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Coming Out Experiences of Non-heterosexuals and Their Families in

Japan: Asserting Normality and Preserving Harmony

by

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ABSTRACT

In a heteronormative and homophobic environment, coming out to one's self and others is a challenging experience for non-heterosexuals. Specifically, coming out to their own families is considerably more difficult because family is seen as a vital part of life. Family members also face difficulties "understanding" and "accepting" the fact that one of their members is a non-heterosexual. The studies of non-heterosexual coming out and the experiences of family members have developed mainly in the field of Western psychoanalysis. Only a few examples exist in Japan. Previous research neglected cultural specificities, but nevertheless predicted that the experiences of non-heterosexuals and their families would differ in different societies with different norms and cultural values.

This paper explores how the experiences of non-heterosexuals and their families were affected by Japanese cultural norms of interaction, family and gender. Interviews with 24 non-heterosexuals revealed that they had to deal with "perceived homophobia," which was created by the expectation of "respectable Japanese selves," in addition to heteronormativity and homophobia. Interviewing family members in 12 families with non-heterosexual members clarified the character of the struggle over "accepting" and disclosing non-heterosexual members to others as due to the fear of courtesy stigma. This stigma existed in society generally but was even stronger in the more intimate sphere called *seken*. *Seken* refers to "human relationships with people one knows," in which Japanese need to value their sameness with others to preserve harmony and through which they gain the meaning of their existence. Thus, family members emphasized non-heterosexual members being "normal or ordinary [*futsuu*]" in order to "accept" non-heterosexual members and to manage courtesy stigma. In proclaiming the normality of non-heterosexual members, they recalibrated heteronormativity inside and outside the family. Insisting that having a non-heterosexual member was *futsuu* was used as a

strategy ["*futsuu* strategy"] of family preservation. They reconstructed their family including the non-heterosexual member and redefining their family as *futsuu*. However, this also perpetuated the force of *seken* and reproduced heteronormativity.

In sum, the Western studies and theories were not fully able to explain the case of non-heterosexuals and their families in the Japanese context, because their experiences were highly influenced by cultural norms and values prioritizing others' feelings regarding Japanese social order to maintain harmony within *seken* over individual identity and opinions. This study therefore contributes to the universal understanding about non-heterosexuals and their families.

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COUNTRIES?

Research Interests

It is often said that Japan is behind the curve on the equality of non-heterosexuals; even though Japan is considered a developed country. Comparing the participants of Pride Parades in the US and Japan in 2013, while about 2 million joined the New York City Pride and about a million people participated in the San Francisco Pride (Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2014a: 165-66), only 12 thousand participated in the Tokyo Rainbow Pride (Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2014b) and about 6 thousand people joined the Kansai Rainbow Festa in Osaka (Kanpare 2013). Moreover, while the Japanese government has taken the relationships between suicide rates and sexual minorities into account in 2012 (Cabinet Office 2012) and one ward in Tokyo [Shibuya ward] began issuing partnership certificates for same-sex couples in 2015, the US Supreme Court ruled in 2015 that states cannot ban same-sex marriage and same-sex couples now enjoy the same legal rights and benefits as married heterosexual couples. In Europe, Denmark was the first country in the world to introduce Domestic Partnerships in 1999. Other European countries followed in subsequent years, so that in 2016 same-sex marriage is also legal in countries such as Norway, Sweden, Island, the Netherlands, and France. It could therefore be true that the Western countries and the US are more "developed" or "modernized" when we define "success" by the size of social movements as well as legalizing same-sex marriage and providing equal rights for non-heterosexuals. However, can equality for non-heterosexuals in Japan be "successful" and achievable by just following what the Western countries and the US have done?

It should not be a simple argument whether Japan is be ahead or behind with the

Western measurement. Maybe in a concrete level, the Western countries and the US are more concerned about non-heterosexuals' rights. What about the social and cultural level? For instance, in the US, even since President Barack Obama, who made clear statement which made him LGBT-friendly (The White House 2009), became the president in 2009, the hate crime rate due to sexual orientation bias has not changed and it has been even increased: 16.7%, 18.5%, 19.3%, 20.8%, 19.6% and 20.2% since 2008 to 2013 (FBI 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014). Of course, these numbers do not necessarily tell us why hate crimes have increased. It could be because non-heterosexuals have become more visible in society or it also can be because more non-heterosexuals have been able to report violence. Yet, these numbers also tell us that discrimination, biases and violence against non-heterosexuals are still strongly rooted in the US society. In Japan, Ishihara (2012), based on the result of World Values Survey, points out that "tolerance" towards homosexuality has heightened since 1990[1].

Furthermore, so called *onee*[2] *tarento*, famous people who are usually referred to as effeminate men including cross-dressers and transgendered people, are widely recognized on the entertainment industry. While cross-dressers, transgendered persons, drag queens and gays are all called *onee*, their sexual identity and orientation are often unknown. Moreover, lesbians and transgendered men are usually absent from the media. Yet, it is still the fact that we see more people whose sexualities are beyond gender dualism and heterosexuality, especially after Shibuya ward in Tokyo passed the ordinance to issue partnership certificates for same-sex couples in 2015. However, as Gingold (2015) points out, "while being openly gay has been OK

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[1] As Ishihara (2012) argues in the limitation of his study, the questioner used terms whether people think homosexuality is "right/wrong" and "acceptable/unacceptable," yet, how respondents interpret "acceptable" is unknown, which might heighten tolerance towards homosexuality.

[2] *Onee* literally means the shorter version of sister. However, this is used to refer to effeminate men who dress and behave like women. It is also used as a derogatory term to refer to male homosexuals. *Onee* is depicted image in media.

for famous people or anime characters, on an individual level, it's been really hard to be out in Japan."

In the Japanese context, non-heterosexuals often talk about how, when and to whom they have come out. During their discussion, the statement, "I don't think coming out is necessary," is commonly heard among non-heterosexuals. In Japan, "coming out" is not as encouraged as in the US, where it is believed to be the way to seek happiness, pursue freedom and resist oppression. Why is coming out different in Japan and the US? Is it because non-heterosexuals in Japan can live more comfortably without coming out? Or is it because non-heterosexuals in the US have easier and safer places than Japanese to come out since their equality is more protected? In other words, is coming out more difficult in Japan because non-heterosexuals in Japan are too oppressed to come out? Is coming out in Japan really necessary in the first place?

Moreover, in speaking of "coming out," we should remember that family members also confront a choice of whether to "come out" or not after they learn that one of their members is a non-heterosexual. While coming out to their family members is considered to be one of the most challenging experiences for non-heterosexuals, the family members, who also struggle after the disclosure, are often time neglected and invisible. Their struggles are also created within societies which still stigmatize non-heterosexuals. Therefore, non-heterosexuals' coming out is said to cause "family collapse" (LaSala 1998, 2000, 2010, Savin-Williams and Dubé 1998) because coming out is influential on the family system. So it is important to ask how do these families negotiate with non-heterosexual members and deal with changes in the family system? How are these experiences different in the US and Japan?

One of the tasks of this paper is to ask how the Western theories are applicable to explain

the case of Japan. The second task of this paper is to see how cultural norms and values affect the experiences of non-heterosexuals and their family members in Japan. A third task is to see the differences between how families of non-heterosexual members change before and after the disclosure. This paper addresses three questions through a review of previous studies on non-heterosexuals, their families and family studies, as well as field research conducted in Japan. The findings contribute not only different insights on studies developed in the West but also possible solutions for non-heterosexuals and their families' struggles in Japan.

Outline of This Dissertation

This paper consists of seven chapters. The beginning of each chapter will present a brief summary of the previous chapter as well as outline of the next chapter. Thus, detail descriptions of chapters are found there. Below I provide a concise overview of this paper.

