

The Impact of Patriarchal Culture on Binary Gender of Homosexuality

Yayun Xiao *

High School Attached to Shandong Normal University, Shandong, China

* Corresponding Author Email: qiuqingpei@ldy.edu.rs

Abstract. This paper summarizes the differences in the impact of patriarchal culture on the binary gender of homosexuality and binary gender inequality in the field of the LGBTQ+ community in terms of socio-cultural influences. The emphasis of this study lies in patriarchal culture's prejudice against lesbians, the impact of Boy's Love culture on the social bias towards different gender homosexuality, the impact of various social cultures on the gender equality of binary gender homosexuality, and the challenge to patriarchal culture by lesbianism. This paper concluded that because of the double identity of "women" and "homosexuals," lesbians have faced greater challenges from the patriarchal system than any other group. Moreover, Boy's Love works lead to unconscious bias against female characters and lesbians. The paper has also summarized the religious reasons for gender inequality based on the Bible and the challenge to patriarchal culture by lesbianism, like reclaiming female reproductive rights and negating the necessity of male existence in sexual relationships. This paper to some extent fills the research gap on gender inequality in the LGBTQ+ community.

Keywords: Gender inequality in LGBTQ, Socio-cultural influences, regional cultural influences.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the situation of the LGBTQ+ community has undergone a profound transformation due to the progress of people's ideology. In 1994, Susan Moller Okin at Stanford University mentioned the relationship between gender inequality and cultural differences [1]. In 2006, Matthias Busse and Christian Spielmann demonstrated the relationship between gender inequality and trade [2]. In 2008, Claudia Buchmann, Thomas A. DiPrete, and Anne McDaniel discussed the gender inequality issues in education [3]. Despite the significant progress made in the LGBTQ+ community and in protecting women's rights, a critical gap exists in our understanding of the binary gender inequality situation in the homosexual field. This paper is motivated by the aim of promoting gender equality within the LGBTQ+ community, which is an important step in protecting the rights of women. The author used a literature review to provide a detailed analysis of the reasons for the differential acceptance of binary gender of homosexuals in patriarchal societies from the perspectives of patriarchal culture against lesbians, the impact of BL culture, different social cultures, and the challenge to patriarchal culture by lesbianism, to discuss and study gender inequality issues in the contemporary LGBTQ+ field and trying to promote gender equality in society.

This study focuses on examining the impact of social and cultural factors on the unequal rights of male and female homosexuals within the LGBTQ+ community.

2. Patriarchal Culture's Prejudice against Lesbians

In general, "patriarchy" refers to a system in which men dominate economically and socially. The second feminist wave of the 1960s and 1970s continued the form of the first and expressed women's anger at the incomplete social transformation after the first wave. At the same time, the second feminist wave aimed to give women a voice in the economic and political spheres of patriarchal society and gradually shifted from mass media to "cultural politics."

According to historical records, primitive societies were generally based on matriarchal social structures. Since the reproductive value was higher than the production value in primitive societies and the role of men in reproduction was not well understood, the matriarchal social structure was

maintained from the beginning to the end of the primitive society, including the worship of female fertility and the equal distribution of tribal resources.

However, at the end of the primitive society, with the improvement of productivity, the surplus value per person appeared. The surplus value led to wars and mutual plunder among society members, which then led to the establishment of private ownership. Since men's physiological conditions were generally stronger and better adapted to war than women's, their status gradually increased during the transition from the primitive society to the slave society. When women's status was replaced by that of men and people no longer worshipped female fertility, men's social status would be higher due to their relatively stronger bodies, thus forming a "patriarchal society."

In developed areas today, patriarchy is mainly manifested in men using their greater power than women to suppress women in all aspects: for example, exploiting women's labor achievements and controlling women's cultural and artistic dissemination achievements. In less developed areas, patriarchy's exploitation of women is even more brutal. In the relatively backward North African region, patriarchy achieves the result of highlighting men's power by controlling women's reproductive rights, repeatedly emphasizing the importance of virginity to women, and controlling women's sexual pleasure. According to UNICEF, by 2024, nearly 4.4 million girls (over 12,000 girls per day) will face the risk of FGM worldwide.

