: 404). This largely descriptive – rather than interpretive – approach aptly attends to the specificity of the community and activist media – they are not abstract and abstruse pieces of artwork that await the critical assessment and insightful hermeneutic of expert critics who can see through the disguised facade of representation; they are audience-friendly forms of information and experience sharing that invite audiences' active participation and direct engagement. There are often no deep meanings or hidden messages to be interpreted from these texts; there are, however, bodies to be connected, relations to be forged, 'affective attunement' (Massumi 2015) to be enacted, and politics to be imagined prefiguratively.

Research as an archiving practice

As a researcher, I see my research process – collecting materials, interviewing people, going to events, and writing fieldwork notes – as constructing a queer archive, and I myself as an archivist. My queer archive is a flexible and evolving one; it is individual as well as collective, subjective as well as objective – the boundaries of which are constantly blurred and twisted. This book is a documentation of my own affective history; it is also a part of the queer communities' affective histories. The book's physical existence – in print and digital forms – can only capture these histories in a limited, and limiting, form. It is my hope that this book can trigger readers' emotions, memories, imaginations as well as other forms of embodied and affective responses, all of which are part of the queer history in its active making and the queer archive in its constant formation.

This book builds on my extensive engagement with China's queer communities in the past two decades and in particular my research on Chinese queer

cultures in the past 15 years. Although I have long considered myself a member of China's queer communities since I came out in Beijing in 2000, my real interest in researching China's queer cultures only started in 2006 when I began my PhD study in Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia. Being a gay man from China having considerable familiarity with the queer communities in Beijing before I started my research proved to be an advantage in my fieldwork: I could access research contacts and materials relatively easily, without the usual suspicion of academic voyeurism or objectification of research subjects often associated with a community outsider. This subject position has also brought me many challenges personally, politically, and ethically. This primarily concerns how I select research data and how I position myself in relation to my research contacts (or 'research subjects' in the academic lingo). I see my research as both a queer archiving and a queer activist practice, the rationale behind which is explained later.

In many parts of the Western world, one can expect to turn to an already existing queer archive to access research material. In contrast, there is no established public queer archive in the PRC at the time of writing, although there have been efforts from various individuals and groups to establish one – the most recent one being a queer museum initiative started by Chen Xiangqi in Shanghai in 2020. Historical materials are often stored on personal computers, the filing cabinets of NGO offices, and even under the beds in private homes. The question of security and sustainability troubles every self-appointed archivist: how can these archives survive personnel and institutional change, lack of funding, technological takeover and, above all, the consistent censorship and ban of queer contents on Chinese media and the constant police raids of NGO spaces in the PRC? As soon as I realised the importance and challenges of queer archiving, the process of my research was transformed into an act of archiving, and my role as a researcher immediately became that of an archivist. During the past 15 years, I have taken every opportunity to collect information pertaining to China's queer communities – books, zines, newspaper clippings, souvenirs, and even screenshots of websites – during my annual visits and dedicated field trips to China. In doing so, I have assembled an archive myself. I have also organised conferences, research workshops, and film events to invite queer media producers and activists to contribute to my expanding archive. In the process, I have learned the techniques and politics of archiving: an archive is inevitably selective – often due to financial, temporal, spatial, and political reasons, in addition to the limits of a person's experiences and resources – and what is included in and excluded from an archive is well worth critical reflection. This is an issue which I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4 in relation to the politics of representation in two queer community documentaries.

A book is an archive; and the process of researching and writing a book is simultaneously a process of building an archive. It is an archive of feelings, 'the many forms of love, rage, intimacy, grief, shame, and more that are part of the vibrancy of queer cultures' (Cvetkovich 2003: 7). An archive is an assemblage of materials, bodies, and affects, temporarily put together to create certain intensities which are ready to be disassembled. I have intended this book to document some

key grassroots, community, and activist queer media practices in the PRC with national and even transnational significance, so as to demonstrate the vibrant grassroots and democratic citizen engagements in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. This understanding of the archiving practice underpins my construction of the research corpus and my selection of the research data for this book. I have therefore selected specific queer media forms and practices for this book, including different ways of documenting queer history (Chapters 3 and 4), various strategies of queer media activism (Chapters 5 and 6), and exemplary instances of engaging with issues of international development (Chapters 7 and 8). Together, they shine an important light on queer media and filmmaking practices in relation to community building and rights advocacy in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Informed readers may question the ‘representativeness’ of some case studies or pinpoint the lack of representation for many other queer media platforms and practices which are equally, if not more, important. I welcome these suggestions and encourage future researchers to pursue these missing narratives or accounts.

