

Give Birth to “the Fruit of Love” in a Hetero-Patriarchy Society? : A Critical Discourse Analysis of Weibo Discussions on Assisted Reproduction among Chinese Lesbian Couples

Jinyi Zhang^{1,a,*}

¹Faculty of Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

^asuzy010608@163.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: Assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) have predominantly converted into routines in China, despite legal restrictions that permit their use solely by heterosexual couples. This is largely due to the medicalized marketization of ARTs, which has led to their adoption as a common choice and a secretive practice among homosexual companions. Although it has received less attention regarding issues faced by lesbians in China specifically. This paper takes the Sina Weibo account Baihe Tucao Jun, an active domestic lesbian digital community, as the central case. Through thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis of related public discussions within this account, this paper examines the opinions of the Chinese lesbian community on assisted reproduction. The findings indicate that the strategic use of ARTs confer power upon Chinese lesbians who wish to have children, challenging the dominant heterosexual matrix. Women’s physiological structure also grants them greater autonomy in choosing ARTs, which not only provides them with opportunities to parent but also serves as a form of women’s empowerment. However, it is acknowledged that lesbians facing dual marginal identities as both sexual minorities and women encounter complexity and high levels of uncertainty when considering parenthood within a heterosexual-patriarchal society. The study posits that examining the issues of reproduction can illuminate the vast range of life experiences among lesbians, revealing that the pursuit of gender equality is not without its challenges. It underscores the need for transformative changes in national laws, social ideologies, cultural norms, and interpersonal resources, knowledge, and emotional gaps.

Keywords: Assisted reproduction, Chinese lesbians, Heterosexual hegemony, Patriarchy

1. Introduction

As same-sex marriage is illegal in China, Chinese same-sex couples cannot enjoy the rights guaranteed by law of heterosexual couples, including having children and forming a family. China is one of the major countries in the world that uses assisted reproductive technology, and assisted reproductive technology aimed at solving infertility problems has basically achieved “routineization” in China. Taking the IVF-ET technology, commonly known as “test-tube babies”, as an example, according to statistics, about 300,000 “test-tube babies” are born in China every year. Assisted reproduction empowers couples who have the desire to have children but cannot conceive naturally. For same-sex couples, due to physiological reasons, assisted reproduction is also one of the inevitable paths for them to carry out reproductive practices in addition to adopting children. Although sperm banks, IVF-ET and other assisted reproductive technologies are not open to non-married people, in fact, the adoption of assisted reproductive technology by Chinese homosexuals both domestically and internationally has become a common choice and secretive practice. However, most previous studies have only focused on the surrogacy controversy of male homosexual couples in China. Lesbian couples seem to be not representative enough at the grassroots level due to the natural connection between “uterus” and reproductive ability, and their voices on reproductive issues have been ignored.

Sina Weibo is the most widely used social media in China and the main platform for Chinese netizens to discuss social issues. Although LGBT discourses have not been fully visible in China’s mainstream media and people lack the rights to freedom of expression due to the internet censorship, KOL social accounts can, to a certain extent, form an online community gathered by common topics, promoting interaction and exchange of views. There are also accounts that focus on LGBT issues on Sina Weibo.

Although a large number of accounts have been banned in several large-scale online censorship, there are still a small number of accounts that are relatively active on a daily basis. “Baihe Tucao Jun” (Baihe, the folk name of lesbian in China; Tucao, which means that expressing opinions on something in Chinese) is one of them. This account is used to receive and publish lesbian-related content. As of August 2024, it has 1.09 million followers. People have heated discussions in the comment and forwarding areas centered on specific topics in the blog posts, including lesbian couples’ fertility issues. Although the self-identification of participants is not necessarily lesbian, due to the strong correlation of online discourse and the spontaneous speech supervision among participants, it can be regarded as a local lesbian digital community in China. This article uses this account as the research field, and uses keywords such as “children”, “pregnancy”, and “test-tube baby” to search for blog posts related to lesbian couples’ reproduction issues, collects original blog posts and extended discussion texts in the comment area, and uses thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis methods to understand people’s views on assisted reproduction for lesbian couples in the context of China. It is worth noting that this article does not outline a global picture, and it is impossible to observe the similar but different life experiences of all Chinese lesbians. It can only conduct a superficial exploration based on sporadic public texts, in order to depict the special voices from a point to a surface.

