Seeing Homosexuality in nowadays society from movie
“Brokeback Mountain”
從電影「斷背山」看現今社會對同性戀觀感之研究

Authors: Mang-Ling Cho, Shu-Ti Yang and Te-Yun Lai
Nanhu Senior High School, Taipei City

作者：卓曼翎，楊書禔，賴得芸

台北市立南湖高級中學二年五班

指導老師：陳怡倩
I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Motivation

Recently, the blooming homosexual movies have aroused increasing public awareness on homosexual issues. These issues are highly debated and have intrigued heated discussion. This can be easily observed in many recent movies centered on homosexuality issues and the recent protests against Proposition No.8 in the United States.

It is shown that societal attitudes toward homosexuality are affected by culture, country and the environment. The Pew Research Center’s 2007 Global Attitudes Survey found that people in Africa and the Middle East strongly objected to homosexuality, whereas some other majorities in Latin American countries and Western European nations demonstrated more acceptance to homosexuality.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International used to claim the relationship between same sex adults as a crime. Since 1994, the United Nations Human Rights Committee still argued that this rule is against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

“LGBT”, acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, is a commonly adopted term in many homosexuality-related publications. It is considered more neutral than “queer” or “lesbigay”. However, this term was not accepted or admitted before. It has been a long history for the minority in the pursuit of the LGBT rights (or gay rights or gay and lesbian rights). Behind those movements and acts, their only goal is to achieve social equality. People who are in this community seek for their rights in the society despite their sexual orientation and gender identity. The group is making activism by building on the basis of political activism. They had held streets marches, protests, parades. Additionally, publications like magazines, films, literature, academic research and writing also are the approaches to voice their hope. Wikipedia, an online information exchange platform, indicated that the LGBT activism and movements were interrelated to the society revolution. It has certain degree of influence on the nation’s improvements. According to previous research, the LGBT history can be divided into three periods: Before 1860, the movements times 1969-1974 and 1987 till present.

First, in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, same sex behavior and cross-dressing was regarded as unacceptable. However, in the 1600s cross dressing was common in some plays, such as in William Shakespeare’ work. Dating back to the 17th century, there was the first announcement or law for homosexuality. Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify’d(1949), which was written in English by Thomas Cannon, was said to be the earliest published defense of
homosexuality. As to the first known argument for homosexuality law, it was reformed by social reformer Jeremy Bentham in England around 1785. The thought of secular humanist inspired Bentham informed the French Revolution. After the emergence of National Constituent Assembly and Assemble’e nationale, France became the first nation to decriminalise homosexuality in 1791. Perhaps attribute to the homosexual Jean Jacques, who was one of the authors of the Napoleonic code.

The second period spans from 1969 to 1974. The new social movements of the sixties including Black Power and anti-Vietnam war movements in the U.S. On the other hand, the Women’s Liberation throughout the Western inspired some LGBT movements and caused the Gay Liberation Movement emerged in the end of the decade. This progress is owed to the Stonewall riots of 1969. A group of lesbian and gay people at a bar in New York resisted a police raid. Stonewall certainly became a vital point of the fledgling movement. Afterwards, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and the Gay Activists’ Alliance were formed. It was at that time that the use of “gay”, as a antonym for “straight” (respectable sexual behavior), it encompassed a range of non-normative sexualities as like LGBT people. Through the way, they were trying to strive for the respect and rights for themselves. A critical value from the movement was gay pride. It was organized by an early leader of GLF, Brenda Howard. And Stonewall became known as Gar pride parades.

Thirdly, from 1987 to present, there has been a increasing number of activities related to homosexuality issue. After the Queer Nation (1990) and the Lesbian Avengers (1992) was formed, some younger activists, seeing gay and lesbian increasingly standing out for their rights, they began to use the word “queer”. They use the word as a defiant statement of all sexual minorities just as the earlier they’ve done with the word “gay”. Some groups like LGBT, LGBTQ and LGBTI, described themselves as “gay rights” groups at 2006 and still fighting for it from time to time.

These foreign experiences also cause some echoes in Taiwan. There have been several activities such as “Taiwan Pride parade”, “protest for anti proposition No.8: against same sex marriage” and so on. As in Europe and the United States, communities like LGBT also fight hard for the rights of the sexual minority people. Research has shown that a growing number of homo organizations are standing out through the parades and seeking the respect from society. This may be the time for them to express themselves.