In a patriarchal society, the situation of lesbian women is generally considered to be more difficult than that of other groups. Lesbian separatists believe that lesbians in a patriarchal society face a more difficult situation due to their "feminine" and "homosexual" dual identity than gay men and heterosexual women who identify as male or female, respectively, and heterosexual women who identify as female. At the same time, this group, like many feminists, believes that heterosexual marriage is a central manifestation of the oppression of women by patriarchy.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as the second feminist wave developed, a political lesbian group emerged within the lesbian separatist movement, which believed that women choosing same-sex relationships was not merely a matter of sexual orientation but also a political choice aimed at ending patriarchy. Lesbian women completely liberated women from heterosexual marriage and proved to the patriarchal society that women do not necessarily need to establish sexual and romantic relationships with men to survive.

Therefore, lesbian relationships as an anti-patriarchal form of love exist in a patriarchal society and have long been subjected to oppression. Andrienne Rich mentioned that, for a long time, lesbians were always depicted as the embodiment of female evils. They were forced to live between patriarchal culture and heterosexual culture, which were both dominated by men and had always driven lesbians into secrecy and guilt [4].

Before the American Psychological Association (APA) removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders in 1973, psychology generally believed that homosexuality could be treated, and therefore many physically harmful treatments were applied to the LGBTQ+ community, such as lobotomy.

Since lesbian relationships are not as obvious as gay relationships, they are often mistaken for platonic friendships, and therefore the general society has less understanding of lesbians compared to gay men. Therefore, other groups often have misconceptions about lesbian individuals and their relationships. For example, some people still believe that lesbianism can be cured as a sexual orientation. In South Africa, where the rape rate ranks high in the world, the problem of corrective rape persists. Since 2000, there have been close to 40 lesbian women murdered, and on average, about ten lesbians are raped each week by males who think that they are "correcting" the women's sexual orientations [5].

3. The Impact of Boy's Love Culture on the Social Bias towards Different Gender Homosexuality

The Boy's Love culture (BL culture) originated in Japan in the 20th century, and it was initially created by the "24 Group," who drew comics about young men's homosexual relationships. The initial stories focused more on the spiritual support between young men but later evolved into romantic relationships between men.

In works related to the BL culture, including comics and novels, the main characters are usually male-only, and sometimes the author will create a worldview without women, which means that in the world the author creates, human gender only includes males and does not include women or other genders. This undoubtedly ignores the fact that women and other genders exist in the real world and reinforces the existing patriarchal system.

In domestic Chinese research, the BL culture is often interpreted by scholars as a practical path for feminism. A considerable number of Chinese scholars define BL culture as a liberation for women, a way to satisfy women's desires, and a "feminine gaze" on male protagonists in online literature. For example, Chinese scholars Chang Jiang and Tian Hao conducted a survey and interview to define the value and significance of BL culture in a China-specific way: "In a somewhat extreme way, Chinese Yaoi fans consciously exhibit their distaste of and resistance against patriarchal gender norms yoked to the resurging Confucianist ethos that seeks political harmony in both social and family domains" [6].

However, according to Chen Ke's survey conducted through interviews and questionnaires, most female authors who create BL culture-related works do not create feminist literature as their goal [7]. On the contrary, women are often "instrumentalized" in BL culture-related works, meaning that they are given a setting in novel writing to prevent the two male protagonists from falling in love or to assist them in falling in love. In the first case, the female supporting character is set up as a negative influence on the main plot (i.e. the affection between two or more male protagonists) and, to a certain extent, leads to the audience's dislike of such characters, triggering the reader's unconscious misogyny.