2. Literature Review: Assisted Reproduction of Lesbian Couples in China

Assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) have been used in China for more than 20 years. The Ministry of Health of the People’s Republic of China issued the “Regulations on the Management of Human Assisted Reproductive Technology” in 2001. However, it specifies in detail that ARTs, including intrauterine insemination (IUI, mainly refers to human sperm banks in China), in vitro fertilization/in vitro fertilization-embryo transfer (IVF, mainly refers to test-tube babies in China), etc., can only be applied to married couples with infertility. Medical institutions and medical personnel are strictly prohibited from providing ARTs to unmarried couples and single women. In the absence of legal recognition of same-sex intimate relationships and marriages, Chinese same-sex couples cannot access ARTs through formal medical channels. Therefore, the initial large-scale adoption of ARTs in China was targeted at a limited group of people. The technology itself can be understood as a supplementary continuation of the traditional family model, that is, a complete heterosexual blood family means marriage and necessary reproduction. However, despite the strict legal restrictions, in practice, due to the market orientation of medical technology and high economic profits, assisted reproductive technology has become popular among Chinese same-sex couples who were not previously considered “legal users”^[1]. Whether it is private assisted reproductive technology service companies in China, which are a “regulatory gray areas”, or the overseas assisted reproductive market, which is called “reproductive tourism”, both provide Chinese same-sex couples with the possibility of using assisted reproductive technology, giving birth to children, and becoming parents without being forced into heterosexual marriage.

A large number of scholars have examined the fertility and use of assisted reproductive technology by Chinese same-sex couples, and the research mainly discussed three core issues. First, is the birth of children by same-sex couples a transcendence or restoration of the traditional heterosexual family model? Some scholars believe that the existence of same-sex families breaks the hegemonic monopoly of heterosexual reproductive narratives^[2], and homosexuals also have the right to form a family of their own choice; some scholars believe that the strong desire for fertility of same-sex couples is permeated with traditional Chinese values, over-emphasizing the importance of blood inheritance^[3], replicating heterosexual family norms. Secondly, scholars unanimously believe that the availability of assisted reproductive technology is uneven. They borrowed the concept of “stratified reproduction” and pointed out that the right of Chinese same-sex couples to have offspring depends on the level of economic, social and cultural capital^[4]. The high cost of money, time and even body behind assisted reproductive technology will exclude those who are not qualified. Finally, in recent years, more and more studies have paid attention to the fact that assisted reproduction (technology) is not neutral but gendered, that is, all homosexual people cannot be generalized. For example, some scholars believe that Chinese gay men face a dual reproductive dilemma. First, there is the culture-specific form of stress for males^[5], and they need to complete the task of reproduction; second, the difference in natural physiological structure makes it more difficult for gays to “give birth” to a child with a blood relationship with them than lesbians^[6]. Under this concept, lesbians seem to be able to enjoy the ease of “true love has nothing to do with reproduction” and the advantages of reproductive selection, and the corresponding research focusing on the reproductive issues of Chinese lesbian couples is relatively scarce. But in fact, this may not be the case. The lack of research is another manifestation of lesbians’ aphasia. Some scholars have pointed out

that in the context of a heterosexual-patriarchal society, the choice of assisted reproduction for lesbian couples may be more complicated. Not only do they have to seek external living space for same-sex families, but lesbian couples generally need (at least) one of them to take on the responsibility of pregnancy. Feminists regard childbirth as one of the fundamental oppressive systems that continue the gender order under the patriarchal structure, which may lead to the evolution of new inequalities within same-sex couples^[7]. Therefore, it is particularly necessary to explore the understanding of assisted reproduction for lesbian couples in the context of China.

