

Chapter Three Research Methods

3.1 Method and Research Subjects

Examining the issues around male to male sex workers from the perspective of the state, male to male sex workers have experienced political oppression, from the social stratifications which make inferiors subservient to their superiors to the invisible classes at the lowest ranks of the social order, from their conspicuous place in the cultural heritage to their necessary invisibility in the traditional way of thinking. How can we contrast the personal liberty to self-determination over one's own body with the burdensome traditional rules of social decorum, or marriage and the individual, the family and freedom and their complex and nuanced synergies, and how shall we consider such varied perspectives? How can we extrapolate the social influence, the economic and traditional morality impacts, experiences and feelings, of the male to male sex workers whose lives are substantially hidden from view? This research employs the methods of substantive in-depth interviews to obtain deep anecdotal evidence to study. Relying on the shared experience of the personal interview, to test the research questions and engage in a deep interpersonal dialogue, yielding a treasure trove of that richest data stream, culled from real life, for analysis. Initially then the task was to define the research subjects and search for appropriate participants, and then to proceed with an in-depth explanation of the research study processes step by step.

Defining the Research Subjects

This research examines the role of male to male sex workers in Shanghai particularly because of two main reasons: Firstly, from Ke-chan, An's work *The Black Souls under the Red Sun*, he points out that Shanghai is the Chinese metropolis which enjoys the highest population density of homosexuals. The writer's extensive contacts with the male to male sex workers after becoming acquainted for the research study reveal, that although one cannot say that male to male sex workers are synonymous with being homosexual, nevertheless one cannot consider them in the utter absence of the homosexual sexual

orientation either. In order to appreciate in depth the frustrating contradictions that the male to male sex workers experience as a result of the twin pressures of tradition versus economics, and to poignantly and profoundly raise the public consciousness about the problems facing the male to male sex workers, it was inevitable perhaps that one should choose to focus on the Shanghai male to male sex workers as the research subjects for this study. Secondly, the male to male sex workers represent an almost invisible social class, and it is inherently very challenging to make contact with them or obtain objective data about them, and in order to secure reliable information and ensure the personal safety of the participants, it became absolutely essential to find a trustworthy not for profit organization which could provide assistance.

Most amazingly, the writer was able to quite serendipitously enjoy the privilege of becoming familiar with the Shanghai Leyi (Happy Friendship) organization and enjoying their assistance. The Shanghai Leyi (Happy Friendship) organization is a not for profit, independent civil society organization, which was established in November 2004, which endeavors to improve the health status and quality of life for China's male to male sex workers. Currently it is the only such organization in China dedicated to counseling male to male sex workers. The mission focus for the organization revolves around finding practical solutions for the work and lifestyle related difficulties facing male to male sex workers. Their outreach efforts involve visiting in person every possible location where male to male sex workers might likely be present, and providing on the spot counseling and guidance. Reliance on the goodwill established by the organization with the male to male sex workers, helped ameliorate the trouble and risk for the author in selecting research study subjects. Additionally, their assistance dramatically improved the willingness of the male to male sex workers to actively, completely forthrightly cooperate in the study. So, this study finds its origins with the 15 Shanghai male to male sex workers introduced by the Leyi Happy Friendship organization, who serve as a representative sample for this unique social substratum.

Applying Levison's theory of the seasons of life, 17-33 is the pre-mature period; 17-22 is the intensely pre-adult period, when many move away from their family and start to live independent lives. 22-28 is the phase of entering adulthood, when people develop

their own lifestyle structure, choosing their career, marrying, and establishing a family. 28-33 is the intense post-30 phase, when people reappraise their work and family arrangements, setting the foundations for their next lifestyle structure (Huang 2001).

Regardless of whether one is a male to male sex worker, in terms of their personal blueprints for life, it is natural that the blueprint will make room for career, companionship, family, and even those perennial human questions of birth, aging, disease, and dying. This kind of hypothetical framework fits well with the all aspects of the needs of human development we confront during the mature phase of adulthood. But in those parts of China with heavy burdens from real life pressures, many young people face severe practical living stresses, and must work to provide their own living from very early on.

In light of the above considerations, this study sought to find male to male sex worker subjects who possessed the following characteristics: firstly, they should be male adults over the age of 17, currently residing in Shanghai. Secondly, they should be persons already familiar to the Leyi Happy Friendship organization through their outreach efforts. Third, they should be presently engaged in male to male sex work, without regard to whether their specific place of work was in a health spa, a sauna or as a solo sexual entrepreneur.

After deciding upon the definitional characteristics of the subjects of this study, the Leyi Happy Friendship organization was asked to assist in preliminary selection of suitable subjects willing to participate in the interview processes. Because the subjects of the interviews were to be male to male sex workers, and considering their delicate status, naturally this made finding suitable candidates voluntarily willing to meet in person for the interviews all the more difficult. However, through the intervention of the Leyi Happy Friendship organization, quite thankfully, all of these potential difficulties were efficiently and speedily overcome. Thus this study focuses on these 15 male to male sex worker interview subjects. The 15 subjects ranged in age from 20 to 40. Their educational backgrounds varied from no prior formal schooling to the university graduate level.

Also, in order to better appreciate the interviewees' circumstances in depth, the writer was able with the assistance of the Leyi Happy Friendship organization's arrangements, to visit the health spas for field research regarding the interviewee's actual

working environment. This allowed the author to observe the actual workings of the health spas in terms of their design and the marketing methods they deployed to obtain clients. This also afforded the author the chance to understand more about the actual place of work where the sexual contact was conducted and the contents of the sexual work services provided. Additionally, on the occasion of the opening of a health spa, it became possible to participate in the festivities and to engage in on the spot impromptu discussions with the clientele.

Additionally, in order to better understand those male to male sex workers who work outside of the health spa milieu, with the same in-depth understanding, the writer visited the People' s Square, the Bund, underground discotheques and private bars to see through first hand observation and through anecdotal dialogues with locals, to better appreciate the actual work environs of the male to male sex workers. This also afforded the author the chance to learn about how others feel and think about the male to male sex workers around them.

In-depth Interview

This research initially used the methods of substantive in-depth interviews in depth anecdotal research method to develop the research question. Because this study' s focus was on the male to male sex workers and their views towards marriage (and the family) and economic pressures, in light of their traditional and self-determined actual behavior and mental processes. Male to male sex workers status is very special, so it is only through actual field research that one can provide the interviewees with an outlet to express their multifaceted voices, and through the mechanisms provided by autobiographical narrative, to afford the researcher the opportunity to better understand and study them. Because the theoretical premises of the realism approach to research which call for believing that reality is socially constructed by the individual through mediation with society, but the main point of importance for this researcher in particular, are the definitions which the participants provide for themselves on their own terms (Merriam 1998, as interpreted by Peng Lihui 2003 : 46) .

Although qualitative research methods include the researcher recording the data

through observations, copying or interviews (Miller and Crabtree as interpreted by Youhui Hu and Meihua Yao 1996), but given the reasonable concerns about public exposure of their status among the male to male sex worker interview participants, and the practical need for the researcher to develop bridges of trusted communication, it seemed only natural to select the in-depth interview methods of qualitative research for this study.

While qualitative research does not particularly concern itself with disproving a hypothesis and statistical inferences, or the search for the general paradigmatic rule applicable to the situation (Hu 1996) but still the researcher engaged in qualitative research must apply themselves to discover the problems for study and enhance the fidelity and accuracy of their credibility and efficacy. Hence after this study's in-depth interviewing, the male to male sex worker organization founders and their professional counseling experience were able to serve to help verify the veracity of the evidence we obtained.

Design of the Interview Content

Male to male sex work in China is considered to be an activity of a second class form of culture, as compared to the more prominent social class of sex worker, the male to male sex worker is all the more unacceptable to social norms. This meant that during the interviews, the author's attempts to uncover the male to male sex worker's actual current situation became a central research difficulty. In terms of the interview design, the first questions focused on the interviewee's sharing how they got started in sex work and from this to discuss their personal lives, then proceeding to enquire how the sex worker came to find themselves in Shanghai and from this line of enquiry to learn more about their family and educational backgrounds. These questions led towards the search for the story behind how the male sex worker came to engage in male to male sex work and their attitudinal changes, so as to ascertain how much the male to male sex worker really felt satisfied with this type of sex work.

Additionally, the interviews went from sexual orientation through to interpersonal relations, to better appreciate the male to male sex worker's social circle. The sexual orientation perspectives afforded insights into the degree of initiative and voluntariness that surrounded the male to male sex worker's participation in male to male sex work.

Additionally these questions allowed one to explore whether the male to male sex worker's interactivity with their proximate social environment and interpersonal relations could help explain the male to male sex worker's degree or opposition to their particular form of sex work. Finally, the interview process proceeded to examine the family background and from there to consider their future personal plans. This led to consideration of the male to male sex worker's acceptance of family and marriage, and whether the male sex worker had any desire to return to traditional family life and carry on the family name.

Each interviewee will be arranged to be interviewed face to face in an isolated room for 120 to 150 minutes and the process will be recorded at the same time. The conduct will be done by conversation; meanwhile any sharp questions or conclusions will not be made during the process in order to avoid causing any uncomfortable feelings to the interviewees. The non-stop courage and eye contact will be provided all the time for developing the understanding toward the interviewees and hope to let the interviewees tell more truths and inner feelings. Also, after each interview is done. The writer will cross validation the content with the members of Le-yi for making sure that the interviewees sharing is correct. Through the help from Le-yi, the authenticity of the paper will arise.

Basic structure

I n t e r v i e w Q u e s t i o n s
A Interview Template/Outline
How they got started and developed along in their sex work?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When did you first become aware of sex work? 2. What is the difference what people term an MB and a homosexual? 3. Initially how did you engage in the MB line of work? (any special experiences

or personal anecdotes)

4. Why did you choose to help sex workers? (what factors impacted on your decision to enter this field)
5. What factors led to your participation in sex work? (from your beginnings to the present)
6. How do you find clients? Do you work with any organizations or middlemen? (How do you describe them (what nomenclature is used to refer to them) and how did you get to know them...)
7. Who were the targets of your sexual work services? Males? Females? What is your personal sexual orientation? Any differences from your proximate colleagues?
8. Which groups have you served? Hong Kong compatriots? Taiwanese? Is there any group of clients which you particularly favor?
9. What is the worst experience you have heard of? (or the experiences which made the strongest impressions)
10. What rates do you charge for sexual services? What are the content of the sexual services?
11. How many times do you engage in sexual liaisons on average in one month?

What is your average monthly income? What are your average monthly expenditures?

12. Do you know anyone who is currently financially supported for exclusive sexual purposes? Who provides their support? How much remuneration is required for exclusivity?

13. What is the maximum age for sex workers? Average length of service? Is it possible to successfully leave this field of endeavor?

14. What are the drives behind participation in this kind of work? What do your parents wish for you (or, pressure from your parents)? Sibling rivalry?