The first two chapters will summarize the relevant literature and key terms. Reviewing previous researches and studies will indicate questions and purpose of this paper. In the end of Chapter 2, research sample as well as the methods of field research conducted in Japan will be explained. Chapter 3 will go over the narratives of non-heterosexuals and examine what they experience and how to negotiate when they came out to themselves and other heterosexuals. Meanwhile, how their experiences were affected by cultural norms will be analyzed. This reveals an obstacle, "perceived homophobia," as another factor that oppresses non-heterosexuals in addition to heteronormativity and homophobia in Japan. From Chapter 4, the narratives of family members of a non-heterosexual will be introduced. The chapter provides details of their experiences after they found out a family member was a non-heterosexual. It includes their initial reactions, their struggles and the "understanding" process they went through. Gender perspectives will be taken into account when analyzing the experiences of

family members. For example, the experiences of mothers were more complicated than those of other family members due to their expected roles in society and among family. In Chapter 5, the meaning of "acceptance" when family members insisted they "accepted" non-heterosexual members will be critically examined. This chapter also will take the effect of *seken* into account to clarify how family members negotiate or not negotiate with others. This chapter will unveil what "courtesy stigma" means for families by looking at their decisions of not disclosing non-heterosexual members to others. Chapter 6 will explore how families have changed in their style by closely looking at mothers and their roles. This will help to see recreation of the "families with non-heterosexual members," which challenges "ideal family style" or traditional families. This paper concludes with the discussion of the potentiality of "*futsuu* strategy" to seek the better environment for non-heterosexuals and their families in Japan, and some suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 1. NON-HETEROSEXUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN A

HETERONORMATIVE AND HOMOPHOBIC SOCIETY

This chapter will review relevant literature on non-heterosexuals and their families as well as defining important terms such as heteronormativity and homophobia, which are the root of discrimination against non-heterosexuality. All quotes from Japanese literature are my own translation. The first part of this chapter will introduce the history of how non-heterosexuals have fought against oppression in the US and Japan and how they have realized the importance of constructing non-heterosexual identity. The second part of this chapter will present the reactions of family members when they discovered a member was a non-heterosexual. This chapter ends by pointing out, shortcomings in the applicability of Western studies in looking at the Japanese case.

1.1. Three Types of Sexualities: Physical Sexuality, Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

There are mainly three components[3] to thinking about human sexuality (The Network of Sexual Minority Teachers 2006): physical sexuality, sexual identity and sexual orientation. Physical sexuality is defined at birth and determined by biological traits. If one's gentile is not obvious enough for determination, it is called intersexuality. However, a child's sex is decided by parents most of the time because parents are required to report births and, in Japan, a baby's sex is registered in *koseki* [family registry]. Physical sexuality is still highly dependent upon dualism: either male or female. While physical sexuality is medically and biologically determined, sexual identity is how one identifies regardless of physical sexuality. When physical sexuality and sexual identity do not match, it is classified as Gender Dysphoria in the

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[3] Some (Sanbe 2014, QWRC 2010) use four characteristics for illustrating sexuality. The additional one is the performance of sexuality. This is how people perform gender based on gender stereotypes.

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Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-V (DSM-V). Some who have Gender Dysphoria identify as transgendered people. To use this term, acknowledges overcoming or challenging the existing gender framework, living subjectively and proactively (The Network of Sexual Minority Teachers 2006). When a person's physical sexuality is male and sexual identity is female, they are identified as MTF [Male to Female] while Female to Male is described as FTM. Unlike physical sexuality, sexual identity tolerates choices other than male or female, such as X gender. Those who are not comfortable with dualism, may identify as X gender and this is usually understood as gender-neutral. Sexual orientation is the concept that expresses which gender a person is attracted to. When person is attracted to people of opposite sex, they are usually called heterosexual, while homosexuality is understood as attraction to people of the same-sex.

1.1.1. LGBT, sexual minorities and non-heterosexuals

Most societies treat people's sexuality as "normal" when individuals' physical sexuality and sexual identity match, as well as when their sexual orientation is toward people of opposite sex. If this sexuality is taken as "standard" or "normal" sexuality, those who do not fit this pattern would be categorized as "sexual minorities." Sexual minorities are also known as LGBT. LGBT stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered/Transsexual. The categorization LGBT is criticized for not including the full range of diverse sexualities. It omits, for example, intersexual and asexual people. While acknowledging this criticism, in this paper, LGBT and LGB refer inclusively to all the diverse forms of non-heterosexual sexuality, as well as their organizations and communities.

In addition to these terms, non-heterosexuality is another possible term to refer to LGB or homosexuals, who are same-sex sexual oriented. Explained more in following sections, the

term homosexual originated in clinical description when homosexuality was thought to be a disease and, thus, was criminalized in society. Putting "non" before heterosexual allows critique and challenges normalizing heterosexuality, with its discriminatory and negative connotation toward homosexuals and their history. Thus, in this paper, non-heterosexuality and LGB are used interchangeably to refer to people whose sexual orientation is toward people of same-sex.

1.2. History of Oppression against Non-heterosexual in the US and Japan

Homosexuals have been oppressed worldwide. Oppression tends to be seen from a Marxist perspective, in which oppression is the product of class or economic conditions (Altman 1993). However, oppression also means when "those holding authority systematically impose burdens and penalties upon relatively powerless segments of a society." (Humphreys 1972: 13-14) Being ignored or made invisible is part of the oppression homosexuals have suffered and struggled through. In this paper, oppression is defined as having three dimensions that overlap: 1) legal oppression, 2) cultural oppression, and 3) psychological oppression. Legal oppression involves authority, in which a group in power places pressure on a powerless group (Humphreys 1972). Their power is also supported by hegemonic and naturalized beliefs, which results in excluding not-mainstream beliefs and leads to cultural oppression. People are socialized and they internalized these beliefs, which leads to psychological oppression. In sum, heterosexuality is naturalized and hegemonic in society. Often referred to as heteronormativity, this social circumstances expect people to be heterosexual and they internalize these beliefs, resulting in stigmatization of homosexuality, which is understood as homophobia. Laws are based on these mainstream beliefs; thus, legal restriction is legitimated in society. Homosexuals have fought against oppressions to reach the point where their presence is acknowledged today, even though oppression against homosexuality remains.

1.2.1. Gay liberation in the US: The stonewall riot and HIV

The federal government of the US has recently begun to take action to provide homosexuals with equal rights. However, before these dramatic changes, there was a long history when homosexuals were stigmatized as diseased and criminalized. Up until 1973, homosexuality was included in the DSM (Vincent et al. 1997)[4]. Due to stigmatization and criminalization, they were silenced and became the target of violence, discrimination and punishment. However, a dramatic change was triggered by the Stonewall Riot, which took place in a gay bar in New York City on June 27, 1969. Even though gay liberation in the US was formulating after World War II, with groups such as the homophile movement, the Mattachine Society and the first lesbian organization called the Daughters of Bilitis (Humphreys 1972, Iino 2008, Kawaguchi 2003b), the Stonewall Riot was the historical event that catalyzed the gay rights movement in America (D'emilio 1998, Haider-Markel and Meiter 1996, Humphreys 1972, Kawaguchi 2003b, Sullivan 1987, Unno 2005, Vincent et al. 1997).