Some scholars have used Zhihu as a platform for conducting online ethnography to examine the views of Chinese lesbian couples on assisted reproductive technology^[4]. However, the source of the text is mainly lesbian couples who have decided to adopt or have practiced assisted reproduction. They may analyze less of the “difficulties” behind this choice and tend to look at things and review their experiences with a brighter and more positive attitude. Secondly, as a knowledge question-and-answer platform, Zhihu’s users are recognized to have better economic and educational backgrounds than the average level in China. In other words, its users are closer to the potential audiences of assisted reproductive technology, and the collected answer texts may be less representative. The above two minor shortcomings provide inspiration for this study to find a platform with more popular participation and more openness. As mentioned in the introduction, this article hopes to use “Baihe Tucao Jun”, the most popular Chinese lesbian digital community on the Sina Weibo platform, as a central case, and through thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis methods, understand people’s views on assisted reproduction of lesbian couples in the context of China. When using online text, it will be presented like this: “Original text” (@Weibo user name), such as: “You are homosexual, why are you so eager to have children? I am really speechless. There are too many similar posts.” (@Yangmaode Laochen). It should be noted that the original texts used were all written in Chinese and translated into English by the researcher whose native language is Chinese. Based on the contributions of previous studies, this article will focus on the following three issues:

- 1) How do they understand the relationship between assisted reproductive technology and having children and building same-sex families?
- 2) How do they perceive the accessibility of assisted reproductive technology for lesbian couples?
- 3) How do they view the impact of assisted reproduction on lesbians, lesbian couples, and women?

3. Findings

3.1. Questioning and Discipline of the Heterosexual Matrix

The decision to have children should ultimately be a choice made by the individual and his or her partner through mutual consultation. However, in China, a society that emphasizes collectivism, “childbearing matters” are not entirely personal behaviors, and it is clear that the views and opinions of outsiders also have a certain reference role for the parties involved. However, for Chinese homosexuals, they have low visibility in society and are willing to actively reduce their visibility. Therefore, compared to directly consulting relatives and friends, anonymously seeking help from strangers on the Internet is a safe alternative. This is also the basis for this article to carry out online observations. In the “Baihe Tucao Jun” account, it can be seen that fertility issues have become a common topic of discussion. Many of the submitters ask whether to complete the practice of childbearing after having a stable partner. It seems that there is not much difference from the heterosexual couples who have a huge voice on Weibo in recent years, discussing whether to have children after marriage.

However, upon observing the posts, it is evident that when the submitter expresses hesitation or confusion about childbirth, the most direct response in the comment section is not to discuss the pros and cons of childbirth or share experiences, but to believe that the problem itself should not exist in the lesbian community, and not understand why lesbians still consider childbirth: “You are homosexual, why are you so eager to have children? I am really speechless. There are too many similar posts.” (@Yangmaode Laochen). “Isn’t homosexuality equivalent to giving up reproductive rights? If you want to have children, you can be heterosexual.” (@Baojiang Yuni Tianla Zhaji). “Homosexuals do not have the right to reproduce. How many times do I have to reiterate this?” (@Pink Feminism Zenmenile).