15. If you do not engage in this line of work, do you have other plans?

16. please describe one day in your life

17. What is the maximum number of clients you might service in a day?

18. When you do not have any clients, how do you manage to survive?

19. Where do you usually stay? Who do you live with? Describe your daily schedule?

20. Describe your local social circle? What do you do for fun?

21. What are the ties between the middlemen and the club staff?

22. Are you afraid of arrest by the public security (police)?

23. Have you heard any stories of MB being abused?

24. How do you deal with your own desires? Buy name brand items? A predicament?

Social factors/perspective

1. Are you afraid that your family will learn about the nature of your work?
2. Are your friends aware of the work you are engaged in?
3. Do they agree that it is only shameful to be poor but not to be prostitute?
4. What things in life do you think might provide you with a sense of security?
Money? Your own house? marriage?
5. Why do you maintain contact with the Leyi Happy Friendship organization? For what kind of needs?
6. What does the government offer?
7. What about the social welfare system?

B. Personal Bio-Data

1. What's your name?
2. Background:
 - a. age place of birth
 - b. Family member's father's profession? What did you wish for yourself

since you were young?

c. marital status:

Married single do you have any children?

Do you plan to get married in the future? Would you object to marrying someone who is a sex worker?

d. educational background

3. Work experience: what lines of work have you done before? Why didn't you continue in them?

4. Why did you choose Shanghai? Why did you come to Shanghai? What were the initial hopes you had when you came to Shanghai?

5. Have you been to any other cities?

6. What about your friends? Are they also engaged in sex work?

3.2 Profile of interviewees

Table 1. Initial Interviewees Bio-Data

Order of interviews	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
pseudonym	Wang Wei	Xiao Min	Yang Yang	Zhang Wei	Johnny	Xiao Lan	Ma Shan	Xiao Long	Wang Xiao	Wu Laoba	Zhang Lu	Xiao Zhang	Tony	Mr. Gu	Xiao Yun	Zheng Huang	Yu Tian
Homosexual? (could be translated as you are a communist party member)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	22	26	24	22	24	27	40	30	30	25	25	32	24	20	23		
Education Level	University, major	Sr. High School	Junior High School	Vo-tec high school	Junior High	elementary school	High School 1	Junior High School	Junior High School	Junior High School	Vo-Tech 2 yr	Elementary	Junior High School	University	Junior High School	Vo-tec high school	Vo-tec high school

	in educat ion	1	1					1	1	1	colleg e		1 dropo ut		1		
Hometow n	Xi' a n	Guang dong	Jiangs u	Xi' a n	Hebei Anhui	Xinjia ng, Gansu	Beijin g	Anhui	Shaan xi	Jiangs u	Xi' a n, Shaan xi	Jiangs u, Kunsh an	Shaan xi	Jiangs u	Shand ong	Guang dong	
Years of Sex Work in Shanghai	0.5	3	2	0.5	2	4	8	11	2	5	3	2	3	2	1	found er of Leyi Happy	couns elor with Leyi
started where	intern et cafe	health spa	sauna	intern et cafe	bathro om	park	restro om	park	friend	club	bar	foot massa ge	the Bund	club	park	friend ship Organ ization	Happy Friend ship organi zation
does your family know your occupatio	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Aware		

Notes	has		has			dresse	divorc		has a	intervi	found		foreign	has	self-m		
Siblings	has	No	has	No	No	No	No	Yes	boyfri	Aware	engag	No	No	No	At		
know your	girlfri		girlfri			Musli			end	jointly	ed in		custo	gonorr	d		
occupatio	end		end			m					affair		mers	hea	extern		
n											by				al		
Fearful	afraid	afraid	afraid	not			afraid				boyfri				genital		
others will				afraid	afraid	afraid		afraid	afraid	afraid	afraid	afraid	afraid	afraid	afraid	afraid	
find out																	
Price for	200	200	200	200	200	100	200	500	200	200	200	200	300	200	50		
services	(about																
(in	NT\$8																
Chinese	00,																
Renminbi	US\$3																
RMB	0)																
yuan)																	
Plan to	hope	yes	yes	no	don'	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	don'		
marry?	so			way	t plan								way	t plan	to		
					to												

Individual Interviews with the 15 Male to Male Sex Workers: their Personal Stories

This part provides three perspectives from the points of view of the male to male sex workers, the Leyi Happy Friendship organization, and the researcher, to elucidate the personal characteristics and life experiences of the interviewees. This study involved conducting interviews with 15 male to male sex workers, this chapter will present their personal stories one by one in fifteen sections, to provide a detailed introduction to each of them in terms of their family background and their individual work experience, the insights of the researcher gleaned from the interactions with these male to male sex workers, and observations.

I · Sexploitation: Accidentally devoured by the wolves- WANG Wei Character Portrait

The Shanghai of January 17, 2007, was frigid. After hearing the sounds of loud knocking on the door, and opening the door, there appeared before my eyes a very sunny, but somewhat shy, young man. Although it was very cold, he was wearing very thin clothes. As soon as he entered he smiled at me very politely. From his tight-fists holding onto his sleeves one could perceive his apprehension. But from his speech one could immediately ascertain that he came from a family which encouraged a high level of education and culture. WANG Wei was the first male sex worker I was to interview, and also the first to leave me in tears after his departure.

WANG Wei, 22 years old, had just arrived in Shanghai just two weeks earlier. He was the first male to male sex worker to be formally interviewed for this study. He came from a small rural village outside Xi'an, and his family of five was composed of his parents, a younger sister and a younger brother. Both parents were engaged in farming. In order to support his studies, the family had borrowed a lot of money. But in Xi'an, a graduate from a vocational college can only earn a salary of about RMB 600 yuan per month more or less. So after graduation from the Xi'an Teachers College, in order to quickly repay the family's debts, he borrowed an additional RMB 1,000 yuan to come to Shanghai to make money. But as soon as he arrived in Shanghai, he became the victim of

job placement scam artists, leaving him with no place to stay but an internet café. When he was finally hungry beyond his ability to withstand the cramps, he had no choice but to send out SMS messages, and it was then that, he was discovered by some club personnel, and because of his starvation he felt helpless not to refuse their offer to come to the club to engage in sex work.

WANG Wei is definitely not a homosexual. Engaging in male to male sex work merely represents an unfortunate (regrettable) response to the pressing circumstances of real life. In the club environment, he is a merely a passive cog in the machine. He never seeks out customers on his own initiative, merely waiting to be selected. When he was interviewed, it had already been a month, and he had served ten clients. But he continually told himself, it will only be these ten. He will not accept any new clients, he hopes to rely on these clients to save enough for his return fare home, and then he wants to leave. But with every sexual encounter, he only makes RMB 200 yuan, from which he must deduct RMB 100 yuan for the mamasan. He is left with only RMB 100 yuan. Considering the high cost of living, he is unable to save very much. Every time he engages in a sexual encounter, he feels nauseous, and can only rely on self-pity as a source of comfort to anesthetize his feelings.

Xiao WEI: Its only an emotional response, you think you want to throw up, when you first start doing it, but after awhile you start to think, its only flesh, and we're all bodies made of flesh, whether male of female, fat is fat, its really nothing, it doesn't matter at all.

He realized that this society, is a dog eat dog world, not at all like when we were in school, full of innocent dreams, when falling in love was very pure, but those young men like him from the countryside when they enter into adulthood suddenly are faced with economic pressures, social pressures, and family responsibilities, all of which they must struggle against on their own, by themselves.

Although it was very cold, he was only wearing two very thin layers of clothing. This was because he did not want to spend any money on name brand clothing. In the club, he is also weary of making friends, because he is afraid that his sexual orientation might change because of the environment.

Xiao WEI:“Its not just for the money, its just so unfortunate to do so, but, in fact it really is just for the money, so I am stuck in this unfortunate situation, and I can't do what I really want to do, because sometimes, well you just think, this line of work provides an easy living, so you don't want to stop, like those working in the club, in order to attract clients and make more money, will go out and buy nice clothes and dress up, but as you can see I never make any effort to beautify myself, and never go out and buy some outfit to try to impress a prospective client, all of my clothes are several years old.”

Anecdotes about the Researchers discussions with Xiao Wei

Xiao Wei is the first man whose experience in life literally reduced writer to tears. He should be that happy someone with a real zest for life. Not only is his appearance but very handsome, but is demeanor is also very endearing and gentlemanly, and it is only through our heart to heart conversation that he betrays his deep-felt inner frustration. That frustrated sense he has in the face of the vicissitudes of real life, which reveal themselves not only in his fashion choices, but more directly through his speech. Even though marriage remains the constant focus of his purpose in life, but the impact of his current method of earning a living has forever indelibly impacted his desire to raise a child of his own.

Xiao Wei:“Because I feel so very tired with life, I do not feel it would be fair to bring another life into such a weary existence to suffer so, and that's just the way it is, whether one is born with a silver spoon to a rich family or in the throes of poverty, life is a battle for everyone against so many worrisome thoughts, the rich have their worries such as about whose going to inherit what, as we often see on TV, and for those born into lives mired in poverty, like myself, for example, you know, even though my environment may not be like that (that bad), why would I want to bring a child to endure such sufferings? As long as there is a

heartfelt companion who can share their intimate thoughts with me, that's enough for me, I haven't thought of anything else, I've never even considered having a child."

But even more difficult, are meeting parents' expectations, as the realities of life create real anxieties and contradictions in his soul, as his values become more confused and lose focus. During those precious moments with this researcher, he continually repeated his heartfelt desire to leave this way of living. But it seems he has failed to appreciate, in fact this environment has already exercised profound impacts on him.

Xiao Wei: "its not to say this is the only way to make a living, but is just that, you don't feel free to choose otherwise, if you were say moonlighting on two jobs, and then suddenly you lose your job, then I'd be back in the same rut, and be forced again to find some late night clients, its inevitable, because, you, can't force me to give up on my dreams when I am so young."

Brief summation: After the interview session was over, the writer really felt a deep longing, to let Xiao Wei know, he could stop. I wanted to give him the 2000 yuan RMB he needed for one way fare back home, and tell him, you shouldn't be living this lifestyle. In the end, I managed to keep my composure and not act on the impulse, because I knew that this is not a circumstance where a one hour intervention can resolve everything. But my heart was truly bitter, and deeply anguished. It was the first time I had witnessed a man who had been really crushed by society. The first time I understood the painful eloquence of feeling completely powerless to change one's situation in life.

II · A broken hearted Cantonese in the clubs- Little Min

Character Portrait

Little Lin was my second interview, and he was the living embodiment of that especially genteel sense that most people associate with being gay. He had a maturity in his appearance well beyond his tender years, but one could easily sense that he had a very warm heart. As we got started talking, Little Min naturally delved into his personal story. But, for some unknown reason, perhaps it was as we began to speak about his parents and

his feelings, and the like. Little Min began to close up again...

Little Min is 26 years old, from Guangdong province, where his parents are also farmers. Originally Little Min worked at a hotel on Guangdong's burgeoning hospitality industry. Through the internet video chat rooms he got to know another man who advised him that it was easier to find higher paying work in Shanghai than in Guangdong, so he saved his money to move to Shanghai. But as soon as he got to Shanghai, the man he met online refused to meet him in person, and since he had no place to stay, he went online again, where some gay friends told him about the spa where he moved in. In the spa he met some MBs, and learned the art of the sex trade from them.

Little Min's feelings were contradicted. On the one hand he felt like since he had left the country, he might as well not go back to the countryside, because it was impossible to make any money back home anyway. But on the other hand, Little Min, even though homosexual, and even though so far off from his hometown, still felt compelled to get married. It was an inevitable sacrificial offering of respect and appreciation for one's parents.