Teenagers who are exposed to BL culture too early often exhibit stronger unconscious misogyny (especially an unconscious devaluation of female identity) and excessive worship of masculinity and phalluses due to being influenced by BL works, leading to a deviation in their gender self-identification. Mentally immature female teenagers who are over-exposed to BL culture sometimes show a dislike for being female in terms of gender self-identification, and even if their rational sex and gender self-identification are both female, they are more likely to express a desire to be male or to openly call themselves male and use male pronouns to refer to themselves compared to their peers who are not exposed to BL culture.

Moreover, early exposure to BL culture-related works often leads to a distorted understanding of the LGBT community among mentally immature audiences (especially underage audiences). It is particularly noticeable that, given the current BL works generally exhibit a latent feature of "excluding women," the teenage audience that reads more BL works shows a serious difference in understanding of the binary gender of the homosexual community. For example, in the teenage audience of BL works, it is often seen that female homosexuals are verbally degraded or pathologized, thereby contrasting the superiority of male homosexuals.

4. The Impact Different Social Cultures on the Gender Equality of Binary Gender of Homosexuality

The previous discussion explored many issues related to the social status disparity of binary gender of homosexuality in China, which has a unique cultural background. However, the United States, a country with a completely different cultural background from China, also has the phenomenon of unequal social status for binary gender of homosexuals.

The ancestors of Americans consisted of a large number of European immigrants. From the 17th century to the early 19th century, a large number of Europeans flooded into the United States, most of whom read the Bible and believed in Christianity. In the Book of Genesis in the Bible, it is mentioned that God created a man named Adam and then created a woman named Eve from Adam's rib, which is the well-known story of Adam and Eve.

"The Lord God caused him to sleep deeply, and while he was sleeping, he took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.'"

Therefore, the Christian classic, the Bible, provides a sacred reference basis for the fundamental inequality of male and female status in Europe. Women were taken from men, which deprived women of their reproductive significance, and advocated that women came from men, which was unfair and objective. Moreover, the fact that women came from men laid the foundation for the situation of female dependence on males in the European feudal society later on. Furthermore, Wang Yu pointed out that the Bible denied the social value of women. God created Eve to accompany Adam, which shows that women's existence is only for the companionship and pleasure of men [8]. The Bible also mentions that Eve stole the forbidden fruit, and Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden. The Bible blamed the responsibility on women, making women bear the sin from birth, and providing religious reasons for men to belittle and blame women.

Therefore, the Bible is a male-centered patriarchal work created from a male perspective, and it also provides a religious background for the issue of the unequal status of men and women in the early days of the United States.

5. The Challenge to Patriarchal Culture by Lesbianism

Lesbian separatists believe that heterosexual marriage in a patriarchal society is a major obstacle to women's liberation. They believe that women can only achieve true freedom by completely separating from men, which is also the first step towards women having equal rights with men. Therefore, lesbian separatists claim that lesbian relationships are not just a matter of sexual orientation but also involve the political choices of feminism that women want to end male dominance. Thus, political lesbians emerged.

Both political lesbian relationships and traditional female homosexual relationships are challenges to patriarchy. In a patriarchal society, female homosexual relationships directly prove to patriarchy that women do not need to depend on men to survive, which is a major blow to the patriarchal system.

Because female homosexual relationships have long been ignored by feminist theoretical systems, André Rich proposed the concept of "compulsory heterosexuality" in 1980. In the article, she defined "compulsory heterosexuality" as the sexuality that is forced by patriarchal society and culture. Moreover, she mentioned that heterosexuality is not a 'preference' for women [9]. Female homosexual relationships, on the other hand, reject the characteristics of male power embodied in patriarchal society and represent a substantial expression of anti-patriarchy. For example, Kathleen Gough mentioned in her article "The Origin of the Family" that male power embodied male sexuality "to force it upon them" [10]. Therefore, female homosexual relationships, which oppose male power being demonstrated through rape and other forms of sexual violence, are subjected to suppression and persecution due to their "anti-patriarchy" nature.