Before the midnight on June 27, 1969, police officers came to raid the Stonewall Inn. There are several different theories about how the Stonewall Riot happened. However, the Stonewall Inn was an inviting target. Because owners managed the bar without a liquor license, there were rumors of connections to crime organizations, and of nearly naked "go-go boys" being offered for entertainment (D'emilio 1998). Moreover, customers of the Stonewall Inn were likely to be "young and nonwhite," which might have made them an easy target (D'emilio 1998). Before the riot, homosexuality and the "gayworld" (Altman 1993: 27) had been the target of police violence and harassment; thus, homosexuals had been forced to be patient. However, on the day of the riot, people acted differently. They were explosive and confronted

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[4] Vincent et al. (1997) included two Japanese authors, who are the writers of the important book *Gay Studies*. All quotes from this book are also my translation.

the police raid. People threw things at police officers and their cars[5]. The next day, an estimated 2,000 people fought against about 400 police officers. People shouted "Gay Power!" and confronted the police (D'emilio 1998: 232, Humphreys 1972: 6), and the rioting lasted for four more nights.

After this riot, women and men in New York organized the Gay Liberation Front. It spread to many cities and countries and motivated sexual minorities to form gay liberation groups (D'emilio 1998, Vincent et al. 1997). The riot made homosexuals recognize their oppressive situation and realize the importance of constructing a homosexual identity. Since then, homosexuals have become more visible in society.

However, the 1980s brought another shocking event: the advent of AIDS/HIV. On July 3, 1981, the New York Times reported on HIV, saying "the rare cancer was found among 41 male homosexuals in NY and California," and this was the first news about AIDS in the world (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010: 12). In 1982, this mysterious disease was named AIDS, and the following year it was found that this disease was caused by HIV virus (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010). There often, homosexuality was connected with disease and the stigma grew even stronger. In sum, the riot was influential not only for liberation movement but also for the development of academic research on homosexuality, and the advent of AIDS had powerful impacts upon both homosexual individuals and academia.

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[5] One leading story of the starting point of this riot is the presence of trans women. Another important and unneglectable point is that most of people who were involved with resisting violence and discrimination were trans women and gay men, who were sex workers (Kinkaid 2015).

1.2.2. Homosexuality in Japan: Westernization, HIV, "gay boom" and OCCUR in the first

court case

Nanshoku [pederasty] is a well-known term to describe male same-sex sexual encounters in pre-modern Japan. The *Nanshoku* culture was widespread in the Edo era [1603-1868], and was characterized by two distinctive types of relationships: among *samurai* and among *kabuki* actors and their customers[6] (Furukawa 1997, 2001, McLelland 2000). The Meiji Restoration brought Western perspectives and cultures to Japan, and the reputation of sexuality was no exception. The Western discourses on male same-sex encounters were introduced; namely, a deviant and dangerous passion toward people of the same sex (Furukawa 1994, 1997, 2001, McLelland 2000). In 1873, *keikan-zai* [the sodomy ordinance] was established to criminalize homosexual acts. However, it did not work because the *nanshoku* culture was widely accepted and commonly practiced among people, which led the ordinance being banned in 1882. Male same-sex sexual encounters were widely practiced among male students up until the end of Meiji period [1868-1912] and the early Taisho period [1912-1926]. The weakening of strong militarism, establishment of women's schools, the increase of romantic relationships between men and women were all factors in declining same-sex encounters among men. In the same period, the term "homosexuality" was spread in order to explain the new incident: homosexual acts among women (Furukawa 1997, 2001).

Female students were educated to be good wives [*ryousaikenbo*] because they were expected to become housewives, especially after the wars with Sino and Russia brought a

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[6] *Nanshoku* among *samurai* was more valued than that among *kabuki* actors and their customers; the former *nanshoku* consisted of loyalty, in which both parties did not have to lose their male identity, while the latter *nanshoku* was prostitution, in which *kabuki* actors dressed and acted feminine (Furukawa 1997, 2001). In the end of the Edo period, the *nanshoku* culture among *kabuki* actors was weakened because of the government's strict regulations against prostitution.

change in industrial structures (Furukawa 2001). The ideology of romantic love and the respected female virginity brought intimacy among female students. Their intimate relationships were a concern among educators because these relationships would threaten to deny male presences and marriage (Furukawa 2001). Therefore, the term "homosexuality" was needed to explain homosexual acts among female students, because the terms *nanshoku* and *keikan* were the descriptions for male homosexual acts. Negative connotations toward "homosexuality" became even stronger in the Taisho and Showa periods [1926-1989], due to the introduction of sexology from the West. The book *Psychopathia Sexualis* was published in 1886 by Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, and a translation of this book was introduced to Japan in 1913. In this book, Krafft-Ebing characterizes "abnormal" sexuality, and homosexuality is also identified as "abnormal" (Furukawa 1994, 1997, 2001). Furukawa (1994, 1997) points out that homosexuality as *nanshoku* became "homosexuality as sexual perversion." This Westernized concept of homosexuality, which is stigmatized and discriminated against, still remains today in Japan.

As explained, the Stonewall riot was influential to many other countries. Yet, there was no Japanese gay and lesbian movement similar to the US or other Western nations. There were however, small local organizations in the 1970s in Japan (McLelland 2005). Like the US, the discovery of HIV in Japan spotlighted the existence of non-heterosexuality, especially gay males. Although there were people with AIDS in 1984 due to blood-transfusions, the media did not report AIDS until a male homosexual was infected in 1985 (Hasegawa 2003, Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010). However, the first gay group, International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) was established in 1984 by Teishirou Minami, who was an editor of gay magazine called *Adon*. In 1985, after a male homosexual with AIDS was found, OCCUR, the "Organization for Moving Gays and Lesbians," was established to deal with the issue of AIDS and gay rights. OCCUR's activities had a substantial payoff in the form of removing the

classification of homosexuality from the Japan Society of Psychology and Neurology, and redefining homosexuality in major Japanese dictionaries and encyclopedias (McLelland 2005). Yet, their activities gained more public attention after the "gay boom" occurred in the 1990s, when print media showed more interest in gay culture and homosexual identity among activists (McLelland 2005). Since 1990s, Pride Parades and events began to be organized in major cities in Japan, such as Tokyo, Sapporo and Osaka.

One of the events occurred in the 1990s at a "Training and Accommodation Institution for Youth" in Tokyo and this event publicized longtime harassment against homosexuals in Japan (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, Vincent et al. 1997). OCCUR was having a study group at the institution openly as a homosexual organization, but their members were harassed by other members from different groups, such as Christian and Chorus groups. Members of OCCUR were spied on and laughed at while taking a bath, and derogatory words, such as "*homo*" and "*okama*[7] [queer]," were heaped on them (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, Ooishi 1995, Vincent et al. 1997). Although OCCUR members lodged a protest against the institution for discrimination and even discussed among groups, OCCUR members were treated cruelly. Additionally, the institution decided to reject OCCUR requests to use the place with the reason below. "It is not our concern that your group is for homosexuals and insists on it because it is your freedom. However, it is our concern that considerable friction is generated with other groups and creating extra concerns for us because of your group feature…" (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010: 47-49) After the discussion with the institution, OCCUR decided to take legal action. This trial lasted for 6 years and this was the first major court case for dealing with homosexuality in Japan. In 1997, OCCUR won the case (Fushimi 2003, Kazama and

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[7] *Okama* literally means a pot but usually refers to cross-dressed and effeminate men (McLelland 2000); thus, widely used as a derogatory term. This term is also problematic since it does not distinguish gays and MTF transgendred people (The Network of Sexual Minority Teachers 2006).

Kawaguchi 2010).

1.2.3. Homophobia and heteronormativity

One of the earliest sociological studies on homosexuality was *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation* written by Altman in 1971. The beginning of the first chapter in his book starts with the statement, "To be a homosexual in our society is to be constantly aware that one bears a stigma." (Altman 1993: 20) His book made people realize that those categorized as homosexual were not oppressed individually (Altman 1993). This triggered the creation of the term homophobia. In 1973, in the field of psychology, Weinberg published the book called *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* and introduced the term homophobia, which is "the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals." (Weinberg 1972: 4) This concept supported the notion that the ones who needed a "cure" were not homosexual individuals but those who have a phobia about homosexuals or a homophobic social structure (Vincent et al. 1997: 33).