**Writer: "Oh, so you knew from a young age that you were a gay?
So you don't really want to get married?"**

Little Min: "I want to get married."

Little Min: "How could someone not marry? I feel like I have to get married"

Little Min: "yeah, after all I am still a country boy from the countryside"

Little Min feels that this line of work is not something someone can be proud about, but there's nothing he can do about it, because he doesn't have any other marketable skills. When discussing the future, he not only doesn't have a plan, he doesn't even appear to have the slightest idea or even a clue. Regarding his mom and dad, Little Min feels especially frustrated, afraid that someday his parents will discover how he really makes a living.

Little Min: "Let's not even assume my parents could know. Don't even ask such a hypothetical question... it's too frightening to even contemplate..."

**Little Min: “Imagine that my parents knew. It just sounds too scary.
Where’d there be any social standing (face) left at all?”**

Besides being homosexual, his values otherwise represent those of most people, so Little Min engages in the male to male sex trade primarily for the money. He feels that the entire society evaluates human worth solely in financial terms.

Little Min: “I feel like. Real life is just this way. People will fun of your poverty, but not of your prostituting. That’s the way it is (literally, It’s normal)”

The Little Min that revealed himself throughout the interview remained the same person that had come to the big city of Shanghai with the courage to dream. He felt he was looking for that Mr. Right, the person who would love him. He hoped that after marriage and having children, and thereby fulfilling his social responsibilities to his parents, he could divorce and seek his true love. But his definition of true love meant a man who not only loved him but was also of substantial means.

Little Min:”In life its natural that we need spiritual solace and support, its very important... as important as your financial life. You really enjoy (him). He really likes you. Only if you can have a better material life. If you can have your cake and eat it too... that would be the best of both worlds”

Brief summation: As soon as I met Little Min I realized he was mature beyond his chronological age. He did not have a bodybuilder’s svelte physique, nor a noticeably handsome facial appearance. If your paths crossed walking on the streets, you’d probably never imagine for a moment that here before you was a male to male sex worker in the flesh. But from the discussions with him, it became clear that cash had become his personal sacrificial cow. Whether discussing his relations with or feelings about his parents, or the true love he was so desperately seeking, everything had become secondary to money.

III. The Little Dragonfly in the bathroom, Yangyang from Jiangsu Province

Personal portrait

Conversing with Yangyang was a very pleasurable experience; it was almost like watching a movie to hear him discuss his personal experiences and life story. Except that this script lacked any beautiful scenes, and had more than its fair share of little people trying to make their way in the big city, struggling with all they could to survive. Yangyang shared with me much about the male to male sex trade in Shanghai's spas, but to preserve confidentiality (and security), recordings were not made. As for the more colorful and an intimate aspect, the writer is forced to leave them to your most furtive imagination...

Yangyang is now just 23 years old, and came to Shanghai from the not too distant reaches of Jiangsu province. Out of some confusion as to his own sexual orientation, Yangyang had a girlfriend of his own back home. If it hadn't been for his breakup with her, and then coming to Shanghai, he would surely be like the vast majority of Chinese homosexuals, having gotten married and raising a family, all the way living a veiled and masked existence to cover their true selves and identity throughout life.

Yangyang: "getting married. Your family wants to see you get married... but for now I'm thinking. No money... so it wouldn't be fair for the girl"

Yangyang: "anyway to get married is okay. I can perform the natural way too... Most of my clients are bottoms."

Yangyang is a soho sex-preneur, which means that during the course of selling himself for sex, he does not have to give a commission to a mamasan. Yangyang works exclusively in the saunas, where he pays 79 yuan RMB for an entrance ticket, then he takes full advantage of his physical charms, to find customers lusting for his flesh, for which he charges 200 yuan RMB for his services.

Yangyang: "because I've already spent the entrance fee, like an investment. So I have to earn back the cost of admission... So I'll help others with a little massage here and there... and you go naturally they'll want me... they come on to me... they come there to bathe and so... of course they'll notice my... and come to my room for me like this.. In the back, this way..."

Back home, Yangyang used to work in a small hotel as the shift manager, in charge

of 10 employees. And like the vast majority of MBs, he felt that being an MB was the result of a number of factors coalescing together from their days as youthful boys growing up in the countryside and the social pressures of adult life now that they' d grown up.

Yangyang:" While little, in the countryside we all slept together, slept and played together, so sometimes we'd touch each other in a game called fly the airplane, that was normal for us, of course for those of you raised as an only child you wouldn't know about such things, but for us country kids we understand such things, if someone was a little frustrated, they'd go spend the night at your place, under the cover of the covers they could touch here and there, excite your little chickadee a little bit, no big deal"

Ge Tong in his Field Research on the Status of Male to Male Sex Trade among Chinese surmised that youthful experiences were one of the factors in male to male sexual relations, and from the case of Yangyang one finds some empirical support for this notion. In China there are many country boys, who because of the rural overpopulation and poor conditions of life, are forced to sleep together with other boys, and over time this naturally leads to the development of some degree of a contributing factor for homosexuality. This also contributes to the country boy' s adult attitudes of acceptance of homosexuality as not something so out of the ordinary.

Right now Yangyang is very worried, even frightened that his family will one day learn he has been an MB. As for the future, he is even more reticent. He only knows that this society is wholly based on realism, only concerned with how much money you have. Money is the sole determinant of one' s dignity and social standing.

Yangyang:"For those like me doing this... its...its not like I really want to... most are unwilling.. But after working for several years... any work has its difficulties... and this line of work is also not carefree... well its... sometimes you just think... as we say back home... people poke fun of the poor but not at prostitutes"

Yangyang expressed his hope to quit this field of endeavor, and lead a normal life.

Oftentimes he would ask himself why it is that his life should have become like this. He feels exhausted, and empty. But if you ask him whether he is willing to return to the 9 to 7 lifestyle of the white collar class, he says he would not. He feels like working ten hours a day only to earn 1000 Yuan RMB a month is not acceptable to him anymore. But interestingly enough he also said that it was really impossible to make any money in this trade either, and it's even more wearisome. This kind of contradiction is quite confusing to an outsider. Whether making money and sex work can actually be equated with each other seems to be a rather perplexing, albeit interesting, question.

Yangyang: “no money, spending all one’s time in this circle, its wearying, better to lead a normal life sooner rather than later”

Later Yangyang described his current life by analogy to a room. He said his current inner emotions were like a room full of clutter stacked all about, perhaps others felt it was very messy, disorganized and chaotic. But he felt very happy. And isn't that the most important thing?

Brief summation: Yangyang's story reflects a common tragedy affecting China's male homosexuals. Yangyang is somewhat luckier though, because without the freedom gained by having left his distant hometown, he might not have discovered his sexual orientation. That would have meant he would have remained like so many, having gotten married and started a family but living a quite miserable existence. But Yangyang is also quite unfortunate, because after so many years, he is still mired in the throes of abject materialism. Working in Shanghai's male to male sex trade, he knows is not a normal line of employment, and it has not brought Yangyang the kind of wealth he had anticipated it would, and he is also desirous of leading a normal life, perhaps because of the vicissitudes of making a living, but he just can't manage to force himself to quit.

IV. Lively youth from Gansu- ZHANG Wei

Character portrait

Zhang Wei seems to be someone who was overprotected by his parents throughout

his childhood. He is very personable and full of confidence. Unlike most other MBs, he was raised as a big city boy. He has a bodybuilder's physique. It's very pleasant to engage Zhang Wei in conversation, during the interview he not only spoke very openly, but also with a gregarious sense of humor. The atmosphere was completely relaxed throughout the interview.

Zhang Wei, 22 years old, from Lanzhou. His parents used to work as employees at a department store, but now are both retired. Zhang Wei graduated from a vocational junior high, and was planning to go on an internship with a song and dance ensemble troupe, but because of his extreme myopia, the doctor's advised against his working as a dancer, so at the tender age of 18 he went to Shanghai, working at a bar, and after a few years returned back home to Gansu, then after a year or so back home, he returned back to Shanghai. It was at the People's Square that he first learned of the MB way of life.

Zhang Wei is quite unconcerned with whether others should know he is gay. At his previous place of work, all of his colleagues knew of his sexual orientation status. But as to his parents, he still had the anxieties that all Chinese gays suffer from

Zhang Wei: "How to explain it, well, of course I'm afraid my parents will find out, not so much afraid of what they might do to me, but afraid of how it would make them feel inside."

Zhang Wei's parents have already started to put pressure on him to marry. His mother has even planned to take him to the hospital for an examination. But actually Zhang Wei's parents probably at some level understand and have surmised Zhang Wei's sexual orientation. It's just that like most Chinese parents, they are unable to come to recognize and admit the truth, that's all.

Zhang Wei: Last year my mother was still at it! I really do not want to marry, then my mom was asking me why I don't want to marry and don't even have a girlfriend at this age already, when young kids in their early teens are already dating.

Zhang Wei: yeah, she really seriously asked me whether it was a physiological problem or a mental problem that I had

Zhang Wei: I said I didn't know, and then she said she wanted to take me to the hospital for an examination

Zhang Wei: An examination scares the heck out of me, if she wants to take me to the hospital, then she surely must suspect that I...

Because of his family background, Zhang Wei is able to enjoy a high degree of impudence as he engages in the male to male sex trade. To put it more succinctly, he would not compromise his taste and have sex with a client he did not like just to satisfy the compelling desire to make some money. He is though quite dependent on his natural attitude, while not admitting that his attitude and feelings can be affected by influences of the surrounding environment.

Zhang Wei: My feelings change very rapidly, if you talk to me like this and we're laughing, but suddenly say something which I don't like to hear or which upsets me, or hurts my feelings, then I might immediately fly into a rage, that's just the way I am

Zhang Wei: Last time this friend of mine introduced me to a client, but when I met him in person, oh my ..., I said forget about it, I couldn't do it, I couldn't stand to at all

Brief summation: Zhang Wei is not a victim of economic deprivation. He doesn't have any social pressures or economic burdens. Quite the contrary, he is a child who has grown up quite carefree under the loving care and protection of his parents. But he still has some degree of materialistic motivation for money. Given his circumstances, he could have saved up a lot of money, but he hasn't. The gravitational pull of the desire for material things and the good life mean that he cannot return to a normal way of life.

V. The Money worshipper from Hefei- Johnny

Character portrait

Johnny originally worked in a department store in Shanghai as a salesman. He has the gregarious personality of the northern Chinese. He was very willing to share openly about the interview questions. Initially his clientele were all referred by his friends. Among the MBs, because of client's taste preference for the new, it is common to refer clients

among themselves. From the interview it was quite obvious that Johnny was a very good son who cared for his elders in the traditional manners of exhibiting filial piety. For his parents, he would be willing to make any sacrifice.

Johnny comes from Hefei. He is 24 years old. Johnny's parents are farmers. After high school graduation, because he has many relatives working in Shanghai, and since the wage rates in Shanghai were many multiples of those in Hefei, it was without any reticence that he came to Shanghai to make money. Initially Johnny worked as a salesman at a clothing firm. After he left the job, some gay friends introduced him to the trade.