Additionally, the primitive society was based on a matriarchal social structure because humanity's desire for the continuation of the species led to the worship of female fertility. However, as society transitioned to a slave society, men became stronger, forcing women to engage in agricultural and textile production within the household, while men gradually gained control over the economy. Therefore, female fertility was also controlled. However, as modern people began to promote the idea of equality, female homosexual relationships were gradually recognized. Unlike how female fertility was controlled by men in the slave society, female homosexual relationships to some extent prevent

traditional men from controlling female fertility and take female fertility back into their own hands: lesbians can use sperm banks to reproduce, but single men or gay men cannot reproduce independently and without the help of women. Since male control over fertility is also an expression of male power in patriarchal society, female homosexual relationships challenge the patriarchal system's male-dominated reproductive system.

6. Conclusion

This article analyzes the impact of patriarchal culture on the binary gender of homosexuality from the perspective of a patriarchal society.

Regarding the prejudice against lesbians in patriarchal culture, the article concludes that due to the control of female reproductive rights and exploitation of labor achievements in heterosexual marriage systems under the patriarchal system, the lesbian relationship challenges the status of men as dominant in the patriarchal system, lesbians, with their double identity of "women" and "homosexual," face greater challenges from the patriarchal system than any other group. Furthermore, the lesbian relationship, which has long been an under understood romantic relationship, leads to social misunderstandings of lesbian relationships and consequent corrective rape.

In the section on the impact of Boy's Love culture on the social bias towards different gender homosexuality, the article argues that the widespread "toolization" of women in BL works leads to unconscious bias against female characters and worship of male homosexual relationships, leading to a desire for male identity recognition and bias towards lesbians.

In the section on the impact of different social cultures on the gender equality of binary gender of homosexuality, the paper summarizes the analysis of unequal sacred male and female status based on the high proportion of Americans who believe in Christianity, contrasted with the analysis of binary gender of homosexuality status inequality based on China's social culture.

Finally, in the section on the Challenge to Patriarchal Culture by Lesbianism, the paper focuses on the challenge that lesbianism poses to the patriarchal system: namely, reclaiming female reproductive rights and negating the necessity of male existence in sexual relationships. The study is limited by a lack of reliable data and existing research. Future research should be undertaken to explore a confirmatory study by doing interviews and questionnaires.

References

- [1] Okin, S. M. Gender inequality and cultural differences. *Political theory*, 1994, 22 (1): 5 - 24.
- [2] Busse, M., & Spielmann, C. Gender inequality and trade. *Review of International Economics*, 2006, 14 (3): 362 - 379.
- [3] Buchmann, C., DiPrete, T. A., & McDaniel, A. Gender inequalities in education. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.*, 2008, 34 (1): 319 - 337.
- [4] Rich, A. On lies, secrets, and silence: Selected prose 1966 - 1978, W. NORTON, 1995.
- [5] Kammila Naidoo, Sexual Violence and "Corrective Rape" in South Africa, *Global Dialogue*, 2018 - 03 - 22. <https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/articles/sexual-violence-and-corrective-rape-in-south-africa>.
- [6] Chang, J., & Tian, H. Girl power in boy love: Yaoi, online female counterculture, and digital feminism in China. *Feminist Media Studies*, 2021, 21 (4): 604 - 620.
- [7] Chen Ke. Danmei Culture and Gender Consciousness: A Study based on the Perspective of the Production and Dissemination of Danmei Texts, Guangdong University of Finance and Economics, 2021.
- [8] Wang Yu. Research on the Change of the Status of American Women during the First World War, Liaoning University, 2019.
- [9] Rich, A. Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Journal of women's History*, 2003, 15 (03): 11 - 48.
- [10] Gough, K. The origin of the family. *Journal of Marriage and family*, 1971, 33 (4): 760 - 77.