Weinberg identifies five factors that motivate homophobia in the US: 1) religion; 2) fear inside of one's self; 3) the effect of masculinity and its threat; 4) threats to majority values; and 5) the threat to modern nuclear family. Moreover, as Weinberg notes, a homophobic reaction can be seen within homosexuals (Weinberg 1972), which is often called internalized homophobia. Szymanski and Chung cited several clinicians' definition of internalized homophobia, and this refers to when gays and lesbians internalize negative feelings toward their sexuality unconsciously or consciously (Szymanski and Chung 2001). Hudson and Ricketts (1980) claim that homophobia and homonegativism are distinct. They used homonegativism to refer to "the entire domain or catalogue of anti-gay responses," while they regarded Weinberg's definition of homophobia is one dimension of homonegativism (Hudson and Ricketts 1980: 358). Homophobia in this paper refers to not only fear of non-

heterosexuality but also negative feelings like disgust, discomfort, aversion, anger as well as negative behavior including violence and denial of non-heterosexuality. There are also phobias against bisexuals or transsexuals that can be called biphobia or transphobia, but in this paper the term homophobia refers to the phobia against sexual minorities in general.

Weinberg (1972) also states that people have a homophobic reaction not only because homosexuality is labeled as a problem, but also "because [heterosexuality] is still a majority point of view." (5) Thus, as Weinberg (1972: 16) puts it, a homophobic reaction is influenced by the "threat to values," in which people whose norms are challenged and feel they are being harassed. This suggests that homophobia is produced and reproduced by normalized belief in heterosexuality which is called compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980) or heteronormativity (Shaw and Lee 2006, Warner 1991).

Butler's argument may help to provide better understanding of the relationships between homophobia and heteronormativity. Judith Butler, one of the important theorists in the field of gender and sexuality, explains that gender as well as sex is constructed by continuous normalization of the social norms, and regulatory practices reproduce its roles and norms (Butler 1993, 2006). Butler (1993) points out that these individuals' attitude is a performance and emphasizes the differences in performance as just an action and performance as a "regularized and constrained repetition of norms." (95) Performance is not the individual's will, but the repetition of norms shapes the condition for the individuals to perform. Butler calls it a "ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production." (Butler 1993: 95) However, since the determination of who to punish is based on laws which are created by those who are in power, those who are outside the power will be punished (Butler 1993). Therefore, even individuals who try to

perform based on the social norms are always under the threat of punishment. This implies that heteronormativity is socially constructed and it determines individuals' performance, because if individuals fail to perform based on norms, they will get punished. Furthermore, they are always under the threat, which is also understood as stigmatization of non-heterosexuals or homophobia since they are powerless in heteronormative society if they fail to perform normatively.

Consequently, oppression of non-heterosexuality is rooted in heteronormativity or compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia worldwide (Altman 1993, Eaklor 2008, Kazama 2002a, Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, Pharr 2006, Rich 1980, Vincent et al. 1997). As Eaklor (2008: 4) puts it, "homophobia and heterosexism are equally effective in enforcing silence and invisibility, which return the favor by maintaining homophobia and heterosexism."

1.3. Construction of Homosexual Identity and the Coming Out Process

Lesbian and gay studies have been based on the subject position or the construction of identity in order to resist homophobia or oppression. In heteronormative society, where homosexuality is treated as an illness and "deviant," the most important priority is to establish a "positive" image of homosexual identity for resistance or liberation. Through constructing non-heterosexuality, they "come out." "Coming out" is a shortened form of "coming out of the closet." The closet is a metaphor of the space where one stays and lives in denial and secrecy by hiding their non-heterosexuality. Thus, coming out of the closet refers to when one is aware of and reveals their sexual identity and orientation. Further sections will look at how one establishes non-heterosexual identity discussed in the West. This will lead to question of whether or not constructing non-heterosexual identity is enough for non-heterosexuals living in Japan.

1.3.1. Western psychological perspectives: Cass's and Coleman's models

Homosexual identity formation has been discussed in the field of psychoanalysis. The goal of psychoanalytic theory is to demonstrate how individuals establish their non-heterosexual identity as a solid identity, in which people integrate non-heterosexual identity and treat it as a way of life. One the popular scholar on this theory, whom other scholars also often cite, is Vivienne Cass. Cass (1979) discusses the psychological changes during the development of identity and illustrates six stages of homosexual identity formation; "Identity Confusion"; "Identity Comparison"; "Identity Tolerance"; "Identity Acceptance"; "Identity Pride"; and "Identity Synthesis." The time required for each stage differs among people. On the final stage, people acknowledge the social complexity in which there are heterosexuals who support homosexuality and those who do not. Thus, people in this stage are able to "synthesize" their private identity as homosexuals with their public image as heterosexuals. Thus, their homosexual identity becomes a part of all their identities, even how they present themselves in public, and homosexuality becomes part of one consistent self. As Cass notes, these stages do not apply to all people; however, these stages are broad guideline of how one constructs a homosexual identity.

The issue of "coming out" is often discussed along with identity formation. Coleman (1982) proposes five stages of coming out in the Western psychoanalytical contexts. Coleman's definition of "coming out" depends more on a disclosure to self and other non-heterosexuals than to society or heterosexuals. Thus, his model overlaps with the homosexual identity construction process. Table 1 shows the comparison between Cass's and Colman's models.

Table 1. Comparison of Cass's and Coleman's Models

Cass	Coleman
	1ˢᵗ Stage "Pre-Coming Out" • Realization of difference from others without identifying as homosexual or heterosexual
1ˢᵗ Stage "Identity Confusion" • Doubt own sexuality as homosexual without knowing what it means to be a homosexual that confuses them and feel alienated = "potentially" homosexual" • Seeking information, rejecting attractions to people of the same-sex that might resolve their confusion and alienation	**2ⁿᵈ Stage "Coming Out"** • Acknowledge homosexuality as the difference • Two ways to accept their homosexuality: 1) Gaining acceptance from numbers of persons 2) Seeking acceptance from other homosexuals
2ⁿᵈ Stage "Identity Comparison" • Concern about both how they perceive themselves and how others perceive homosexual behavior → isolation • Pretend to be heterosexual to reduce feelings of isolation • Extreme isolation motivates them to contact others	
3ʳᵈ Stage "Identity Tolerance" • Perceive their sexuality as homosexuals; thus, they are more aware of how others see them → Isolation → Seek interaction with other homosexuals or "homosexual subcultures" to reduce isolated feelings	**3rd Stage "Exploration"** • Exploring, testing or experimenting with their new sexuality to gain a positive self-image
4ᵗʰ Stage "Identity Acceptance" • Frequent interaction with other homosexuals helps to normalize homosexuality and fosters acceptance of homosexual self-image • Choosing where to portray a homosexual self-image to avoid risks	
5ᵗʰ Stage "Identity Pride" • Less concern about how others see them, provides "the freedom to choose disclosure as a strategy for coping"	**4ᵗʰ Stage "First Relationships"** • Extend the interaction with other homosexuals that makes them desire a relationship
6ᵗʰ Stage "Identity Synthesis" • Homosexual identity infuses all aspects of identity; there is one consistent self across social contexts	**5ᵗʰ Stage" Integration"** • Comfortable with their sexuality so that they start seeking a long-term relationship

This table is based on Cass's model and it shows how Coleman's model is similar and different from Cass. Coleman (1982) has a distinct first stage, while his second stage is essentially the same as Cass's first stage, as Coleman points out. The strategies in the second stage of Coleman's model can also be seen in Cass's model. As Coleman notes, his third stage is similar to Cass's third and fourth stages in which people interact with other homosexuals to develop a positive homosexual self-image. Cass's fifth stage is not seen in Coleman's model. Instead, Coleman fourth stage is independent from Cass's, in which people extend the interaction with other homosexuals that makes them desire a relationship. This stage is especially important for reaching the final stage of Coleman's model because the last stage is about being comfortable with their sexuality in order to seek a long-term relationship. Yet, the final stages in both models are very much similar: individuals fully identify themselves as homosexuals (Cass 1979) so that they seek a long term relationship (Coleman 1982) in which non-heterosexual identity is a way of life.