Johnny feels life is not full of choices. As for being an MB, Johnny feels that even though he can't figure out something else to do, at least it's a job too. Sometimes he feels very weary, but other times he feels it's okay. Because even if at times you might run into clients you don't like, but you still need to face up to them.

Johnny: It's a job, it's just that with this job sometimes you feel very weary, and other times it seems better, why is that well, because of someone you don't like you'll feel that way, you'll feel different, sometimes even when you're not feeling up to it you still have to face them

Johnny: but you still have to service them

Regarding marriage, Johnny also has no choice. Because his parents have already ordered him to return home next year and get married. So even though he is a homosexual, he is unwilling to hurt his parent's feelings and Johnny thinks he should fulfill their wish.

Johnny: "I think... what I am saying is that I'll do what my parents back home expect of me, but only as a formality, that is, we won't actually live together as husband and wife later, so we'll just have to see what happens. But I cannot refuse my parents, because there is no way I can tell my parents that I am gay, which means, I don't think my parents could forgive me if they knew, I am just not sure, you know? Aha"

Johnny : "I know the only thing I can do is to respect them, give them a little respect so they feel satisfied, but as far as it goes later, telling them I've divorced the girl and such, but there's no

way I can hurt my parents feelings”

Johnny : ”Its just that since I was born until now, I owe my parents so much for everything, so I don’t want to make them feel hurt or angry, others can go to hell, but I can’t make my parents feel hurt”

Johnny has his own theories about the factors that lead to becoming an MB. Besides family background influences, he feels that the relative degree of freedom, ease of earning income, and low educational requirements all constitute important motivating factors for becoming an MB.

Johnny : Because I feel like for myself my educational level is not very high for Shanghai, so if you to work, you won’t earn a very high income, all you can say is well, to put it simply, you earn a little bit more from this than from working, so that’s why you do this instead... and this affords a person a lot more freedom.

Every month Johnny earns between 7 and 8 thousand Yuan RMB, but Johnny is not a spendthrift. The good life and having fun are the main things Johnny spends his money on.

Johnny : But I spend about, oh about 7 to 8 thousand a month...

Johnny : So I spend about all I make, and save only a little

Johnny : Because I mean you got too have some fun in life, so most of my earnings are spent on good food and great fun

Johnny : I like to eat out with friends, sing karaoke together, go shopping, buying clothes, etcetera; those are the things I like to do most, because I like shopping

Currently Johnny’s main source of clients comes from the internet. Every day after getting up, besides watching TV, Johnny goes online to search for clients. Johnny is very confused (contradicted) about love. On the one hand he wants to find a man he likes; on the other hand he hopes his love will be well off.

Johnny : I mean like this, of course I want to be with someone I like, certainly not with someone I didn’t like, but I hope that the one I like is not someone of no means

Johnny : not to say that I am really all that happy, just that everything is alright, definitely a little better than before, for now I feel like if they don't know about being an MB that's no big deal, just to find a man I like and be together would be the best, and to not marry

Brief Summary: Brokenhearted Johnny has to return to his hometown next year and get married. In his heart, Johnny suffers from the common tragedy of MBs, so even if they are really unwilling, nevertheless they have to satisfy their parents' wishes. In his lifestyle, Johnny suffers from the same contradictions as all the other MBs, such that even though he knows the money he earns is earned through real hardship, nevertheless he remains addicted to the greenback intoxication of the material world from which he cannot escape. Even in his emotional life, if he finds someone he loves, he will still reject them if they do not have money.

VI. Saintly Islamic Woman from Xinjiang- Xiao Lan (little Orchid)

Character portrait

Xiao Lan is a very straightforward person, on the day he came for the interview, he was wearing blue jeans and a black leather jacket. He was wearing shoulder-length hair, but didn't speak; giving the impression he was very cool. But as soon as he opened his mouth and starting talking, his country boy accent quickly revealed his simple origins. Xiao Lan doesn't have the handsome appearance that most MBs do, and his mouth is full of pop out teeth. If he hadn't said so, one could never guess how long he had been an MB. Xiao Lan is 27 years old. He comes from Xinjiang and Gansu, and is a Muslim, but in order to survive, Xiao Lan, cannot avoid being an MB.

Xiao Lan's father originally ran a medical clinic in their home village. Their family's lifestyle was not bad. So it was quite unexpected when in the course of transporting coal home that there was an accident, and given the poor state of healthcare in the countryside, his father passed away. After his father's passing, the family became quite destitute.

After finishing the third grade in elementary school, Xiao Lan dropped out. At 15 he moved to Xi'an to work, and at 17 he heard his brother's friends talking about working in Shanghai, so he joined them. The innocent country boy, Xiao Lan, arrived in Shanghai with no friends as a complete stranger, and in the walking around of the People's Square met some MBs and went off with them.

As for the MB line of work, Xiao Lan is completely against it. He feels like this makes him feel the same as if he were begging. But he doesn't know what else he could do make a living. He has no self-confidence at all, and feels he is really useless.

Xiao Lan: I am going to tell you the truth, and frankly it's a little embarrassing, it's embarrassing to admit that it's like begging for money, it's embarrassing to go and do this for money

Xiao Lan: Oh my, in truth, it makes me feel I am quite worthless

Xiao Lan: It's the truth that I don't like having to rely on others; I want to rely on myself

Xiao Lan has done many different jobs. But besides earning a lot less money from working, he also had to endure the bosses' attitudes. Some bosses even took away his identification cards, to control his personal freedom, just to squeeze out his labor. He often thinks he has no idea what his future will hold.

Xiao Lan: There are times when I just think I don't know what the future what it holds for me...

Xiao Lan: Or how I will live

Xiao Lan: I feel very empty inside, I really feel my life has been wasted and I am worthless like trash

Xiao Lan feels very empty. So he doesn't surf the internet, and doesn't have a regular stable of customers. He is also worried that his family will force him to marry, and bears the burdens of religious pressures. All he can do is comfort himself by telling himself that...

Xiao Lan: In all the universe and throughout creation there is nothing which is perfect, there's always a little bad mixed in something good, and something good in the bad too, that's

**what I think about this when I think well this is not
something I really want to be doing**

Brief summation: in order to survive, where the homosexual marketplace is not so big, and there is no stable supply of clients, Xiao Lan dresses up as a woman and goes to nightclubs, where he gives blowjobs as a means of attracting heterosexual clients. This is very dangerous, because even though it's late at night, it is still possible that the clients may realize the truth during their sexual encounter. When he has been discovered, the results have either been to be verbally abused or beaten to a pulp, though a small minority of customers go ahead and finish the sex, so this is a very risky proposition which literally endangers his life. This only goes to show the powerful gravitational pull and seductive power of money, such that people even forget the value of their own lives, which is really quite astonishing.

VII. A Shandong redneck- Ma Shan

Character portrait

Ma Shan is your typical Shandong redneck. His accent was the most difficult of all the interviewees to understand. Unlike the other MBs, Ma Shan is quite a bit older than the rest. On the day he arrived he was wearing a scarf, and he was tall and thin. It was hard to tell he was an MB at all. He seemed very cold and distant, but as soon as he started talking he quickly revealed his warmhearted northern temperament.

Ma Shan hails from the Shijia Village in Shandong. When he was 28 or 29, quite by accident, in a public place he discovered that there was such a thing as homosexuality, and began to explore his own sexual orientation. At that time, Ma had already been forced to get married through a matchmaker and had a child. After confirming his sexual orientation, Ma left his family and came to Shanghai to look for work. At the little park near Nanjing Road and at the People's Square, through introductions by other MBs, Ma Shan himself became an MB.

Because of the difficulty of finding clients, Ma Shan feels like it is becoming more and more difficult to be an MB. Ma Shan doesn't go to the discotheques or saunas. As

for the clubs, Ma Shan also seems to reject them outright. This is because to the 28 year old Ma Shan, the clubs are paradises for the younger people. As for himself, Ma Shan feels he is no longer suited to those places.

Ma Shan: in the first place at the clubs, in the clubs, I feel, the clubs have all kinds of things going on... in the clubs they like to do blow jobs; most of them are about 24 years old. ... Uh, in the clubs, if you stay there until you are say thirty years old, of course there are some who like you, but still you'll feel a little depressed... Uh, because compared to the competition, well... those guys are like 18, and you are 28, or even over 30, so when you sit together with them, you'll start to develop some depression inside.

Ma Shan feels like being an MB now is no longer as easy as it was to make money, and sometimes he doesn't even make enough to make his ends meet. But as to changing jobs, Ma Shan is also completely unwilling to do so. He thinks that given his abilities, it will be impossible to find some other work. And on the other had, even if he found other work, he would still be drawn back to this lifestyle.

Ma Shan: so even if you find a job, you could still do this and work at a job, you'd be thinking about how you get clients while you were working at your job... (Or, you'd be thinking about this while you were supposed to be working)

Ma Shan's parents have already both passed away. But still Ma Shan is under a lot of family pressure back home to get married. But for Ma Shan, marriage for him can no longer be the mindless exercise it was before.

Ma Shan: I'll think about it, there are those who don't about life in the big city and the great big world out there beyond the countryside, and so they keep it all inside to themselves, and suffer, but you, to put it bluntly, lets say you have this situation, and you are this kind of person, but you have no idea that there is this kind of world out there, so you can still be with a woman without even thinking much about it at all, but if you know about this world, then you couldn't sleep with

her at night.

Ma Shan hopes he can find a lesbian, and have a fake marriage, just to give his relatives what they want. Today's Ma Shan is no longer all that innocent, so he can even imagine having a fake marriage. But as far as Ma Shan's poor understanding of personal healthcare and protection, it is really quite shocking. Because Ma Shan said, if a client accidentally has seminal emission inside his body, all that is needed is to take some traditional Chinese pills and drink a little extra water and everything will be fine.

Ma Shan's main dream for now is to simply make more money. Ma Shan believes that as long as you have more money than all of life's problems can be manageable. Ma Shan thinks that the main reason for being an MB is because of the poor economy. If you have money you'd never want to be an MB.

Ma Shan: it's because right now I need the money, who doesn't need things, if you have a house, a car, a living, then that would do this? Nobody would do this.

But later Ma Shan said that he had known some people who had successfully left this line of work. But they had all been heterosexuals. Among homosexuals, he had never met one who stopped being an MB.

Ma Shan: Uh, even assuming that a homosexual wanted to leave, even if, even if, even if it was that way, and he really tried hard, a homosexual would still find it very difficult to leave.

Brief summation: While the strong accent of Ma Shan's speech is very difficult to understand, still you can get a sense of how the older MBs feel about themselves and their line of work. Even though Ma Shan has been married, and his folks have both passed away, nevertheless the strong pressures he feels from the rural relatives to get remarried continues to maintain a strong hold over him. And even finances are strangling him on their golden guillotine. Besides marriage, the case of Ma Shan also provides evidence for the relationship of the MB to normal work and sexual orientation. The inability to force themselves to return to regular work may be a bad habit for all MBs, but because of their sexual orientation, it is a little bit easier to engage in this form of work, and surely that

influences their decision. But no matter the reason, for anyone to have to sacrifice themselves because of external environmental conditions, merits our serious critical consideration.