Therefore, the background for discussing whether to have children between heterosexuals and homosexuals in China is completely different. The discussion in the heterosexual context is the result of the development of feminism in recent years, and more and more people realize that childbirth is not

“inevitable”, while the starting point of the discussion in the homosexual context is the opposite. Their initial psychological barriers are actually deeply influenced by the heterosexual reproductive family matrix. The concept of the “heterosexual matrix” was proposed by Butler, which believed that romantic relationships, marriage, and childbirth in society were all regulated by heterosexuality^[8]. To follow the natural sequence of “heterosexual intimacy, heterosexual marriage, and completing reproductive upbringing”^[9], this concept makes homosexuals considered isolated from the reproductive process. They either become non-traditional homosexuals or get married and have children to form a family: “If you want to live a traditional life, then consider getting married, after all, there are fathers of children in traditional families.” (@Shishi King). Due to the physiological structure that determines that two homosexuals cannot have children without assisted technologies, the concept of homosexuality as a reproductive disorder had an unbreakable position when assisted reproductive technology was not yet developed, and it also strengthened the reproductive hegemony of heterosexuals through scientific discourse.

But through the increasing number of similar questions in the account, it can also be seen that assisted reproductive technology greatly empowers the reproductive agency of homosexuals. For homosexuals who have no intention of being forced into heterosexual marriage in any form, technological development gives them the power to question the heterosexual matrix and resist the marginalized status of homosexuality. Especially focusing on the case study in this article, when discussing whether lesbians have “reproductive rights” in the account, most users’ responses are powerful. Although they may not necessarily choose to have children, they believe that assisted reproductive technology and women’s unique uterus provide absolute rights: “Women have uterus anyway, why not have children? Having children does not necessarily require marriage or sexual intercourse with men. Who says lesbians cannot be mothers?” (@Jieyishan Moonlight). “Women can have children if they want, it has nothing to do with their sexual orientation.” (@103 Shu1 Pei 301 will live here). It is worth noting that users in this account generally emphasize that gay men do not have “reproductive rights”. Although they benefit from assisted reproductive technology, they oppose technology being above human rights. They not only identify with their homosexual identity, but also take pride in their female identity.

However, “being able to give birth” is clearly not the ultimate solution to the problem. Contrary to the positive attitude of the aforementioned faction, a large amount of comments in the account express uncertainty and anxiety about forming same-sex families in a society dominated by heterosexuals. In their view, relying solely on technology without considering the consequences is selfish: “It’s quite selfish to have children in China. Everyone has a father, but Lala’s child doesn’t. Moreover, the baby has to accept that her family is different from others since she was very young. Being different from others is actually quite scary. How can the little baby face malice?” (@Cats like Cooking Fish). “Same-sex families are not conducive to the healthy growth of children. You may not care about others’ opinions as an adult, but children have to accept many strange voices during their growth process. Experiencing these things before their children have formed an independent and strong psychological state is really not conducive to their growth.” (@Dahandajiaode Xiabingxiejiang Bieguan). “I don’t know if my statement is influenced by stereotypes, but personally I cannot understand the behavior of lesbian couples having children. Because I think the outside world can have a great impact on children, and they may have to live in negative public opinion from a young age.” (@Lizhi isn’t rational). It can be seen that they have truly experienced and felt the enormous survival pressure of same-sex families in China in their daily lives, so they are more vigilant about the discourse of technological liberation. As Foucault said, the biopolitics governmentality is operated through state apparatus, which can distinguish marginalized individuals at any time and in any scope^[10]. We cannot simply understand their opposition to childbirth as a regression of ideas. Their discussions precisely indicate the ubiquitous discipline and structural violence of society towards the LGBTQ+ community, including but not limited to the lack of reproductive security, difficulties in household registration certificate for children, social stigmatization and shame, and other accompanying problems^{[11][12]}. Science and technology may only be a small step towards promoting gender equality, and ultimately, assisted reproductive technology is not openly available to homosexuals in China. Although technology can be used through grey channels, they are not recognized at a broader societal level, composing the hidden polyphonic tragedy of same-sex families being marginalized in heterosexual dominated societies.