1.3.2. Experiences of Japanese forms of homophobia after gaining homosexual identity and coming out

In Japan, homosexuals have not gained a political identity, which diminishes the development of homosexual movements as well as academic research (Vincent et al. 1997). This issue appeared notably when OCCUR confronted discrimination about the use of a public institution. Because homosexuals have faced discrimination and also been socialized to oppress their inner struggle, members of OCCUR "were surprised at they had even a choice to get 'angry' about being discriminated and harassed," because "being 'angry' is a subjective action." (Vincent et al. 1997: 186) When they went to court, they were required to verbalize in public for the first time experiences, such as their difficulties accepting their homosexuality. After that, homosexuals began to gain language to talk about themselves and share stories with other

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homosexuals. Since the 1990s, bibliographies of gays and lesbians have been published in Japanese (Fushimi 1991, Kakefuda 1992) and received public attention. These narratives written by homosexual individuals in Japan revealed that their experiences of oppression were somewhat similar to those individuals in the US confronted, and their struggles were caused by homophobia (Horie 2004, 2006, Kawaguchi 2003a, Kazama 2002b, Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, Vincent et al. 1997), which is produced and reproduced by heteronormativity. Although previous literature illustrates homosexuals' struggle to accept their sexuality and how it diminishes over time, there is no theory on the process of identity construction, as the US.

Previous research on homosexuals in Japan also suggests that the quality of homophobia and its effects work differently in the US and Japan due to the cultural differences (Fushimi 2000, Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, Vincent et al. 1997). There is a myth that "Japan is thought to be 'tolerant' towards homosexuals" because homosexuals in Japan rarely become targets of violence and there are no laws to prohibit homosexuality unlike the US where homosexuals are discriminated against morally and religiously (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, Vincent et al. 1997). However, Japanese homophobia is characterized by neglect, which actually means the presence of homosexuals is made invisible, and homosexuality in Japan is given cultural "tolerance" while discrimination is covered-up. This is why "hidden homophobia does not mean homophobia does not exist" in Japan (Vincent et al. 1997: 111). In fact, the cases of robbery and murder-robbery targeted male homosexuals occurred in 2000. Even though media coverage as well as judges rarely mentioned that these crimes were triggered by homophobia, Kazama (2002a: 119) concludes that "the understanding of Japan being tolerant towards homosexuals, because it treats homosexuality as a hobby or preference, trivializes violence against homosexuals as well as making it invisible."

Homophobia causes non-heterosexuals to internalize the negative and reject

themselves; at the same time, it works to create violence and the discrimination of non-heterosexuals when their sexual orientation was unveiled like members of OCCUR experienced. However, previous literature barely discussed how to negotiate with homophobia when they accept non-heterosexual identity as well as when non-heterosexuality is disclosed to others.

1.4. Limitations of Existing Western Theory: The Necessity of Sociologically Looking at How to Negotiate with Heterosexual Others

When comparing the development and achievements of gay liberation movements in the US and Japan, the Japanese case may be disappointing because Japan is considered a highly developed nation. Can we simply conclude that Japan is behind so they need to "catch up" with the US? Or can we simply say Japan has been developing in wrong ways which is why they are behind? It may be more important to consider how development in Japan and the US are simply different, and not at different stages of development.

Moreover, considering how gay and lesbian studies have developed historically, it is understandable why accepting or "coming out" to yourself is considered to be a primary concern in many societies. As Vincent et al. (1997: 90-91) describe, "most gays who have gone through the coming out process have stories of their history: about 'compulsory internalized homophobia' and about constructing positive gay identity." As Altman (1993: 22-23) also puts it, "'coming out'… is bound up with the whole process whereby persons come to identify themselves as homosexual, and recognize thereby their position as part of stigmatized and half-hidden minority." Phelan (1993) also describes constructing lesbian identity as "(be)coming out," it means that "coming out" is often referred to as "coming out" to own self. Therefore, it makes sense that Cass's and Coleman's models of identity construction process emphasize the

importance of "coming out" to other non-heterosexuals or the importance of interactions among non-heterosexuals for becoming fully comfortable with their non-heterosexual identity.

However, the process of constructing non-heterosexual identity takes place through interacting with not only other non-heterosexuals and communities but also with heterosexual others because non-heterosexuals mostly have to live with heterosexuals. In this sense, "coming out" is considered to have two prominent dimensions: coming out to yourself and coming out to others. As explained, coming out to yourself is the construction of non-heterosexual identity. Negotiating with heteronormativity and homophobia is a subsequent dimension of "coming out." Yet, we need to be careful who are included in the category of "others" to whom non-heterosexuals come out. According to Horie (2006), there are three dimensions of coming out; 1) to yourself, 2) to someone close, and 3) to unspecified others. Although these categories are simply based on to whom people come out in situations that call for different kinds of social interaction, it is necessary to consider the effect of culturally embedded homophobia in each category since the quality of homophobia seems different depending upon cultural norms. Furthermore, coming out to non-heterosexual others is assumed to be easier than coming out to heterosexual others. People regardless of their sexuality live in a heteronormative society, and this causes non-heterosexuals to struggle over accepting their non-heterosexuality. In addition, heterosexuals may normalize heterosexuality and have homophobia, such that non-heterosexuals have to negotiate with heteronormative society once they identify themselves as non-heterosexual. Thus, disclosing non-heterosexual identity in heteronormative society requires them to negotiate and deal with other people's reactions. This is why, as Vincent et al. (1997: 91) point out, coming out is on "extremely socially and 'political' process." Therefore, I organize coming out as; 1) to yourself, 2) to people of little or no homophobia [sexual minority communities and people one can trust], and 3) to heterosexuals with homophobia or heteronormative prejudices. Organizing coming out in

these ways helps to look at the coming out experiences in a more sociological way, asking how they negotiate with heteronormativity, which produces and reproduces homophobia, through interactions within their social settings. This point of view makes it possible to actually find a way to make a less-heteronormative-environment.

1.5. The Family and Prioritizing the Mother-Child Relationship in Japan

In the West, the family as developed in the 18th to 19th centuries, the modern period, is the so-called "modern family," characterized by creating a stronger and privatized family relationship (Ariès [1960] 1980), intimacy or domesticity (Giddens 1992, Shorter 1975). "Modern family" emphasizes the importance of the parent and child bond. The miniaturization of family size that helped to abate husband's absolute authority over the family, and gave women power over child rearing (Giddens 1992). However, since the late 20th century, this "modern family" is now considered to be the "traditional family" or "conventional modern family" (Jamieson 2002). Since then, love relationships between partners have changed and today they are characterized by "disclosing intimacy" (Jamieson 2002) or "the pure relationship" (Giddens 1992). This relationship is based on commitment, which requires negotiation and open communication otherwise it will end.