VIII. The Pride of Anhui Bear – Wang Xiaolong (little dragon, same first name as Bruce Lee)

Personal introduction

Xiao Long is one of those fat boys who always wanted to be a girl when they were growing up. Unlike the MBs with poor self-esteem, his speech is full of pride. But one feels he is not quite being so honest, when he treats sex work as if it were both easy and affording a high income. But his rates are quite higher than others. During the discussions, he continually remarked how Shanghai's MB market was a really easy one, but that as the internet flourished and clubs grew, this line of work has become much more difficult.

Xiaolong is 30 years old now, and hails from Anhui. His family plant bamboo. He came to Shanghai at 17, and started working as an MB at 19. When he was growing up he knew he liked other boys, but because of the conservatism of the countryside, he never told anyone else, so it was not until he came to Shanghai and learned that you could make money from having sex with other men that he first got started. Xiaolong started in the MB field at the very beginning of its development, so he has witnessed the explosive growth of the MBs in Shanghai.

Xialong's rates are very different from the other interviewees, and he said that if he didn't like a prospective client or felt lazy, he wouldn't work. For his services, just for hugging and kissing his rates start from 300 RMB yuan and up. For intercourse, he charges upwards of 500 RMB Yuan. These rates are several times higher than most MBs.

Xiaolong: Now I don't even go out looking for customers... I just rely on luck. I don't even surf the net like others... or try to pick up customers like that... I don't visit the saunas either. I just like to visit public places such as the People's Square or bars and have a look... and if I like you... then we'll discuss how much money and so on. I never go searching online. I

feel like those online are always cheating people like that.

Xiaolong said he is a landlord now, so the supplemental income from sex work is no longer an essential. While we have no way of verifying whether Xiaolong's actual rates are the same as he claimed, nevertheless from his comments we can see the hold over the MBs that money singularly enjoys as their main reason for being an MB.

Xiaolong: I feel like they are seduced by the money. That's it. Like the real purpose of life is just about the money. If you have money you can buy good things. Eat well. Live in a fancy house

Xiaolong: Yeah. That's how things are now. If you have more money, then people look up to you. But if you are poor, it's not like it used to be.

Xiaolong doesn't make friends with other gays, because he only feels comfortable with normal people. At the onset of the interview, when asked about whether his parents knew, he revealed a very anxious side.

Writer: so does your family know what you do?

Xiaolong: no, none of them, if they knew they definitely could not accept it.

But actually his ideas on the subject are very confused, because a little later when asked about the matter through a similar question, he provided quite a different response.

Writer: So are you afraid that your family will learn?

Xiaolong: I am not afraid. If they find out, they find out.

Writer: Your dad wouldn't go ballistic?

Xiaolong: That's not something one can foresee with certainty. (Or, I wouldn't be there to witness it anyway)

Xiaolong says he has had girlfriends before, and has had sex with girls. Xiaolong also felt quite certain that because of the undeveloped state of communications in the countryside, and pressure from parents, that the vast majority of Chinese homosexuals had had sexual intercourse with girls.

Xiaolong awakes every day at noontime, and strolls along the People's Square or the Bund. When asked about his plans for the future, his remarks were like those of many

other MBs, as Xiaolong has a sense of reticence about what the future has in store for him.

Xiaolong: I feel like coming out, well... what use is money... money is about the external things. But you can't live without it. I feel like if you have enough money to make your ends meet, then its okay... I haven't thought about any long term plans or consequences. Just take it day by day. Tomorrow is another day.

Brief summation: After interviewing several MBs, Xiaolong's was the least persuasive as to its authenticity and credibility. Just looking at Xiaolong's outward appearance it is hard to believe he could charge the rates he claimed. Also, many of the things he said were spoken in a very proud tone. For example when he talked about how easy it had been to earn money in Shanghai, and how simple it was to be an MB, etcetera. But, perhaps these exaggerations form a part of his self-protective barrier. While his comments did not mesh with what the researcher's information about MBs showed, but the irresistible appeal of money as a factor was the same. Once again this shows the close relationship between the desire for money and being an MB. Again this case provides support for the central hypotheses of this study.

IX. The Gigolo from Shaanxi- Wang Xuan

Character portrait

Wang Xuan is a charming playboy. He has a boyfriend (BF), and so besides relying on his BF for financial support, he also works in the sex trade to make money. From his youth he was like a girl, liked to dress up pretty, and liked sewing. Wang Xuan had had a girlfriend in the countryside, and had had sexual intercourse with her (several) many times. After coming to Shanghai, it was only after becoming an MB that he realized he liked boys more. As far as the social inequities, Wang Xuan has his own ideas about thing. From Wang Xuan's testimony, the writer heard many things that other MBs had only heard about other MBs secrets.

Wang Xuan was born in Shaanxi, and is 22 years old. His parents are farmers.

Through financial assistance from his boyfriend, he had visited Europe before. He had always dreamed of going abroad to work. Because he thinks it will surely be easier to earn more money overseas.

In the beginning Wang Xuan treated male to male sex relations as just for fun. It was until he went to Guangdong that he learned from friends that you could make money doing it. The first time he did it for money was in a bar, and he felt so depressed afterwards that he cried, as he could not believe he had become such a person. But that first time he earned 800 RMB Yuan, which was equivalent to most workers monthly income, so he found the temptation too hard to refuse.

Wang Xuan: At that time I went to Guangzhou, it was the first time in my life, the first I'd made money, that was a ... that was the first time, at that time, Oh my, my heart was very frustrated, how could I make money that way, what kind of person had I become, and I just started crying

But he wasn't earning money to support himself, because for all his basic necessities, he had support from his boyfriend. His own income was solely devoted to purchasing cosmetics or personal expenses. What's really odd is that, the boyfriend was well aware of this, but did nothing to stop him. When life was short of money, the boyfriend would become dependent on his prostitution

Wang Xuan: Because right now I have a boyfriend, so sometimes, well he pays the rent, and everything else, so if I go out and earn some income, then maybe I'll buy myself some clothes, or buy some cosmetics, for myself!

Wang Xuan cross-dresses as a female to attract clients because right now it is more difficult to earn money from homosexual clients. The heterosexual market is larger. The contradiction comes from the fact that even though he himself does not like this kind of Wang Xuan, nevertheless he can't get himself to leave this lifestyle.

Wang Xuan: But as for normal (heterosexual) there are just too many, they want to party all night long, one after another, one after another, as many as there are trees in the forest!

Wang Xuan: Of course I do not appreciate the stares of strangers on

the street, if I am walking on the street, and I feel like they may be looking at me, it should be like, like I am the same as them.

Wang Xuan: it is quite hard on my heart, after we finish, I will tell myself, that's it, oh my, I can't earn this money anymore, I'll say, even if others earn several million Yuan RMB, or tens of millions, I'll be jealous, but this kind of work, is really not suited to me, my heart feels very sad, every night as I walk back home, my heart is depressed, that kind of feeling is like... one's heart is... like someone took a knife and cut some of your heart out, and then you just cry

Wang Xuan: feelings are just feelings; he is up in the heavens, while you have to face reality back on earth

As for marriage, Wang Xuan also does not know what he can do. This is because once by happenstance, his family learned of Wang Xuan's line of work. So his parents told him, if he does not get married, he is not welcome to come back home. Wang Xuan loves children, so he said, even though he loves kids, now is not the right time for him to marry, but perhaps in the future it will be. As it happens, this is the same tragedy which seems to affect all of China's homosexual men.

As for the future, Wang Xuan said that nobody can say for certain what will happen. But he feels like he walked down the wrong path, a path from which he feels he cannot escape.

Wang Xuan: I feel like in our lives, no one can say for certain about how tomorrow will be, no one knows what tomorrow will bring.

Wang Xuan: I just feel like this society is very cruel, very realistic (mate-realistic, materialistic)

This society which believes in laughing at poverty but not at prostitution has caused Wang Xuan to lose his sense of self worth. As for emotions, he looks upon them very lightly and unimportantly. Even though he has a boyfriend who loves him, but if asked whether he would allow others to support him too, he said he was willing. This kind of set of values is quite an eye-opener.

Wang Xuan: I've told my boyfriend, that if I find a really wealthy one, its possible, you know that I engage in the business, if he's good to me, surely I would be willing to be his, even though we've been together many years now, and I'll treat as one of family, we'll still remain very good friends, but if I can really find a wealthy person, I would definitely break up with my boyfriend.

Brief summation: Wang Xuan's cavalier playboy attitude makes it difficult to say whether MBs actually have any real feelings at all. Even though Wang Xuan does not have any economic pressures at all right now, but still money is what he is seeking after in life. Wang Xuan has been arrested by the police before, but because the police could not produce any evidence against him, they had to drop the charges. During the interview, Wang Xuan made many criticisms and suggestions regarding the Chinese government. These prove that even though he is an MB, from Wang Xuan's story, one can see that even the MBs can have genuine concern for their society and real attachment to their country.

X. Handsome Club Owner, Manager Wu

Character portrait

When I first met Manager Wu I felt like he had the face of a superstar. It was already halfway through the interview before I began to realize just how much he looked like Tony Leung the star of Lust. Manager Wu dressed very stylishly, giving an impression of affability. But the gaze from his eyes carried the trustful depression of Tony Leung's character. Throughout the interview, his cell phone never stopped ringing, because there was an endless procession of people calling to ask his rates and make an appointment. It was impossible not to admire Manager Wu's business sense and style.

This very youthful Manager Wu hailed from a small rural village in northern Jiangsu. While living in the countryside he had had one girlfriend, but when his contract with a textile factory expired, he came to Shanghai to make more money. Manager Wu had been

an MB for four or five years now. Now Manager Wu is the manager of a male club in Shanghai. He has seven or eight youth working for him.

When Manager Wu first got started he thought that MBs serviced female clients. At that time, he thought, as long as you can make money, anything would be fine.

Manager Wu: At that time I was rather... I thought... at the time I thought maybe it's for women, so when I chose, I said it's fine if the clients are women, so it's worth a try to see if I can make some money.

Manager Wu: Whether I liked men or women, at the time I couldn't say for sure, at the time either way was fine, since, well since I just wanted to make some money.

Manager Wu's interview took place in the presence of a friend from his hometown. His friend only realized that he an MB the day before the interview. But his friend could commiserate with his circumstance, because he felt like he really had no other choice.

Good friend: Uhh, he, when my old buddy first got to Shanghai, he didn't have any education. Life was very... very hard, with no means of support.

From his days as an MB Manager Wu has become an expert in the club culture. Since he made a little money, he thought being a boss would have a lot more dignity than being an MB. So he recruited some young followers, and started his own club.

Manager Wu: Ah, ah, it's just that I have been a little bit luckier than most, since I was able to make a little money, and after earning some, I thought this work would provide a lot more self-respect than that.

But to manager Wu's way of thinking, being an MB is a professional career, so it is no big deal to let others know about it. But as for his parents, know matter what he would not let them know what it is he does for a living.

Manager Wu: it's no big deal, I am not afraid of him (meaning the good friend attending the interview together) knowing, there's nothing wrong with this line of work, initially I did not want to let him know, but ah... what the heck, since he already

knows, so there's nothing to be afraid of, I am what I am and this is my job.