Research as activism

Research is not simply an archiving practice aimed at recovering histories from getting lost and rescuing ephemeral materials from falling into oblivion. Research into queer cultures in the PRC context is also a form of activism. In a national context where queer and feminist issues are rendered politically sensitive and constantly censored, researching and writing on queer issues, together with participating in and even organising queer public events, becomes a type of queer social and political activism. Similarly, working in a transnational context where knowledge and practices from non-Western contexts are often marginalised, writing about queer China or organising research workshops and public events to introduce queer China becomes a form of decolonial political intervention into a Eurocentric academic landscape.

My research is ethnographic as well as activist. In the research process, my own subject position has transformed from being an ‘objective observer’ of queer community history to a self-identified cultural historian and queer researcher who works with the communities concerned and produces knowledge to help make a difference to them and to society at large. I interviewed filmmakers and queer media event participants; I frequently attended queer film and media events. Sometimes I was simply an observer, participating in an event and observing what was going on; other times I was more active and proactive, taking part in an ongoing event as an active agent, shaping the unfolding of the event. For example, I helped my queer filmmaker and activist friends translate film subtitles and film festival programmes; I chaired screenings, panel discussions, and directors’ Q&As at these film and media events; I wrote film reviews, event reviews, and academic articles. After finishing a draft chapter and before sending it out for review or publication, I often sent my writing to my research participants for their comments and suggestions; their feedback often shaped my writing in particular ways. It was therefore

more appropriate to speak of a collective authorship, a mode of joint production of knowledge, and a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the ones under research. I believe that this approach is appropriate for community-based research. This collaborative approach to research and writing foregrounds a researcher's ethical responsibility for the communities about which they write and the topics with which they engage.

This research has been informed by PAR often used in community-based research with an emphasis on participation and action (Fals-Borda 1995; Chevalier and Buckles 2019; Schubotz 2019). PAR seeks to understand the world by being a part of the process of social change. Refusing to make a clear-cut distinction between knowledge production and social change, and between research and activism, PAR recognises the complexity of the social world and the inevitable connectivity between human beings – and non-human beings if we apply insights from Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2007). Indeed, changes are not there passively awaiting to be acted upon; changes are everywhere although their intensities may vary, depending on circumstances and certainly activated by human and non-human interventions. In other words, since all researchers effect social changes through their research practices, PAR practitioners simply acknowledge the role that they play; they even magnify that role via self-conscious participation and intervention. Contrary to conventional research methods, most of which emphasise disinterested researchers and the reproducibility of findings, PAR sees each experience as singular and each person as playing a unique role in shaping social processes. Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda (1995) calls for the incorporation of 'community action' in research. By deprivileging scholarly approaches, working with communities, and learning from ordinary people and real-life experiences, PAR opens up a democratic political vision for academic knowledge production. It has important implications for marginalised people and communities, who are often subject to voyeuristic and othering gazes from a heteronormative mainstream society and from ethnographers coming from the outside. In Chinese queer studies, Travis Kong's (2014, 2019a) oral history project with older gay men in Hong Kong is among the first research projects that self-consciously use PAR as a research method. *Queer/Tongzhi China* (Engebretsen, Schroeder, and Bao 2015) is also exemplary in bringing together queer researchers and activists for research collaboration and dialogues. This book follows the aforementioned examples and continues to explore the use of PAR as a research method, through which to interrogate the politics and ethics of queer and media research.

This book can therefore be seen as an outcome of PAR, practised by a researcher who identifies with the communities and who hopes to contribute to the communities with socially relevant research. This approach disrupts the rigid boundary between the researcher and the researched, between subjectivity and objectivity, and between the self and other. My embodied and affective ethnographic methods have also been inspired by the notion of ethology. First proposed by Spinoza and later discussed in Deleuze's (1992) works, and recently brought to life in ethnography by Elspeth Probyn (2003, 2005, 2016), ethology defines the bodies of humans, and animals by the affects of which they are capable. For Deleuze,

‘ethology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterise each thing’ (1992: 627). In my research, I pay meticulous attention to how people, technologies, and bodies meet and what speeds, intensities, and affects they engender through these encounters and entanglements. These dynamic processes make up the social as we know it. It also highlights the productive role of the academic research in shaping queer identities, communities, and politics.