In 21st century, people have rights to speak up for themselves and in the pursuit of what they want. It is a society for people to have certain human rights. In the reality, it makes people wonder how will the crowd think of homosexuality while they really exist in their life.

Mass communication expresses homosexuality:
While more and more homosexual people parade on the street, the screen in theatres is showing more and more movies about homosexuality as well. No matter is the plot, the script or the story, people may accept it or not, occasionally, it is movie that alters people’s point of seeing view for things.

1.2 Research questions

Because of the above-mentioned reasons, two research questions are addressed:

1. What are high school students’ attitudes toward homosexuality?
2. How do movies have effect on students’ attitude and how are they altered?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Human rights play an important role in the issue of homosexuality. After drafting the introduction, the research is about to track back to the process that homosexual history has all been through. There are 3 perspectives to be shown below: human rights, gay rights and movie effect.

2.1 Human rights

Basically, human rights is the word for saying that being right and having a right (Universal Human Rights in Theory& practice p.7). It can be said that when a person is doing something right or something one’s doing is right, in this occasion, this the thing that human beings talk over so often, human right. Homosexuality is not a disease; our sexual orientation is something natural as print gender and so on. Take human rights as a moral vision, it has a lot to do with the society. Human usually have acquirements in nature, and the society is guided by human rights(Universal Human Rights in Theory& practice p.13). We can see through the relationship between these two unities. When bringing legal and political practice into line, homosexual group is bringing this into the moral vision. Why is concerning on gay rights so important? It is said that individual human rights is the basis of the minority, furthermore minority is what the society inclusive of(Universal Human Rights in Theory& practice p.212). Not only homosexuality but also women rights, negros and so on, the minorities have the rights to seek their rights.

2.2 Gay rights

We are, created equal with unalienable rights, which are life, liberty and in the pursuit of happiness. As human beings we already have life, from 1950s, the Liberation series of Civil Rights, Femme and Homosexuality then could have the chance to defend themselves. In this decade, it may be the time for homosexuality holds the rights in their hands to be in the pursuit of happiness.

The definition of homosexuality can be summarized as:

Male for male, female for female, when one’s sexual attraction is for someone of the same gender, we call it homosexual. It was first used
by Karl Maria Kertbeny in an 1869 pamphlet in which he argued for the repeal of Prussia’s antihomosexual laws. (Prussia is now part of northern Germany.) (Is it a choice? P.1).

Homosexuality movements are vital among all. In 1969, the Stonewall riots took place, the gay, lesbian bisexual and transgender group of resisted the violence from police. The police cuffed the people and even slapping and punching them (Stone butch blues p.7). However, the movements came along with labor liberation and activism for women rights. This is the proofing for that along with time and human rights processing, gay rights movements is moving on as well. While Netherland was the first nation to allow same-sex marriage in 2001, Belgium, Canada, Norway, South Africa and Spain, as per 2008 followed Dutch to permit same sex marriage. Some states in the U.S. are not only trying hard to get in the line in previous time, in August, Chicago, they also defending their civil rights: protest anti the proposition No.8 to against same sex marriage.

2.2 Movie effect

_Brokeback Mountain_ won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, and was honored with Best Picture and Best Director accolades from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, Golden Globe Awards, Producers Guild of America, Critics Choice Awards, and Independent Spirit Awards among many other organizations and festivals. _Brokeback Mountain_ had the most nominations (eight) for the 78th Academy Awards, where it won three: Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Original Score. It was ranked eighth among the highest-grossing romantic dramas of all time.

As to the structure of the story itself, around these two West cowboys, the people in their lives are closer to the situation in reality, in order for us to discuss and make hypothesis easier.

As a equipment, the movie will demonstrate in this research that how the society nowadays is going to react and how is it going to affect the societal point view for homosexuality.

### III. METHOD

In response to the research’s theme: to see homosexuality in nowadays society, the experimental research took high school students as the society group to see through the issue, a careful experiment was designed.