As to marriage, Manager Wu is opposed to it. But even with respect to true love among homosexuals, Manager Wu does not believe it exists either. As for emotions involving an MB, he feels they cannot last for very long either.

Manager Wu: they all like fresh (meat), something to stimulate and excite them, love for most homosexuals is not like the love between a man and a woman for most, and they just can't handle that.

Although Manager Wu had made a lot of money by now, but Manager Wu said that he would only continue this year and then quit. In fact he can't really stand how the outside world looks upon him. Or the pressure he feels from his friends.

Manager Wu: its not fear, it's just that I feel others will, other people will look down upon me.

Good friend: on the one hand I urge him not to continue, and on the other hand he is not really willing to do it himself, so he doesn't want to keep doing it.

So on the one hand Manager Wu knows that the MB path cannot be a long-term endeavor. People need to have a purpose and direction, something they can do for a long time, so they can give their parents some pride in them. This attitude, as expressed by Manager Wu, was the first time in an interview that someone had been able to express this concept and tries to achieve it.

Manager Wu: take yourself for example, you are, are, when cornered, when it gets down to the crutches, you have to find your purpose, you can't continue just to hang around, or when you have no work to do, you will be very nervous for sure.

Brief summation: According to information provided the author by the Happy Friendship Leyi organization, not long after the interview the club's ownership was transferred by Manager Wu to one of his younger followers. This was a result of the pressure of his

friends, or perhaps it represents a genuine decision on his own to do what he said during the interview as an integral part of his plan for life, but we won't know for sure either way. But from the discussions with Manager Wu and his friends, the author learned a lot of precious information about clubs. For example about the situation for the MB trade. The author is certain that the information provided was truly very valuable and accurate.

XI. The doctor from Xi'an, Zhang Lu

Personal introduction

Zhang Lu is very tall. And he is very skinny. When the interview first began he seemed a little ill at ease. But as he talked more about his feelings and hurts, Zhang Lu began to open up and speak unrestrainedly. Zhang Lu had been an MB for many years now. Currently he was living with a heterosexual roommate, but this heterosexual man sometimes would have sex with a woman who lives nearby. That kind of sexual relationship can only be described as wild.

Originally a clinical medical student, Zhang Lu, had dropped out of medical school, and started working as a bellhop in a hotel in Xi'an. In 2003, he left for Shanghai to get rich in order to see the greater world. At the time he was only 22. As soon as he got off the train a stranger took him back to his hotel, and somewhat by mistake he had become an MB.

When Zhang Lu got started he took on clients at the saunas. According to what he said, four or five years ago it was a piece of cake to find clients in Shanghai. Every day in the saunas there would be dozens of young MBs. On an average day he could earn 1 to 2,000 Yuan RMB.

Zhang Lu: At the time it was really easy, there were no clubs then, no massage spas, etcetera.

Zhang Lu: At that time in 2004, Shanghai did not have any such places.

Zhang Lu is now one of the MBs with a high income. But because it is not easy to find clients, Zhang Lu has designed his own website, and relies on multimedia promotion, so his income has never declined.

From the discussions with Zhang Lu, you can see that besides the ease of making money from selling their bodies as MBs, there is also a lot of blame to squarely place on the shoulders of government and the society.

Zhang Lu: Because at that time to graduate from college you had to spend a lot of money, in our home village nobody learned anything in school, but if you worked hard and learned a lot, when you came back home you would still only have 700 or 800 Yuan a month, or 5-600 Yuan per month to look forward to for living on, and my family had debts to pay off, and I never got along well with my family anyway, so if you don't take this route, how could you possibly ever pay off your debts?

Nobody really chooses or wants to be an MB, and it seems Zhang Lu is no exception. For Zhang Lu, everything has been determined by a process of fate. There was nothing he could do to control things or choose otherwise.

Zhang Lu: no, no it's not like I like this, as you well know one person is one life, to tell it like it is

Zhang Lu: only heaven can determine how your life will be and what you will do and how you will live, its all destiny, the truth be told

Currently Zhang Lu resides with a heterosexual hair stylist. As for his emotional life, Zhang Lu has an attitude that says it doesn't matter he has real love or not. For him, he feels like it's just not realistic for two men to be together. But, when talking about marriage, he feels like this is something he just cannot avoid. He has to fulfill the desires of his parents and society's norms.

Zhang Lu: I'll get married; this is something that someone just has to do

Zhang Lu: because in the countryside, we all have to have some face, among your classmates and among your family, if you don't marry you'll worry what people will think, and their opinions, and ideas, and attitudes, so you think about those things you know

Zhang Lu feels like his temperament is a very volatile one. To customers he does not like, he willingly refuses them, and doesn't worry about how they will feel about him. In his worldview, all people are equal, so there is no reason to suffer other people's temperament for the sake of a few hundred Yuan. He feels like this trade has wearied his heart. But he doesn't feel like he could do something else. For now at least he thinks that you simply have to have money. As long as you have money, the he can do whatever he wishes. As far as he is concerned this trade is only a means of fulfilling desires.

Zhang Lu: As I just explained where there is demand there will be supply, so why is it that you have to serve them... so I say if you did not have me to service you tonight then who would service you, I am bored here with nothing to do, and have nothing better to do than to satisfy your sexual desires, so now I'll answer your question, some people are just strange, why do you want to do this kind of work, etc otherwise, if not for me, tonight who would come service you?

Zhang Lu is very smart in so many respects. But as for emotions, it seems he is very infantile in his purity. He has been living with a hair stylist for a long time, and he is certainly aware that the stylist often has sexual encounters with a local woman. With his lips he claims to not care at all, that he doesn't love the guy at all. But privately he says he can't leave the guy. And he even uses his earnings to support the guy. This kind of relationship seems very perplexing.

Brief summation: According to the Happy Friendship Leyi organization counselor, Zhang Lu really is brilliant in business as an MB. Even during these times when the economy is not doing well, Zhang Lu still has many ways to make a good living. But the unfortunate thing is that, according to the Happy Friendship Leyi organization, Zhang Lu is a drug addict. And it is precisely because of his drug use, that Zhang Lu's living expenses are much higher than the average MB. This may explain why it is that even though Zhang Lu earns a lot, but he still cannot manage to quit. It seems that drug use is actually quite common among the MBs as something normal. Between the interviews, Zhang Lu mentioned uppers like methamphetamines, but during the interview he said he

had already long since stopped using drugs.

XII. The foot-reflexologist from Kunshan, Xiao Zhang (little Zhang)

Character portrait

Xiao Zhang has a slight build and stature. He feels his skin is not clear, and when Xiao Zhang goes out he likes to wear some foundation, so most of his income is spent on dressing and making himself up. Rather than saying that the vicissitudes of life have written themselves in the creases of his face, it might be more honest to say that these are the material prices he has paid in his quest for money.

Perhaps it's because the 32 year old Xiao Zhang is short and thin, that at first glance he seems to be much younger than his age, but from his face one can see that he has really been through a lot. Because he does not have much education, and from childhood he was rebellious and liked to backtalk his parents, he got his first job in a foot massage spa. But he could never manage to make a good living from it. After having moved through a series of towns, he finally arrived in Shanghai. At first, Xiao Zhang's life was not very easy, and as soon as his parents knew that their precious child was suffering they sent him 200 Yuan and urged him to immediately come back home.

Xiao Zhang like most MBs had had a girlfriend back home in the countryside. So when he talked about marriage, even though he is gay, he still feels like he should get married. But, having already gone through society's baptism by fire, he has certain expectations for his future spouse.

Xiao Zhang: My desire for women is very little by now... if you are talking about emotional love... for me now... its not a big deal for me... to have a good relationship with the woman... because I want the bread and the love.. If for example I could not progress in a relationship with a man. But could progress with a woman... then at least to some extent emotionally... I would hope that I could find an exceptional woman... one whose mindset was pure... one who was not too power hungry or who overemphasized money and material things. One who got along well with

others and understood peoples well, that kind... but the way the society has become now, it seems impossible.

It wasn't long after his arrival in Shanghai that Xiao Zhang became an MB. As to why so many people had chosen to the MB line of work, Xiao Zhang had his own theory.

Xiao Zhang: I think its fear that work will be wearisome... so there are many jobs they're unwilling to do... and there is an important factor in that many people's family's situation is not so good.. For those from good families there is probably not many who would be willing to do this... so the basic requirement is probably that your family life is not so good... and also that you are unwilling to do work which is very dirty or laborious...

Xiao Zhang: Uh-huh, because nationwide now... there is an oversupply of labor... there are just too many of us Chinese... salaries used to be much higher... but now even if salaries are hundreds of Yuan lower there are still people willing to do it.. Because of the drop in wage rates so salaries are...

Xiao Zhang is currently employed in a club, so making money is the main focus of his life and work. Even if he doesn't like a customer, he will put up with it just to make the money. While it is not easy finding clients now, but because Xiao Zhang is an experienced foot massage reflexologist, he feels he can still make a modest living now.

Writer: so assume that you are now in a club... can you select which clients you want?

Xiao Zhang: right now I am doing it for the money... so when I think I want to see the money dangling in front of my eyes.. .

Even though Xiao Zhang feels like he cannot get along well with his parents, still he is not willing to let his parents know what he does for a living. All he knows that in this society there are many social classes. If you have no money it doesn't matter which class you belong to, the others will look down upon you. In the clubs he has seen many, many examples of heterosexuals, who though not homosexuals, in order to make money, are willing to sell their bodies in the trade.

Xiao Zhang: as for our life in this... at least as far as I feel... while some

people think everyone is equal... but as far as I feel about my life in this... the lifestyle of this social class, the lifestyle of those in my same social class. Even good men... even if they aren't homosexuals. For the money. They could still accept doing this...

Brief summation: Xiao Zhang is a very honest person. As far as his comments that he was rebellious go, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that because he was very straightforward, he could often rub others the wrong way. But exactly because he is so honest, he can let others really understand the deeply magical attraction that money holds over people. Through Xiao Zhang's case, one can experience just how money in this society serves as a determinant of social class. And can thus understand just how many ordinary people, regardless of whether they are homosexuals, struggle to improve their social class status.

XIII. A "foreigner" from Shaanxi, Tony

Personal portrait

Tony is not very tall, but he speaks very good English. He has a kind of inexplicable pride. Perhaps it comes from the fact that he only services foreign clients, so Tony seems to look down a little on domestic MBs. In his mind, he feels that foreign clients are superior, and more cultured. They don't mind paying. And they are gentle in bed. But these are really just ways in which he tries to protect himself.

Tony is from Shaanxi, from a small rural village. His family circumstances were very poor, so he never had any chance to gain an education. So he feels like his educational level is quite low, and that he could not find any good jobs, so he couldn't earn much money.

Tony: Our family income was really low... because for our family in that village well... its not like those places you might have visited before... because we lived very remotely... in very remote rural village on the outskirts of Shaanxi. It was very small.

Precisely for these reasons, it was not easy for him to have made it to Shanghai, so naturally he valued money very highly. And he never carried any cash on his person, as

soon as he made any money he put into his savings.

Tony: Actually it really is hard to find a job... especially if you are from the countryside and you don't have any education to speak of...

Tony: So if I have any money I put into my savings... I never carry any cash on my body...