In Japanese context, the "*ie* [household]" system must not be neglected when discussing the family. The "*ie*" system was introduced through the Meiji Civil Code. It was a peculiarly Japanese system. This system spread through "the law and education during modernization" and it emphasized "the family conception based on patriarchy and loyalty." (Hirai 2009: 11) The characteristics of this system seem feudalistic; thus, the *ie* retains a pre-modernized family style. However at the same time, the *ie* system also included elements of modernized family style because it was family centered, which emphasized the mother's role and it valued

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affectional bonds among family (Muta 1996). In the early Meiji period, romantic love was also introduced to Japan. Legal patriarchy was abolished after WWII when new constitution was established. However, what was emphasized as family style in the *ie* system has remained as an important ideology.

After the WWII, Japan modernized and innovated, and the new Constitution was introduced in 1946 and a revised Civil Code was established in 1947. Since then, gender equality and equality among family members were protected by law (Matsunobu 2012). Since then, the "modern family," which is based on intimacy and love between partners and in parent-child relationships, spread to Japan, as rapid economic growth took place. The characteristics of "modern family" are: 1) "Separation of the domestic and public spheres"; 2) "strong emotional relationships among family members"; 3) "the centrality of children"; 4) "a gender-based division of labor, with the public sphere assigned to men and the domestic sphere to women"; 5) "a strengthening of the group solidarity of the family"; 6) "a decline of social interaction and *sociabilité*, and the establishment of privacy"; 7) "exclusion of non-relatives"; and 8) "existence as a nuclear family household" (Ochiai 1996: 76-77). Ochiai puts 8 in parentheses because the so-called extended family can have features of "modern family." (Ochiai 1996: 77) Yet the so-called "modern family" in Japan was a bit different from the one in the West. It retains characteristics seen in earlier forms of family in Japan. Ochiai (1996) calls it the "postwar family system." This includes three features: 1) "The shift to the housewife role for women"; 2) "reproductive egalitarianism"; and 3) "the effect of demographic transition" (Ochiai 1996: 75). Furthermore, Muta (2006) points out that the political meaning of "modern family" is much deeper if the gender perspective is taken into account, because "the concept of gender is closely related with the family structure, which resolves around heterosexuality and its system." (6-7) Muta (2006: 7) calls "gendered family" the family which assumes and relies on naturalization of gender to function and reproduce the system of "sexuality, life and labor

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power." As she points out, "gendered family" and "modern family" somewhat overlap, however, the gendered family is a "principle" which can be even more hegemonic in postmodern societies than "modern family." (Muta 2006: 7)

As mentioned, a majority of married women became full-time housewives during the period of rapid economic growth after the WWII (Ochiai 1996). During this period which lasted until 1973, the social policies were revised. One of revisions was the introduction of the "Japanese employment practice." This practice was heavily dependent on housewives. Thus, this practice helped stabilize "postwar family system." Then, it is understandable why housework received great recognition: it was thought to produce priceless values, such as love and care. During this time, "modernistic motherhood norms," which are expected norms for mothers to take care of their children, became widespread (Inoue 2013, Yamada 1994). The connection of motherhood and love was also seen in the West, however, Japanese housewives faced stronger role expectations through the conjunction of "women = emotional = housework." (Yamada 1994) Today, while the normative gender division of labor, in which husband works and wife stays home, is not as supported as before, "good motherhood norms" are still supported (Nishimura 2001) and women are still expected to do and actually do most of the housework or "unpaid work." (Tama 2001)

Another revision was the change in the welfare state around 1980. This was "centered on revenue transfers to 'male breadwinners.'" (Osawa 2007: 1) Thus, the welfare state also assumes gender division of labors and provide security to married couples, in which wives to do child-rearing and housework while husbands are the breadwinners. After the oil shock in 1973, Japanese economic growth became stagnant. Full-time housewives also needed to work and women were encouraged to enter the market. For unmarried women, they were not treated as equal as men's workers and they were expected to quit their job in their marriageable age.

In 1985, Japan instituted the Equal Employment Opportunity Act for Men and Women. However, the "Japanese Welfare State" has emphasized that women should take welfare role and discouraged women from becoming full-time workers because this system supports families in which women are expected to be responsible for all unpaid work in the private sphere. They can work, but only as long as they stay part-time (Osawa 2007). In this environment, divorcing and becoming a single mother lead to poverty. Thus, it is understandable that the divorce rate in Japan has decreased since 2003 (Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare 2015).

These social backgrounds factors explain why parent-child relationships, which are virtually the same as mother-child relationships, are another feature of families in Japan. While the parent-child relationship has gotten weaker in the West, it has gotten stronger in Japan (Yamada 1994). The family configuration has changed, as seen in declining marital age and increasing unmarried rate. However, the family consciousness has not changed. This means that family ideology has remained in an idealized family style. This ideology is perpetuated by the law and institution. The laws and institutions limit what "family" should look like and this "family" has to be blood and matrimonial relationships (Muta 2006). Thus, alternative families, such as unrelated blood relationships and same-sex relationships, which cannot procreate, are excluded by the law and institutions. In Japan, there are no laws that recognize or protect same-sex relationships. There is also no law against such relationships. As mentioned in the Introduction, the Shibuya ward passed the ordinance to issue partnership certificates for same-sex couples in March 2015, yet this ordinance does not have the force of law. In this environment, parents and families are one important resource for non-heterosexuals to get support (Kamano and Khor 2008, Sanbe 2014).

The characteristics of Japanese family as well as social systems have been introduced.

This paper will also deal with how the presence of non-heterosexuals affects family relationships, as well as how family members deal with this fact. In the field of family studies, researchers look for possibilities in configuration and images of families, such as alternative and diverse families to overcome the "ideal family style." (Muta 2009, Parke 2013) How the families of non-heterosexual members change or do not change their family style and whether or not new family styles challenge the "ideal family style" will be analyzed. Before that, in the next section, previous research on families of non-heterosexual members will be reviewed.

1.6. Families of Non-heterosexual Members After the Coming Out in the US and Japan

For non-heterosexuals, coming out to family members is one of the most stressful experiences in both Japan and the US (D'Augelli 2002, Morimura 2003, Otsuji 2005, RYOJI and Sunagawa 2007, Savin-Williams 1989). An Internet survey, was conducted in Japan by the group "Respect Life. White Ribbon Campaign" (White Ribbon) in 2014, found that many children realize their sexual identity and orientation at high-school, however, half of boys and 30 percent of girls never came out to anyone (Akechi 2014). Among children who have come out to someone, 70 percent chose to come out to their friends, while only 10 to 20 percent of them chose to come out to their teachers or parents (Akechi 2014). How many people actually came out to their parents is unknown in this research, however, it is predictable that coming out to family, especially parents, is relatively low because that is considered to be one of the most challenging and stressful experiences for LGBT adolescents. Among parents, non-heterosexual children are more likely to disclose to their mother than father (Ben-Ari 1995). Coming out to parents is challenging because heteronormativity is produced and reproduced within a family; thus, possibly creates homophobia (Fukushima 2003, Kakefuda 1992, Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010). Coming out may result in being disowned, suffering violence, and a negative reaction. These negative reactions influence non-heterosexuals' mental health, as well

as their wellbeing (Griffin et al. 1996, Hammelman 1993, Hetrick and Martin 1987).

However, on the other hand, coming out has huge impacts on family members, as well as the family system. Thus, coming out causes "family crisis" or emotional distress (Savin-Williams and Dubé 1998, Williamson 1998). Much of the literature on families and non-heterosexual members developed in the Western psychoanalysis and these studies look mostly at parents, but not siblings and grandparents or other family members' experiences. Little research has done about siblings (Griffin et al. 1996, Jenkins 2008, LaSala 2010), however, siblings are less likely than parents to react negatively on the disclosure. Besides books written by scholars, there are books written by parents of LGB (Borhek 1993, Griffin et al. 1996, Robert-Jonh 2012). They incorporate their experiences of their children's coming out and experiences of other parents who they met through parents' activities. These experiences are somewhat biased in that these stories are collected by white-middle class U.S. parents. Moreover, even if writer by scholars, there are few works that takes racial and ethnic differences in coming out into account. However, these books written by parents tell a lot of personal stories that are useful to glimpse the shared norms and values in the US families. Not only that, the analysis and tips introduced in these books are also seen in academic books as well.