3.1 Participants:

The participants involved in the study are 60 first graders in senior high school, which consists of 30 males and 30 females. The number of male and female is even to eliminate the gender bias. They are randomly selected so as to ensure their faithfulness to their answers, since it concerns the issue of privacy.
3.2 Instrument:

The experiment took two types of instruments: questionnaire and semi-structured interview. First, the questionnaire was centered on the movie *Brokeback Mountain* (See Appendix). It is not only seeing the societal attitudes toward homosexuality, meanwhile it is basis on the equipment—movie. So, the characters around the two cowboys in the story will be the plot in the questionnaire as well. It is further divided into two divisions, A and B; the former questionnaire is for those who have seen the movie and the latter is for those who have not. Secondly, two boys and two girls were randomly chosen to be interviewed. In the semi-structured interview, qualitative data were gathered and later analyzed.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire demonstrate positive attitude toward homosexuality. As Figure 1 reveals, respect, neutral attitude or no special feeling are dominant from the perspective of the 60 participants. It can thus be inferred that the society getting into the evolution that the societal attitudes toward homosexuality became open minded and impartial.

Figure 1. Attitudes toward homosexuality

![Figure 1](image1.png)

Figure 2 and Figure 3 shows the instant thoughts about homosexuality from two genders. The result shows that the proportion of girls having positive feelings for gay is higher than boys do. While 37 percent of the girls hold respectful attitude and 37% percent of girls hold neutral view on homosexuality, boys show less affirmative attitude with 20% of respectful view and 36% of neutral feelings. That is, the data indicated that girls tend to be more liberal in this issue. Aside from the gender difference, it should also be noted that few participants have negative attitude
toward homosexuality with only 3% of girls and 7% of boys feeling uncomfortable.

Figure 2. Girls’ instant thoughts toward homosexuality

Figure 3. Boys’ instant thoughts toward homosexuality

Figure 4. Comparison of boys and girls
The corresponding results can also be observed in the follow-up data analysis. Figure 4 shows the comparison of two genders in the attitude toward gay, lesbian and both. It can be clearly observed that girls have higher tendency to accept homosexuality. Besides, there is also an interesting result if the boys’ attitude is under deeper analysis. While boys reported higher rate of positive perspective on both lesbian and gay, they actually hesitated in accepting gay, as Figure 4 reveals. Since this is hardly explainable, qualitative data from interview is therefore more important in this aspect.

4.2 Interview

4.2.1 Two boys after watching Brokeback Mountain

In the interview, the two boys’ attitudes are correspondent to the questionnaire’s result that they have respect toward homosexuality. However, despite the similarity, there are still some differences between the two boys’ opinion:

First of all, when being asked about negative feelings toward homosexuality, they both responded resistant attitude to gay, while they can still get along with lesbian on account of their masculine behaviors.

As to the reason why they feel this way, boy A took stereo types as response, his counterparts, replied that he can’t accept gay because he is the same gender to gay. He thinks that lesbian may know each other better so they be with each other, and this makes him feels better than gay.

Boy B then chose lesbian from the two options as what they could accept better.

Through the questionnaire and interview, it shows that boys can accept lesbian better than gay.

4.2.2 Two girls after watching the movie

Compare to the boys, girls find gay disgusting, especially being intimate on big screen. Girls indicated that they can’t accept a gay couple getting close on the street, they strongly feel strange about it. This can be the reason why girl have more possibilities to feel yuck at gay than boys do in the questionnaire.

Interesting, girl B changed her attitudes toward gay after watching the movie. She said that during the movie, she found that homosexuality is like heterosexual, they love each other indeed, they share feelings and shelters together. Furthermore, they have to struggle and care about how the society looks at their relationship. As this point of view, she changed her view point for homosexuality after watching Brokeback Mountain.

REFERENCES


**APPENDIX**

從斷背山看同志情---之現今同志與社會的關係

您好！我們是台北市立南湖高中的學生☺，我們正在做關於社會大眾對同志觀感的論文，並將參加台北市學生小論文比賽。您可以安心作答，此問卷不會有其他用途。同時，為達到問卷結果的真實性；並維護您的隱私，此問卷將採不記名方式進行；您寶貴的答案也將受到完全的保密。