3.2. The Choice of ARTs under the Influence of Neoliberalism

Assisted reproductive technology has long been a self funded medical project in China, which is a significant economic burden for most families. This situation will change by the end of 2023, with Beijing City and Guangxi Province announcing the inclusion of medical projects such as egg retrieval and

embryo transfer in the scope of medical insurance payments. The goal of this policy is to promote the construction of a fertility friendly society amidst the crisis of declining birth rates. However, this “welfare policy” has nothing to do with homosexuality. The use of assisted reproductive technology for Chinese homosexual groups is still highly market-oriented, but to some extent, the micro free market that deviates from the macro policy opens up the possibility of deviating for homosexuals. For example, it is often seen in accounts that when lesbian women are not yet familiar with the actual situation and feasibility in China, some netizens actively inform the market situation: “We have all come out of the closet, and our parents bless and support us. The little princess has been born for seven days now. Ps. Sperm is bought, and there are surrogacy and test tube institutions targeting our group in our city.” (@Caimiliu-Liu Xiaotian). “Some domestic institutions can provide ARTs, with varying costs. The law does not specify whether it is legal or not in this regard.” (@Kill this star). For same-sex couples who want to use assisted reproductive technology in China, they are caught between the state and the market, struggling to find commercial medical institutions that are relatively qualified, reliable, and cost-effective.

However, more users in the account do not support searching for institutions in China for three main reasons. Firstly, they pointed out that domestic institutions are illegal, with lax supervision and high risks. Secondly, they criticized the poor quality of sperm provided by domestic institutions: “Do you dare to use domestic sperm? Anyway, it’s going to cost money, so why not spend more money to get some high-quality sperm?” (@Tuibuliu). “I saw an advertisement before that said men can donate sperm as long as they are at least 160cm tall and have a junior high school education.” (@Liluguaihuang). It should be noted that regardless of whether lesbian couples choose intrauterine or in vitro fertilization, they need to purchase sperm which will provide half of genetic material. Compared to the long wait for male homosexuals to find egg donors and surrogate mothers, lesbian couples do have more choices in the sperm matching process. They express their high requirements for sperm and their beautiful imagination of queer-friendly areas: “Mixed-race babies are so cute! I have always wanted a mixed race daughter with sky blue eyes.” (@Xingzhisuowang). “Domestic institutions are all illegal, they cannot even provide genetic identification. And the quality of sperm is also poor. Men’s intelligence, appearance, and talent are all very ordinary. It is also uncertain whether they have genetic diseases. Chinese institutions dare to charge 70-100 thousand Chinese Yuan for such sperm. And sperm banks sell sperm from men who graduated from Oxford and Cambridge for only 6-10 thousand. They can also provide complete third-generation gene maps.” (@Youzi De Xiaodaicai). Finally, they emphasized the importance of biological sex: “Lesbians do not raise boys.” (@Zengbaihe). “Why do we have a son when we can even screen for gender through IVF?” (@Wurenwenjin Fangzhudi). Although gender screening is an additional right of assisted reproductive technology compared to natural pregnancy, currently only third-generation test tube (PGT) can achieve it, which is relatively expensive. Moreover, there are also cases where embryo chromosome transplantation is unsuccessful, resulting in subsequent financial and physical losses.

Previous scholars have pointed out that the use of assisted reproductive technology is stratified and biased towards homosexuals who possess more economic, social, and cultural capital^{[4][6]}. Through online observation, this article further discovers that the combination of hierarchical reproduction and China’s neoliberal feminism constitutes the collective discourse and value norms within the Chinese lesbian community. They hope to independently select a high-quality sperm from a well-educated and good-looking male and give birth to a girl. This has been less discussed in previous academic research, enriching contextual knowledge about assisted reproductive technology. The availability of technology reflects that medical reproductive services such as sperm and in vitro fertilization have become commodities and consumer goods that carry cultural colors and satisfy subjectivity. Assisted reproductive technology has developed “reproductive choice” into more complex “selective reproduction”. It can be seen that the use of assisted reproductive technologies not only opens up the possibility of reproduction for lesbians, but also reflects the trend of lesbian separationism in contemporary China.