An overview of the book

This book is divided into four parts, dealing respectively with distinct and yet interconnected issues about queer community media in contemporary China. They are arranged roughly in a chronological order: from a general queer history since the 1980s to examples of queer media practices in the late 2010s. They have a geographical dimension too: from the national, local, and translocal to the transnational. They cover a wide range of media practices: from community documentaries to queer websites, from queer subcultural health activism to participatory videos made with people living with HIV/AIDS, from Beijing Queer Film Festival to Queer University video-making workshops. Together, they document different aspects of China’s queer history in the first two decades of the twenty-first century; they also showcase various instances of queer activist and community media practices.

Part I situates this book in historical and critical contexts. Chapter 1 traces an ‘archaeology’ of queer community media in the PRC from the 1990s: leaflets, zines, pagers, telephone hotlines, websites, and gay dating apps. It unravels the community spirit and democratic potentials embedded in older forms of community media. In doing so, it cautions against an overwhelming emphasis on individualism and market values in contemporary neoliberal queer cultures. Chapter 2 proposes a critical concept – the ‘queer generation’ by grouping together several Chinese queer filmmakers and their filmmaking practices. It sets the historical, social, and cultural contexts for queer community media in China. It also introduces a list of filmmakers and their works, many of which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Part II focuses on two instances of queer community efforts to document China’s gay and lesbian histories, represented by Cui Zi’en’s 2008 documentary *Queer China, ‘Comrade’ China* as well as Zhao Jing and Shi Tou’s 2015 documentary *We Are Here. Queer China, ‘Comrade’ China* can be seen as a queer – primarily gay in this case – intervention into an otherwise heteronormative mainstream PRC history. Documenting such a history functions to resist queer marginalisation and historical amnesia. *We Are Here* can be regarded both as a queer intervention into China’s feminist history and as a feminist intervention into China’s queer history. It also adds Chinese perspectives and experiences to the memory of an international historic event. While the filmmakers have successfully inserted queer women’s lives and struggles into China’s queer history and activism, they unintentionally risk erasing China’s socialist histories and feminist memories. Put

together, both films demonstrate the importance of history writing and archival practices for marginalised people and communities; they also epitomise intricate politics of history writing and archiving as critical practices. As I analyse the politics of representation in these films, I also use the two chapters to briefly chronicle China's queer community histories since the 1990s.

Part III examines two cases of queer media activist practices. In Chapter 5, the Queer Comrades community webcast strives to depathologise homosexuality through producing short online videos with positive representations of queer issues. It appropriates some of the mainstream aesthetics but at the same time also queers them through parody and subversion. The purpose is to write queer people into China's visual history, without spectacularising or exoticising them. As the Chinese title of the webcast programme aptly says: 'queers are also ordinary people.' Chapter 6 examines the cultural politics of the Beijing Queer Film Festival from the prism of cultural translation: translation not only in terms of the rendition of texts from one language to another but also pertaining to the circulation of ideas, concepts, and practices across the world, and such a circulation is by no means straightforward. The catachresis, or mistranslation, often challenges the global hegemony of queer knowledge and demonstrates the agency of the local queer cultures.

Part IV situates China's queer media activism in a transnational context by interrogating the politics of international development where queer and activist issues are often discussed and framed in the Global South context. Chapter 7 focuses on *The Lucky One*, a 2011 film about the last few days of a woman who lived with HIV/AIDS made in a participatory approach. It interrogates dominant paradigms in international development in framing HIV/AIDS issues, and raises questions about participation, agency, and empowerment. Chapter 8 introduces the Queer University video production workshop jointly organised by Chinese and African queer filmmakers and activists. It proposes critical terms such as 'queer minor transnationalism' and 'queer Global South' in order to challenge the hegemony of queer theories and practices from the West and the Global North. Through the uneven circulation of these transnational discourses and practices, new social formations and creative alliances are forged; new strategies of resistance are devised; and new geopolitical imaginaries come into being.

The conclusion briefly sums up the arguments of the book. It also highlights this book's scholarly contributions and critical interventions. They include: to underline the study of community media to media, communication, and cultural studies and to highlight the importance of a socialist vision and democratic prefiguration in understanding media, communication, and cultural practices in a world dominated by neoliberalism.