你們的回答將會是我們論文研究的重要資料來源，再次感謝您的抽空回答！

**HAVE A NICE DAY:**

●您是：□男性 □女性 
●年齡範圍在：□16~22 □23~39 □40 歲以上

●請問您對同志的直覺反應是：
□抱持尊重的態度 □不排斥 □沒特別感覺 □感到噁心 □其他：
●請問您週遭是否有同志友人：
□有，認識程度 □熟 □認識而已 □只是單純知道
□沒有
●請問較可接受：□男同志 □女同志 □皆可 □完全不能
●請問您對男同志戀人的反應是：
□抱持尊重的態度 □不排斥 □沒特別感覺 □感到噁心 □其他：
●如感到噁心、不舒服的可能原因是：
□覺得男生不該和男生在一起 □單純覺得男生沒辦法扮演女生的角色
□沒原因 □其他：
●請問您對女同志戀人的反應是：
□抱持尊重的態度 □不排斥 □沒特別感覺 □感到噁心 □其他：
●如感到噁心、不舒服的可能原因是：
□覺得女生不該和女生在一起 □單純覺得女生沒辦法扮演男生的角色
□沒原因 □其他：

*有看過 [斷背山] 此片的請回答問題 A; 反之請回答問題 B, thanks!

**A.**

◎當初想看此片的原因是：
□電影同志議題, 引起想觀賞此片的好奇 □大導演李安的作品, 單純欣賞 □親朋好友推薦 □其他：

◎若您是片中角色，您的做法會是：
1. 若您是片中斷背山農場的主人，發現所雇員工的同志傾向您會：
□與片中相同, 免談直接開除 □提出提醒, 希望在職場不要有此現象
1. 若您是片中男主角週遭的友人，對於下了斷背山，對”斷背情”無法忘懷的主角，有何反應：
   □勸他們回到正常生活 □支持他們的心裡的聲音 □私人問題，不會干涉 □其他：

2. 若您是片中男主角的父母，發現兒子有同志傾向您會：
   □難過失望透頂，當作沒這個兒子 □傷心之餘，雖難以接受，仍尊重兒子 □痛在心裡，假装沒發現 □支持 □其他：

3. 若您是片中男主角的老婆，發現另一半也愛男人的事實會：
   □悲憤交加，無溝通餘地，直接分家 □咬牙隱忍，顧全大局（為孩子著想）勉強維持婚姻 □愛，就是給他自由，好聚好散，黯然分手 □其他：

4. 若您是片中男主角的老婆，發現另一半也愛男人的事實會：
   □悲憤交加，無溝通餘地，直接分家 □咬牙隱忍，顧全大局（為孩子著想）勉強維持婚姻 □愛，就是給他自由，好聚好散，黯然分手 □其他：

◎看完此片後，您的感覺：（請圈選）
   對同志的「敏感度」較為緩和（例如：不舒服、無法接受同志戀情、公開談論同志議題的不適應感等...）【有 / 沒有】

◎演員李安說：「每個人心中都有座斷背山，只是沒上去過罷了。」看完此片，您同意此想法嗎？【YES/NO】

B.

◎當初沒有看這部片的原因是：
   □對同志議題不感興趣 □不想看到男同志親密畫面 □單純不想看

1. 片中農場主人發現男主角們的同志傾向，旋即將他們開除。如果您是農場主人您會：
   □與片中相同，免談直接開除 □提出提醒，希望在職場不要有此現象 □視若無睹 □支持 □其他：

2. 片中男主角週遭的人，對有男同志傾向的人態度嗤之以鼻（甚至曾有攻擊男同志的暴力事件發生...）如果您是男主角週遭的人，對於下了斷背山，對”斷背情”無法忘懷的主角，有何反應？
   □無法接受 □抱持尊重的態度 □支持 □其他：

3. 因故事背景為美國西部，片中男主角父母經營農場，觀念傳統。如果您是男主的父母，發現男主角的同志傾向後，會有何反應？
   □難過失望透頂，當作沒這個兒子 □傷心之餘，雖難以接受，仍尊重兒子 □痛在心裡，假装沒發現 □支持 □其他：

4. 片中男主角的老婆發現男主角的同志傾向，如果您是片中男主角的老婆，發現另一半也愛男人的事實會：
   □悲憤交加，好好和他理論一番，絕不原諒，分家！ □咬牙隱忍，顧全大局（為孩子著想）勉強維持婚姻 □愛，就是給他自由，好聚好散，黯然分手

◎演員李安說：「每個人心中都有座斷背山，只是沒上去過罷了。」您同意此想法嗎？【YES/NO】

◎請問此問卷是否有需改善之處？（ex. 格式、排版或選項等...）
再次感激您的作答！

HAPPY

牛

YEAR!:} 

南湖高中小論文小組敬上