3.3. The Intersection of Radical Feminism and Lesbian Discourse in a Patriarchal Society

In the context of Chinese society, discussing the issue of childbirth for lesbian women is complex. They have dual marginalized identities of homosexuality and femininity, and their identity is linked to discourse and reflects ideology. Scholars have keenly proposed the term “made-in-China feminism”, suggesting that it may differ significantly from the global feminist voices dominated by Western narratives^[13], and the differentiation may be more pronounced when it comes to LGBT issues. For example, scholars have pointed out that the development trend of global feminism is almost parallel to the path of fighting for LGBT rights, while in China it is “intersecting”^[14]. This can be clearly observed in this study. For example, when expressing their views on lesbian childbirth, some users in the account are influenced by internalized homophobia and also analyze the exploitative nature of childbirth from a

feminist perspective. They drew inspiration from the popular feminist discourse in China: “Nowadays, heterosexual couples are fear of marriage and childbirth, why do lesbian women still want to have children?” (@Renyuwotongzui). “I don’t want to have children at all. I don’t have a throne to inherit. My genes are not excellent. Childbirth is very harmful to the body, and I don’t want to harm my partner or myself. If you really like children, then go adopt one. Many baby girls are abandoned in China.” (@Alexa-Sy). It can be seen that expressing the desire to have children is still a very sensitive topic in the Chinese lesbian community. Not only does it mean breaking the heterosexual matrix, but it is also because under radical feminist ideology, women who practice reproductive practices are easily classified as “accomplices” of patriarchy and become “others” of the broader feminist community^[15]. Radical feminism originated in Europe and the United States, and inherited the concept of “anti marriage and anti fertility” in China. It believed that the patriarchal society restricted women to the private sphere of the family through the fertility system, thus excluding them from the public sphere such as politics and economy^[16]. This thought advocates that gender oppression is more fundamental than sexual orientation oppression. The last post is a very typical case. In fact, it is more difficult for homosexuals in China to adopt children than to use assisted reproductive technology. But “adoption or giving birth to a child” has become the standard for outsiders to determine whether lesbians truly love children or are brainwashed by patriarchy and willing to harm their bodies. To some extent, lesbians’ more genuine desire for childbirth has been silenced. Do women must have to give up childbirth if they want to completely challenge the hetero-patriarchy society?

The contradiction between feminism and lesbian discourse is most acute when discussing which one “gives birth to” a child and becomes a pregnant mother. Several scholars have found in their research that the common way for Chinese lesbian women to engage in reproductive practice is through “A Luan B Huai”. They believe that this method helps strengthen emotional connections between same-sex partners, as both partners symbolically participate in the reproductive process^[4]. “A Luan B Huai ” is a Chinese folk term for Reception of Oocytes from Partner, also known as The ROPA method and lesbian shared IVF, refers to a process in which one female partner provides an oocyte and serves as the genetic mother. After the oocyte is fertilized with sperm from a third-party source, the fertilized egg is transferred into the uterus of another female to form an embryo and become pregnant. Simply put, female same-sex partners generally choose between “self fertilization” and “A Luan B Huai” for reproduction, with the latter being the most common choice. However, contrary to the reality, users in the community strongly condemn and resist this method: “Participate in reproduction? I do not accept A luan B huai. This is complete exploitation.” (@I am super happy0723). In Chinese online lesbian community, the term “A Luan B Huai” is associated with surrogacy, and many people strongly emphasize that this is a “free surrogacy” behavior disguised as love: “Remember, don’t be blinded by the so-called true love. The definition of surrogacy is to conceive someone else’s child, which refers to the eggs of other women and the sperm of men.” (@Bendawang Liangzi). In recent years, the issue of surrogacy has caused many heated discussions on the Internet in China, and there has been no room for negotiation among women^[17]. And gays are considered the biggest beneficiaries and have been particularly condemned^[18]. Therefore, when “A Luan B Huai” is bound to the meaning of surrogacy, it can be anticipated that it will completely strip away the real-life context of lesbians and be rejected without negotiation. However, it is worth noting that this viewpoint is not limited to the portion of the lesbian community who have no desire to have children. Many people who have expressed their intention to adopt the “A Luan B Huai” approach have also admitted to their insecurity towards this method. The reproductive practice that is closer to heterosexual couples cannot have substantial institutional guarantees and can only rely on the fragile commitment of true love from partners. And once the relationship breaks down, it is women who suffer losses in their interests, making the dual marginalized identity in heterosexual patriarchal society particularly vulnerable at this moment.