From his first arrival in Shanghai, Tony exclusively took on foreign clients, for him, foreign clients have status and standing, so they also pay higher than others. Of course another reason is that, foreign clients tend to stay in the nicer hotels, in places with good security, so it's not likely that Johns (clients) will get into arguments with the MB.

Actually though this is just one of the methods by which Tony tries to protect himself.

Tony: I have never done Chinese customers...

Tony: I... I've never been afraid... I was never afraid of... because the clients that I serve... if you take Chinese... you use their language... so its easy to communicate... there's no problem with that... but the level of the Chinese clients... sometimes their level is just that way... even if they have some emotional need.. So they need this... its impossible... but foreigners... when they first get to China... they don't dare to misbehave in China... because they have status and standing... so since they have come to China they don't dare to make waves.

It seems that for Tony, he is not looking for money from foreigners. He does not feel like this is a sexual transaction, rather he thinks this is a kind of foreign aid from richer countries to poorer ones who need support, that's all. This is merely the means by which he seeks such support.

Tony: that's just the way it is... its not that I am saying you have to pay so much after we have had sex... it's just that I need some of your help.

Perhaps it's because of these misdirected values that Tony does not have any Chinese friends. Tony also wanted to avoid the topic altogether when discussing marriage. Unlike the majority of MB who cave in to family pressures to get married, he feels like money is the cornerstone for supporting a family, and he doesn't have enough money just yet, certainly not enough to support a family. And besides, as a natural homosexual, he

doesn't want to hurt someone else.

Tony: My family has tried to pressure me... but it's no use... I don't have a stable job... how can one survive... how to support a family? If I am going to have to go and hurt an innocent girl... wouldn't it be better just to remain single instead.

Tony: there's pressure... but I have an elder brother. But here in China. For China... my elder brother cannot substitute for me... but my parents think it would be best to get married...

Feeling that he cannot earn enough money, but also refusing to give up the lifestyle, Tony thinks it's impossible for him to go back and get a regular job. Endeavoring to enjoy the good life he wishes for, he won't turn back on his desire. When asked how long he will continue to be an MB, he said it looks like he'll continue doing it until he can no longer walk on his own!

Brief summation: Tony's interview revealed the desire that many Chinese MBs have for the capitalist world. This indirectly reveals just how their self-image and personal values are distorted by their financial values. From the interactions between Tony and many foreign clients, including drinking urine, role playing and SM, etcetera, one can see the influence of money on a person. How someone's personality, character and values, can be so affected by the distorting effects of such relationships. It is really shocking!

XIV. The diva (man of the house) from Kunshan, Mr. Gu

Character portrait

Mr. Gu was wearing dark colored blue jeans when he arrived on the day of his interview, and a corduroy jacket. He looked very thin, but quite stylish. He looked a lot like a university student. The first time I saw Mr. Gu was at a club opening, he was wearing a pair of shorts that could not have been any shorter, and as the rhythm of the music accelerated, he moved his body in tune to the pace, allowing the customers nearby, to feel him out.

Hailing from Jiangsu, Mr. Gu's family runs their own factory. In economic terms

they are self-sufficient. From his youth he has led a pretty good life. He is well loved by his family.

Mr. Gu is a student at the East China University of Technology where he studies education. Feeling he has always been coddled by his parents, Mr. Gu thinks he is already old and mature, and he should not still be dependent on his parents, so he has been looking for a way to be independent.

While he was back home as a student, Mr. Gu had a girlfriend. His girlfriend even had an abortion for him. After coming to Shanghai, at first Mr. Gu thought that the clubs were exclusively for meeting female clients. But to make money, and become independent, so his parents would not have to support him anymore, he was willing to do anything.

Mr. Gu: I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want them to worry about me anymore, uh, or such, I just want to be independent, even though I know this is not good, but, but still I told them I, I, I want to be independent.

Mr. Gu: at that time I was only thinking that, I wanted to be independent, I want to be independent, I want to earn my own money, I want to buy a lot of things by myself, I don't want to rely on my parents, because if they have to provide me money every month its also not easy for them... because that's life, my own life, so I've been through a little, maybe that's for the good.

Because of his appearance and body type, Mr. Gu is currently the hottest commodity in the club. This is especially true because he doesn't look bad and he doesn't refuse clients. For him, this is just another form of business. He will consider the club's interest, treating the sex as just another business transaction. But accepting clients is always a matter of his choosing, and not a result of coercion from the club.

Mr. Gu: if you don't like them, you still have to do it. You have to. Sometimes. Maybe they'll prefer your friend instead... some of them really are quite handsome. But some don't know how to give a massage. Or how to make small talks with the clients... So some clients will not be happy... They will ask to stop. But I will still pay. Because if you don't want this one.

You can ask for another. Sometimes if they are in a good mood, they will agree to a change... or if in they are in a bad mood, they'll just insist they don't want another either. So even if they pay, they won't be coming back again.. .

For him, he doesn't feel like its any big deal to be an MB, just another way to make money is all. So nobody can coerce him, its all according to his own will.

Mr. Gu: ... and then I, well I think that this line of work, there's nothing, I make a living from my own abilities, its not like I went and stole from someone, or robbed them.

Mr. Gu: I say that I too am a person; I say I am also a human being, so even though I do this with you, but I have not sold myself to you.

While Mr. Gu makes a high income now, he also spends it quickly too. Though he is satisfied with his life, but he is worried that one day his parents will learn what he does to make a living. As far as marriage goes, even though he has discovered that he is a homosexual, but Mr. Gu still feels he has to get married. Because only by being married, he can give his parents a face.

Mr. Gu: To tell the truth of course I am afraid, indeed very much afraid.

Mr. Gu: I will marry, for my parent's sake, I will get married.

Brief summation: Mr. Gu's story reveals the deep-seated feelings of many of China's highly educated MBs. Many MBs who come from very well off family backgrounds, out of their desire for independence, and their unwillingness to continue to rely on their aging parents for financial support, sell their own bodies. Although it sounds unbelievable, it really happens. In a society with such a very rapidly developing economy, one's money has seemingly become the sole determinant of their human worth. The dignity of the body is less than the currency of money. Mr. Gu in order to achieve economic independence, selling his own body, is engaged in what he considers to be true filial piety. So even if during the transactions, he should contract gonorrhoea or any other venereal diseases, and have substantial medical expenses for treatment. Hurting his own health, doesn't make Mr. Gu think otherwise even for a second. He thinks that giving his parents good things,

and using good things, is the best way to love and respect his parents. Such an attitude would seem to actually be the anathema of truly loving one's own parents though.

XV. The “huge” sister from Shandong, Xiao Yun

Character portrait

As soon as Xiao Yun entered the room, the writer was shocked. He was wearing a red coat and a peach red skirt. Looking just like a country girl. But for his large build and rusty voice, it would have been impossible to believe he was a man. Xiao Yun had wanted to be a country girl from Shandong for a long time now. Everything has to begin with the day he castrated himself...

When Xiao Yun is working, he uses the name Xiao Qing. The name comes from the traditional Chinese story about the maidservant to the White Sister Goddess. Xiao Yun feels like he has the same fate as the long-suffering Xiao Qing in the White Snake Legend, with a difficult life. It is as though he cannot follow along the path of the White Sister, and cannot find her footprints, and cannot find his own path in love.

Xiao Yun, 23 years old, comes from a very large extended family in Shandong. While studying in junior high he discovered his own sexual orientation, but due to the conservatism prevalent in the countryside, he never dared to share this with anyone.

Xiao Yun: because our hometown is a very poor village, very backward...

Xiao Yun: if you are not a boy you cannot express your love for another on your own initiative? And if you are a boy how could you go and like another boy?

As computers became more widespread, Xiao Yun slowly began to learn more about the phenomena of male-male love. Xiao Yun started working as a regular laborer in his hometown in Qingdao. But over time he more and more desired to be a girl, so he began searching in the library and doing his own research, until one day he finally decided, to castrate himself.

Xiao Yun: well I just cut out one side of my testicles.

Xiao Yun: Because, cause, because I had studied a lot of materials, and read many books...

Xiao Yun: which said if you remove the testicles, uh... your hormones will be reduced

The unfortunate thing is, due to Xiao Yun's poor understanding of human physiology, and without the assistance of others, that only one testicle was castrated. As the blood continued to bleed without stopping, finally his family members discovered him and sent him to the hospital. But this also meant that his family began to discover his sexual orientation.

His family could not forgive this action and soon kicked Xiao Yun out of the family home. Finding himself without financial support, Xiao Yun started working as an MB. Suicidal ideations constantly affected Xiao Yun.

Xiao Yun: everyone in the family... felt devastated. This is just to say, uh, I felt... I just felt like walking alone outside, and then, oftentimes I really just wanted to end thing...

Even now when talking about his family Xiao Yun only has very deep regrets. Because of the lack of understanding from his relatives, and in their very conservative social milieu, Xiao Yun's parents still feel a lot of social pressure. To this day his parents have been unable to forgive Xiao Yun. Every time, when Xiao Yun calls home, his parents will coldheartedly hang up the phone.

Xiao Yun: and my... my uncles, my... my grandpa, and uncles, they... they all say... they don't want me either. And they say...I'm no longer part of the family. They have cut me off.

Nowadays Xiao Yun can only dress up as a female when servicing customers. Because his external appearance remains similar to that of many men, often times Xiao Yun will be the target of contemptuous laughs or severe verbal abuse. Actually Xiao Yun profoundly regrets it all. But for such matters there is only one opportunity in life, and it is impossible to go back and undo.

Xiao Yun: As I walk, they turn their heads around, and say, Look! A man is not like a man, a woman is not like a woman. What a disgrace, oh heavens! Have you ever seen such a grown man dressing as a woman, a woman... what are you doing as a woman! What the...

Xiao Yun: I really regret it... because I cannot accept my current body either.

If Xiao Yun could choose, he would not be an MB either. When Xiao Yun first arrived in Shanghai he tried to do some other jobs. At first Xiao Yun tried to work as a busboy/janitor in a bar, but the pay was really not very high. When he first started Xiao Yun was almost raped in a park. Not long after Xiao Yun started working as a janitor in a club, but the monthly pay of only 800 yuan RMB was too low considering Xiao Yun's dreams of saving enough money for a sex change operation, which is too far away from his objective. Soon after through the internet Xiao Yun learned that he could sell his body as a product.

Xiao Yun: Yeah, I cross-dressed; uh... or... most of us are like me. Like they... they're like me, so they work... for the money.

The naïve Xiao Yun has often bore the brunt of client's violent tempers or has been cheated. Many clients only realize midway through that Xiao Yun is neither a man nor a woman, so they want to continue for free or they use it to threaten him. So it is actually the real prostitutes who work with him on the streets that often support and encourage him.

For Xiao Yun now, whether it's a public park or on the street, anywhere is fine to pick up a customer. Even for a small pittance in remuneration, he will suffer and bear many indignities. To become a woman has become his biggest desire.

Xiao Yun: I force myself to do it, force myself to go do it.

Xiao Yun: finish the surgery! To complete the surgery means I to make more money, so if I could get the operations completed in about two years, then live as a girl, or go to the bars as a transgendered person, and earn a living, and in between to go study and learn some skills.