1.6.1. PFLAG in the US and Families of LGBT in Japan

Parents Family & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) was originated in 1972 in the US, when the mother of gay man, Jaenne Manford, marched with her son in New York's Pride Day Parade (PFLAG a). That same year, her son, Morty had experienced violence during a gay rights protest, but, police officers ignored the violence. Thus, Jaenne took actions, such as calling the New York Times and the New York Post, to depict the violence against her son.

When Jaenne and her husband finally appeared on the news, more than 20 different TV shows depicted this incident because Jaenne was the first mother in the US history to come out as the mother of gay son to the world (PFLAG c). In the following years, similar groups developed and offered support for parents of gay and lesbian children. By 1980, PFLAG has begun distributing information to educational institutions as well as communities. In 1981, members decided to establish a national organization and the first PFLAG National office opened in Los Angeles. PFLAG was organized to promote "support for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ; education for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ; and advocacy in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ."[8] (PFLAG b) PFLAG activities are political, such as bargaining for equal treatment to the government at workplaces, and schools nationwide (PFLAG a). Now, PFLAG has more than 350 chapters across the U.S. (PFLAG d).

LGBT no Kazoku to Yūjin wo Tsunagu Kai [The Organization to Connect Families and Friends of LGBT] (Families of LGBT) was the first organization in Japan to focus on caring for families, friends and allies. This group was first organized in 2006 and became an NPO in 2007 (Families of LGBT a). The executive office is in Kobe, and there are four chapters [Kobe, Tokyo, Fukuoka and Nagoya]. Families of LGBT was established based of PFLAG, and the purposes of the group are: to create a society which eliminates discrimination against LGBT and promotes respect for diverse sexuality; to support sexual minorities in accepting sexuality

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[8] When retrieved in February 2010, their vision was shown below: to promote "the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights." Their vision and mission have not largely changed, however, these have more clarified when retrieved in November 2015. Their change may be affected by the legalization of same-sex marriage since June 2015. More importantly, their vision and mission has updated to "reflect PFLAG's decades of inclusive work." (PFLAG a)

with their friends and families; and above all, to "create a society in which everyone's own characteristics and human rights are respected, by increasing awareness and broader understanding information in education about the issues of sexual minorities." (Families of LGBT b) Only Kobe has monthly meetings, but other chapters also have meetings once every two to three months. They also organize events and lectures, attend parades and bargain for equality of LGBT with the local governments, educational institutes and centers for human rights (Families of LGBT a).

Families of LGBT is not as big as PFLAG, however, both organizations contribute to both non-heterosexuals' equality and the often invisible struggle of family members who are dealing with the coming out of sexual minority members.

1.6.2. Parents' reactions to coming out in the US

Most of literature, including that written by parents, demonstrates the processes of parents' emotional and behavioral changes leading tem to finally "accept" their children (Beeler and DiProva 1999, Ben-Ari 1995, Borhek 1993, Dohrenwend 2012, Griffin et al. 1996, LaSala 2000, 2010, Robert-Jonh 2012, Williamson 1998). This literature also shows the idea that the goal of the "accepting" process has been reached when parents are proud of their non-heterosexual children. Much of the previous literature has shown that parents experience initial shocks, such as feelings of sadness, lost, fear, grief, loneliness, guilt, shame, mourning and self-blame (Beeler and DiProva 1999, Griffin et al. 1996, LaSala 2000, 2010, Williamson 1998). Some researchers and writers identify stages in the process. For example, LaSala (2010) calls the period of time when parents experience initial shocks as "the family discovery stage[9],"

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[9] Subsequent stages include "family recovery" and "family renewal," which parents reach the point where they identify the benefits of non-heterosexual children and are proud of their children to reconstruct "happy families."

while Griffin et al. (1996) categorize parents' "acceptance" process as "levels of understanding[10]."

When parents are in the early period of time after their children's disclosure, they are emotional and fed up with their inner struggle. Thus, they become distant from their children (Griffin et al. 1996, LaSala 2010). Many parents get confused by inner feelings caused by children's disclosure because they blame themselves, and suffer from feelings of guilt. Parents blame themselves, especially when children of opposite-sex disclosed because parents feel responsible for socialize their children (Ben-Ari 1995). For example, fathers feel guilty when daughters disclose. Yet, among parents, mothers are more likely than fathers to suffer from self-blame (Ben-Ari 1995, LaSala 2010). Additionally, parents feel the lost because children's coming out disrupts parents' dreams for their children, such as having a family and producing grandchildren.

1.6.3. Concerns about stigma after children's disclosure in the US

Once parents ease their own inner conflicts, they begin to acknowledge their children's non-heterosexuality and to be concerned that they and their children may become a target of stigma. When parents are concerned about their children being targets of discrimination, this is referred to as "vicarious stigma." When they are worried about themselves becoming targets of stigma, this is called as "public stigma." (LaSala 2010) Both concepts are incorporated by Corrigan and Miller (2004), who derived them from "courtesy stigma[11]," which they borrowed from Goffman (Goffman 1963). Both stigmas make it hard for parents to confront with

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[10] Level 2 is "child-centered concern" and Level 3 is "concern for all gays and lesbians and their parents," where parents actively stand for their children to challenge against social atmosphere as well as get involved with activities.

[11] More description will be introduced in the end of Chapter 3.

children's sexual orientation and these are obstacles for them to overcome their struggle (LaSala 2010). Western countries, including the US, "religious stigma" (LaSala 2010) or conflict between non-heterosexuality and religion is another concern that parents feel (Borhek 1993, Dohrenwend 2012, Griffin et al. 1996, Robert-Jonh 2012). Their beliefs and values are constructed through religious beliefs and non-heterosexuality challenges these ideas. Thus, parents tend to be more depressed when they are more into a religion. Religion is very difficult to overcome because parents spent almost all their lives believing in church teachings so the disclosure would mean that their beliefs are denied, and that, threatens their identity. One concern for religious parents facing their children's non-heterosexuality is that their children may not to be able to go to heaven. Moreover, these parents worry about being excluded from church communities.

Parents use numerous coping styles to adjust their inner conflicts and eventually change their perceptions on non-heterosexuality. Many parents go to support groups, talk to understanding and nonjudgmental friends, coworkers and relatives and educate themselves about non-heterosexuality and its surrounding issues (Beeler and DiProva 1999, Ben-Ari 1995, Dohrenwend 2012, LaSala 2000, 2010). During this adjustment processes, parents begin to realize that their non-heterosexual children are born that way and sexual orientation is unchangeable (LaSala 2010). Some even begin to wonder about own sexuality (Griffin et al. 1996, LaSala 2010). Religious families reinterpret the Gospels, emphasize loving their children as the primary practice and try to overcome challenges. If parents join support groups, they meet different people with different religions. This is an opportunities for them to learn different perspectives on non-heterosexuals. In this stage, parents still wish their children to be heterosexual and have troubles with non-heterosexuality, however, their feelings are not as intense as in the earlier period.