In addition, the term “T Luan P Huai” is more frequently discussed in the community compared to “P Luan T Huai”. T and P respectively refer to the more masculine and feminine one among female same-sex couples. Although the use of heterosexual norms for identity positioning is increasingly being questioned by the LGBTQ+community^[19], it may still be common in online discourse for the sake of convenience. The term “T Luan P Huai” has been pointed out to be an extreme replica of the gender order under patriarchy. Although the specific ratio of “T Luan P Huai” and “P Luan T Huai” is still unknown, in online communities, people clearly believe that “T Luan P Huai” is more common because T does not want to be a woman but wants to pass on her genes. They call those T who want P to get pregnant “spiritual men”: “If a woman wants to have a baby but wants her girlfriend to get pregnant, then I will call her a spiritual man.” (@ Kill fish with one hand1). Finally, some expressed concerns about the blurred boundary between “A Luan B Huai” and the “surrogacy industry chain”: “Once surrogacy is allowed among lesbian community, all surrogacy activities can be disguised as ‘lesbian’. This leads to exploitation,

and our sexual orientation should not override personal rights. First and foremost, we must protect our rights as human beings.” (@ Bendawang Liangzi). Therefore, although, as scholars have said, feminism and lesbian culture have unlimited potential for cooperation ^[20], it is difficult to really listen to, tolerate and integrate voices from different positions at least on the issue of fertility. For example, the vernacular social media space such as Baihe Tucao Jun will not only encourage the exchange of views and knowledge among women ^[21], but also limit the discussions of specific issues in the echo chamber, which may weaken the joint force to resist the unequal gender structure and promote transformative social changes.

4. Conclusions

Japanese scholar Yashinko Kobayashi wrote that: “assisted reproductive technology was originally developed to maintain (or strengthen) the traditional family model- family consists of father, mother, and their offspring - but this technology has also bred diverse families-which have caused a great impact on the original family structure” in the book *The Choice of Childbearing: Freedom and Boundary*. This statement also applies to the context of China discussed in this study. The strategic use of ARTs confer power upon Chinese lesbians who wish to have children, challenging the dominant heterosexual matrix. Women’s physiological structure also grants them greater autonomy in choosing ARTs, which not only provides them with opportunities to parent but also serves as a form of women’s empowerment. However, through further in-depth research and a deep depiction of reality, it is acknowledged that lesbians facing dual marginal identities as both sexual minorities and women encounter complexity and high levels of uncertainty when considering parenthood within a heterosexual-patriarchal society. While technology empowers people, it may also plunge them into despair again. An overview of the normalization of assisted reproductive technology at the macro social level in China may overlook the unstable, asynchronous, and fluctuating fragmented sounds. Under the social normalization of a medical technology, there will always be more complex processes of acceptance, resistance, hesitation, and negotiation among individuals. And these different voices interweave to form a more comprehensive understanding of science, technology, people, and society as a whole. The study posits that examining the issues of reproduction can illuminate the vast range of life experiences among lesbians, revealing that the pursuit of gender equality is not without its challenges. It underscores the need for transformative changes in national laws, social ideologies, cultural norms, and interpersonal resources, knowledge, and emotional gaps. The journey is long and arduous, but every inch of progress is also filled with positive beliefs and strength.

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