This book also includes an Appendix, in which I interview queer filmmaker and activist He Xiaopei. In her interview, He Xiaopei talks about the queer history, community, and culture that she has experienced from the 1990s and presents her personal perspectives on queer issues in China. Her historical account also informs us of older forms of community media such as pager hotlines, queer zines, and websites that this book has not sufficiently covered.

Put together, these chapters demonstrate the power of digital media and documentary films in constructing queer identities, building communities, and facilitating social and political activism. They also showcase the promises and precariousness of community participation facilitated by digital media and technologies. If media and technologies are ‘tools’ that help people do things, these tools can be both enabling and disabling in political activism and social movements. They are often articulated with issues of identity, community, and rights, which are further assembled with and into the social. All these articulations and assemblages are highly contingent and political; their intensities and impacts are far more unpredictable than commonly assumed. The ‘media as practice’ (Couldry 2004) and media as ‘articulation and assemblage’ (Slack and Wise 2005) perspectives are therefore used in this book to overcome a simplistic view of technological determinism, in which media and technologies alone are expected to create social change.

Besides its scholarly interventions in media and communication studies, queer studies, and China/Asia studies, this book highlights community strength and international solidarity in imagining alternative, horizontal, and less hegemonic forms of queer sociality and world geopolitics. In the process of researching this book, I have met numerous queer-identified media workers, filmmakers, and activists in China and internationally; I have seen lots of their wonderful works and heard from them of many ingenious activist strategies; I have also been captivated by their determination, resilience, and imagination. This book is my schematic account of these queer media practices and practitioners as I trace new trajectories of identities, intimacies, politics, and social formations. A queer world is in the making.

Notes

- 1 In 1997, ‘hooliganism’ (*liumangzui*) was removed from China’s Criminal Law. This was celebrated by China’s queer communities to signal the ‘decriminalisation’ of homosexuality. Legal studies scholar Guo Xiaofei (2007) argues that the ‘decriminalisation’ of homosexuality was an unexpected result of the removal of ‘hooliganism’ although it may not have been the intention of the legislators. He further points out that homosexuality had not been criminalised in legal texts in the PRC although the law in action may have been different. For further discussion about homosexuality in Chinese law, see Guo (2007) and Zhou (2009), and Kang (2012). The ‘depathologisation’ of homosexuality is in fact not complete. CCMD-3 stipulates that only those who are not ‘ego-syntonic’ (*zìwò hexiè*) with their sexual identities need psychological and medical treatment. This has provided justification for some conversion therapy practices in China. See Chapter 5 of this book for more discussions of depathologisation.
- 2 For accounts of homoeroticism before the Mao era, see, for example, Carton (2006), Chiang (2010, 2018a, 2018b), Dikötter (1995), Hinsch (1990), Kang (2009), Kong (2010), Sang (2003), Sommer (2000), Wu (2004), Wu (2003), Xiang (2018), and Zhang (2001). For scholarly discussions of homosexuality in the Mao era, see Kang (2018) and Ye (2018). This chapter focuses on queer issues in the PRC, or mainland China; for discussions of queer issues in Asia or the Sinophone sphere, see, for example, Chao (2020), Chiang and Heinrich (2013), Chiang and Wong (2015, 2017, 2020), Chou (1997, 2000), Erni (2008) Ho and Tsang 2012; Huang (2011), Lavin, Yang, and Zhao (2017), Leung (2008), Lim (2006, 2008), Liu (2015), Liu and Ding (2005), Mankekar and

Schein (2012), Martin (2000, 2003, 2010), Martin, Berry, and Yue (2003), Kong (2011, 2014, 2019a, 2019b), Martin, Jackson, McLelland, and Yue (2008), Pecic (2016), Tang (2011), Wei (2020), Wijaya 2020; Wilson 2006; Yau (2010), and Yue and Zubillaga-Pow (2012). For specific discussions of queer women in China, see, for example, Engebretsen (2005, 2008, 2014), Leung (2004, 2008, 2012), Martin (2003, 2010), Sang (2003), Kam (2013), and Shi (2015). For queer representations in Chinese-language cinema, see, for example, Berry (1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004), Bian (2007), Fan (2007), Fan (2016, 2020), Leung (2008), Robinson (2013, 2015), Lim (2006), Martin (2003, 2010), Wang (2009), Shi (2015), Pecic (2016), Bao (2020), Chao (2010a, 2010b, 2020), Wei (2020), Wong (2020b), Yue (2012, 2017), and Zhao and Wong (2020).

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