Brief summation: Xiao Yun makes for a very sympathetic MB. During the interviews, he often said that he is more pitiful than real women, and cannot compare to real men either. But for the sake of his sexual orientation, he is willing to bear the insults, until he can finally accomplish his objective of a sex change. For Xiao Yun it is now impossible to work in just any old job, he mentioned that once he was working in a factory, and the shift

manager was really willing to help him out, but his coworkers were just not willing. So Xiao Yun had no choice, but to return to the world's oldest profession and prostitute himself. In the interviews, Xiao Yun expressed the fact that he was in poor health, and that he had a very large hemorrhoid. But for the sake of survival, to make money, he had no choice but to grin and bear the pain, and continue to sell his body in exchange for all he needed to live.

The Happy Friendship Leyi organization Zheng Huang

Zheng Huang comes from Guangdong, and is a homosexual himself. When he learned that so many homosexuals and even heterosexuals in Shanghai were selling their own bodies for money, he inserted himself into their highly volatile environment. In order to improve concern for Shanghai's sex worker's health, and reduce the risk of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases among sex workers, Mr. Zheng Huang founded the Happy Friendship Leyi organization in November 2004.

Shanghai Happy Friendship Leyi is a nonpolitical, not for profit civil society organization, and at present remains the only such organization in China focused on serving male sex workers. Their mission is to improve the health status and quality of life of China's sex workers. Through cooperation with support from people from many fields, they provide sex workers with health education and related services.

Shanghai Happy Friendship Leyi organization has six focal points. Their telephone hotline, outreach information booths, sex worker vocational safety training, sex customer safety knowledge promotion, sex worker medical support and sex worker legal assistance.

Mr. Zheng Huang explained that his initial motivation for working with the MSM subculture was that even among homosexuals there were many who looked down upon these male to male sex workers, so they wanted to help these underdogs and they started by focusing on those with AIDS. For the time being, the AIDS prevention agenda provides the primary means for motivating external sources of support for the organization's operations. In Mr. Zheng Huang's opinion, this is a matter worthy of the most serious public attention.

Zheng Huang: originally we just focused on helping some MSM organizations... but through our services for them... we

learned that there was no organized... there were few... or there wasn't any... not even one organization solely dedicated to helping them... organize... so we decided to focus here.. For example the other MSM organization... has a lot of outside help... there are many nationwide organizations for... for AIDS prevention... many people contributed. . .

From Mr. Zheng Huang's outreach activities he has realized that there is a trend for more and more heterosexual men to work as MBs. In Zheng Huang's opinion, these MBs can be divided into three different primary motivational factors, first is money; second is the desire for an easy job; and the third is the larger homosexual community.

Mr. Zheng Huang explained that among the MBs in Shanghai most are doing it because of the desire for money, so that's why they sell their bodies as a commodity. Shanghai is a city with a very high cost of living. An average vocational high school graduate can earn about 2000 yuan RMB per month. For the MBs, as long as they manage themselves well, they can readily earn much more than most people.

Writer: For this kind of work of yours, would 3000 Yuan RMB a month be considered a high salary?

Zheng Huang: given our educational background... we couldn't command so high an income... probably between 1 to 2,000 Yuan... He said in the winter he'd made 3 to 4,000 Yuan... And that's not even during the high season with many customers... if there were clients, he'd make their money, if not, just forget about it... that's how it goes for most of them... some go at it full court.. And the prices go up... if you go seek a customer every day...

Mr. Zheng Huang said that Shanghai was a very densely populated city, and there was a very large population of homosexuals. But this does not mean that every homosexual can naturally find someone they like. So, many homosexuals are willing to spend money on an MB they like. Heterosexual MB are also of course more than willing to service female clientele, but because the demands of the female clients are much greater than for

male clients, so these extraordinary MB tend to focus on male clients primarily.

Zheng Huang: this is the nationwide epicenter. There are many homosexuals here. But that doesn't mean every homosexual can find someone they like, right? The type one likes. So they are willing to spend some money. Finding some customers, they make some money... the money is always in the hands of the men. Of course this includes the homosexuals. And even for those sex workers who are not homosexuals. They really want female customers. But they are so few. And female clients are very demanding. Because they are so few... so when there are so many sex workers. They hold the cards to choose whom they want. It's not like every sex worker is up to their standards. So the sex workers are willing to take on male clients. This is certainly one of the reasons why they are willing to take on male clients.

Mr. Zheng Huang feels that sex work is not likely to disappear from history. From the example of Holland, legalizing the sex trade will not result in reducing the number of participants. So, the decriminalization of prostitution is a very important task. This is also one of the important objectives of the Happy Friendship Leyi organization.

Mr. Zheng Huang also noted that many MB do not have clear ideas about money, or are very weak in their financial management skills. Many simply live from day to day. As a whole, this is closely related to the state of China's social welfare system. In Mr. Zheng Huang's opinion, these are matters which warrant reconsideration of the entire system.

Zheng Huang: These people's financial management skills are too poor. That is to say. Even I do not have very good skills in this area. Still I think others need help too. I don't have. Like any insurance. I only started. The year before last... because if your pay is only 2 to 3,000 Yuan per month... and the insurance premiums are high. So there's just not enough. Not enough even for the basics

of rent and meals. Even if you want to plan... you may not have enough money to pay the premiums. For insurance, it needs to come out of some of your disposable income... or you may not have enough for tomorrow's meals... yet you'd still pay for insurance... so this month you paid a 1000 Yuan premium, and next month maybe 100... who could guarantee a fixed amount to be paid..

Zheng Huang: MBs have these kinds of problems. There are those just like this. Well frankly even I do not know how much money I will have in my budget next month leftover... so I'll just eat a little more now if I can.

Brief summation: Mr. Zheng Huang is a vanguard on the front lines. Having him explain the real situation of the MBs is as objective as one can get. From Mr. Zheng Huang's descriptions one can see how the quest for money enables MBs to forego the traditional Chinese values of a man, in a paternalistic one-sex society, and becomes the main motive behind selling their bodies to other men. According to Mr. Zheng Huang's remarks, due to the high cost of living in Shanghai, and the easy nature of the MB work and the large homosexual market, there has been an explosive growth in the MB marketplace such that even many heterosexuals are willing to take part and try to make some money. But from the results of the writer's interviews with the 15 male sex workers, one can see, that money remains the primary motivating factor behind the willingness of men to engage in the male to male sex trade, but this may not be a result of their own will. Rather it may represent the distorted state of society's values. The American sociologist Morton argues that in a capitalistic society, everyone wants to enjoy a wealthy life, this is the value which everyone in society shares, the purpose which everyone strives to achieve, and so when an individual lacks the basic elements necessary to achieve this objective, or people feel they cannot attain the objective through normal means, this becomes the result of a disconnect between the social structure and a disjoint in the attempt to achieve the value. The male to male sex workers in Shanghai are the sacrificial lambs of capitalism, these male to male

sex workers come to Shanghai to make a living, but because most of them hail from the countryside, with poor educations, they lack the human capital necessary to enrich their own lives, causing them to be willing to sell their own bodies, to accomplish the common social value, this is precisely what Marx referred to as alienation.

Happy Friendship Leyi organization counselor Yu Tian

Mr. Yu Tian comes from Henan, when he was living in Henan he had no idea there was such a thing as an MB. This was so until in 2004 he came to Shanghai and joined the Happy Friendship Leyi organization and got to know some sex workers. Yu Tian himself is a homosexual. In order to escape from his parents pressure to force him be married, he suddenly left and ran away to Beijing. Since he had no savings, at first he went to work at a hotel in Beijing, and lived a very arduous life. Once he overheard two roommates in the same workers dormitory explaining that they were headed for Shanghai, so he decided to join them. When Yu Tian first arrived in Shanghai, he did not have any friends and did not know the place, and he did not have any money, so when he was exhausted all he could do was close his eyes in the internet café and try to rest. Later he found a job in a restaurant. He had even been convinced by the bar manager to go to work as an MB, but as a result of his conscience under the contemporary society, Yu Tian refused to yield to the temptations of money.

Yu Tian: because that was pressing along my moral bottom line, but my manager had asked me to go work as an MB!

Finally because Yu Tian was unwilling to sell his body for money, the bar manager and boss had an argument, and the manager quit his job. Yu Tian considers that there are two main kinds of MB. For those MBs who come from the countryside, Yu Tian feels that it is the unequal distribution of social resources which serves to motivate their willingness to sell their bodies. The same amount of labor in the countryside is not rewarded with the same wages as when it is done in the city, and given the influence of the entire society's distorted values; more and more rural youth enter the MB trade.

Yu Tian: there is a lack of opportunity and inequitable distribution of resources

Yu Tian: for example if I am country boy, and I exhaust the same amount of physical labor, I might only see an annual income of 300 Yuan a year that is adjusting for the cost of living and accounting for purchasing power parity, you work hard for a year and only earn 300 Yuan for the year but if I go out and work I can get 5000 Yuan for the year but in the city a young person would earn even much more so in the current social situation people evaluate social standing on the basis of how much money they have or economic and materialistic considerations, and so on, so given these circumstances it is inevitable that some people will be willing to do anything to make money

As for MBs from the city, Yu Tian believes it is the relative freedom of the lifestyle and its system of China, which attracts the willingness of these urban youth to engage in the male to male sex trade in spite of their relatively better off economic and living conditions. Because they are unwilling to work long hours, and they want to enjoy a very free lifestyle.

Yu Tian: it may be that my understanding is they are like unwilling to live under the current system that 9 to 5 lifestyle and unwilling to work for the bureaucracy because of the lack of freedom or because you cannot say what you think and there are lots of inter office conflicts so probably lots had actually worked in an office before but found it unsuitable for them

Having counseled many MBs, Yu Tian has a deeper understanding of them than almost anyone. The MB is a very lonesome endeavor. To the MB's way of thinking society is made of a hierarchy of social classes. Even worse is the fact that among a majority of the MB's hearts, they have already commoditized themselves as a product and have lost their basic sense of human dignity.

Yu Tian: well after all they basically consider they no longer feel human. Because they have sold their own souls out and they have disappointed everyone in their lives and its

already like that they have already become less dignified than others and their hearts are very weak and depressed... even in terms of their lifestyle they do not even dare to share it with their families... all they can do is swallow their own suffering alone they have no one they can share their pain with

Yu Tian thinks that the only way to reduce the number of MBs is to ensure that the entire society enjoys the benefits of economic development more evenly. To bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, and improve social welfare, etc. etc. Even more important though, Yu Tian feels, is that if the society can become tolerant and accepting of homosexuality, then there would be less demand for MBs, and as demand diminishes, the supply of MBs would naturally decline. If people can have freedom in being with who they love without the gender restriction, the demand of sex to sex workers will reduce and the supply will do, too.

Brief summation: Yu Tian's incisive comments completely and compellingly explained the predicament of the MB lifestyle and their social status. From the interviews with Yu Tian, one can see how the MBs have lost their sense of self-worth and dignity in the quest for material wealth and the material life in an intensely capitalistic society. Additionally one can see how the inequitable distribution of social resources and the paucity of opportunity induce poor self-esteem which lowers one's own estimation of their social status, as materialism and alienates one from their original values. The descriptions of the MB lifestyle given by Yu Tian not only leave one with indelible impressions but a profound sense of exasperation.