1.6.4. Becoming the pound parents of an LGB child in the US

How much time parents take to finally "accept" their non-heterosexual children depends on parents and varies, however, research shows that parents eventually "accept" their non-heterosexual children. As they "accept" their children, the children introduce their partner, inviting them to family events and recognize the partners as someone special (Beeler and DiProva 1999). When parents "accept" their children, they absorb strength from their children and begin to take pride in their children's non-heterosexuality (Griffin et al. 1996, LaSala 2010). At that time, parents "identify the benefits of having a lesbian or gay child" (LaSala 2010: 184) and non-heterosexuality is put in the proper perspective (Griffin et al. 1996). Those who experienced the disruption of family system, they reestablish a "happy family" which is consists of "proud parents and happy children." (LaSala 2010: 185-87) This is also the time when parents realize what their children have to face in society and try to do something about those problems. As they change their perception positively, they begin to stand for their children as well as other non-heterosexuals who are treated unequally due to their sexuality.

Previous psychoanalytic research focused more on the emotional process of how parents overcome their inner struggle and conflicts after the child's disclosure as well as the process of reconstruction of the family system after the "family crisis." Consequently this research barely discusses how parents coming out about their non-heterosexual children to others, although it is sometimes mentioned in books written by parents of LGB children. Accordingly, parents also start coming out to others, even though this is a long-slow and step-by-step process for them (Borhek 1993, Griffin et al. 1996). In coming out they risk courtesy stigma. Parents' coming out is only possible when they "accept" their children and are proud of themselves. These parents feel the significance of taking a stand and coming out to others. Griffin et al. (1996) point out that coming out as a parent is the "key to personal freedom"

because this action is directly or indirectly changes society's negative attitude toward non-heterosexuals; and thus, it also helps them to come out easier. This is why parents' coming out is highly encouraged. At the same time, some authors (Borhek 1993, Griffin et al. 1996) also acknowledge there are lot of conflicts and risk parents need to face, such as in relationships with other family members and family gatherings at holidays. Parents' narratives in these books show that the reason why parents come out is because they experience courtesy stigma, which makes them question the "fairness of the stigma"; thus they rather fight against to gain fair treatment for them and their children from society (Griffin et al. 1996).

1.6.5. Asians and Japanese parents after the disclosure

There is little research which incorporates racial and cultural background differences, however, research on Asian parents points out that they also confront difficulties "accepting" their non-heterosexual children (Lin and Hudley 2009, Sanbe 2010, 2012, 2014, Wang et al. 2009). However, Asians families' experiences seem more complex due to the strength of cultural norms and values, such as prioritizing family ties. For example, in Wang et al.'s study (2009), first sons in Taiwanese and Chinese societies are especially expected to become paternal successors to show "loyalty" to their parents. Thus, the coming out of a first son would threaten the shared "family ethic" and affect family relationships. Yet, similar to the Western parents, parents in Wang et al.'s study also followed the process of "understanding" their non-heterosexual children. But before acceptance, parents still believe their children's sexual orientation will be changeable and wish for a heterosexual marriage. Some parents "accept" their gay sons, however, many parents tend to think non-heterosexuality is a bad habit and accuse their children for not making enough effort to fix their non-heterosexuality (Wang et al. 2009). Some parents blame their children's friends for negative effects, an external cause of their children being non-heterosexual, in order to escape of self-blame. Furthermore, there are

parents who ignore the disclosure and keep pushing their children to get married because they cannot give up their traditional values. On the other hand, Lin and Hudley's study (2009) of Taiwanese mother's reactions to knowing their son and daughter were non-heterosexual shows that mothers eventually "accept" their children, even though they were surprised and experienced self-blame in the earlier period of the time. Lin and Hudley (2009) found that these mothers also changed their perceptions positively on non-heterosexuals and their community, and these mothers reported that the child-parent relationships got better after the disclosure.

In Japan, Sanbe (2010, 2012, 2014) was the first researcher who took both LGB children and parents' perspectives into account in the field of sociology. In her book called *Kamuauto suru Oyako: Douseiai to Kazoku no Shakaigaku* [Parents and Child who Come Out: Homosexuality and the Sociology of Family] (Sanbe 2014), she incorporated Goffman's concept of "courtesy stigma" and examined non-heterosexual children and their parents' struggle, as well as relationships among them. In her book, parents in Japanese contexts also go through similar experiences as in the West and other Asian countries, such as difficulties "understanding" "abnormal" sexuality. Similar to other researchers, Sanbe's research also has shown ways of confronting non-heterosexuality differ among mothers and fathers, with mothers more likely than fathers to "accept" their children. Sanbe does not necessarily illustrates parents' experiences as a process, however, as parents adjust with their inner conflicts and difficulties to reach "understanding," they eventually change their perceptions of non-heterosexuality. Collecting information related to LGB, consulting trusted people, interacting with non-heterosexuals other than their children and joining support groups are helpful tools for the parents. Sanbe studied that as they change their perceptions, they regained hope for their children's future. Through these changes, parents began to acknowledge that they are "parents of LGB" and to be conscious about "courtesy stigma," which the parents also experience as they negotiate with people outside of their families. Sanbe's research gives us an insight into

the experiences of non-heterosexuals and their families within a family setting. Therefore, her research is a great contribution to family studies in Japan because it shows that families of non-heterosexual members cannot be simply explained by either their attitude being too conservative or liberal since their experiences are powerfully affected by courtesy stigma (Sanbe 2014). Even though it may be not her research interest, how these families have or have not changed their family style after the disclosure is still unclear. Moreover, Sanbe uses "courtesy stigma" without asking what it means in the Japanese context, meaning, she does not question how "courtesy stigma" is created in the context of Japan.

Overall, previous research in Asian including Japanese studies suggest that Western theories and researches on non-heterosexual coming out and family might be missing important cultural specific aspects. Western studies also raise important question: how and to what extent do family members negotiate with when they hear the disclosure? To reconsider the experiences of non-heterosexuals embedded in cultural norms, we have to find answers for how family members negotiate with cultural norms and values when they find out one of their members is a non-heterosexual and when they actually disclose it to others. To do so requires us to critically apply the Western theories and analyze the Japanese case with consideration for embedded cultural norms and their effects. In the next chapter, Japanese cultural norms regarding interaction and behavior will be shown. The purpose of this research, research questions, and research methods will be also introduced.

CHAPTER 2. STRONG CONFORMIST JAPANESE CULTURAL NORMS AND THEIR

EFFECTS

Chapter 1 argued that while the studies of non-heterosexuals and their families developed mostly in the West, these studies neglect to take cultural specificities and their effects into account. Moreover, these studies only focused on psychological changes, but not on how external factors affect non-heterosexuals' and their families' experiences. However, reviewing what non-heterosexuals and their family members experience in the West suggests that East Asian countries, and Japan in particular, experience coming out differently because of distinctive social practice, values and norms.

Therefore, in this chapter, what Japanese value highly, how Japanese behave and interact with others and how certain kind of discrimination are perpetuated are introduced in order to discover how these cultural differences affect non-heterosexuals' and their families' experiences in the Japanese context. This chapter concludes with the purpose of this study and an overview of research methods, including five years of interviews and participant observations, that I have conducted.

2.1. *"Society" and* Seken*: Absence of "Self" and the Uses of Harmony in Japan*

Every Japanese belong to some *seken*. This is one characteristic specific to Japan. Japanese society cannot possibly cohere without *seken* (Abe 2003). There is no exact translation of *seken* in English. According to *Koujien* (2008), one of the most authoritative dictionaries of Japanese, it has six meanings: 1) "the boundary for sentient beings' life"; 2) "the space between heaven and earth"; 3) "people's life"; 4) "society, world and people"; 5) "relationships with others and the range of acquaintance"; and 6) "life orientation." According to the Encyclopedia of Contemporary Sociology in Japan (Osawa et al. 2012), the word *seken*

originated in the Sanskrit, "loka," and it frequently appeared in *Manyoushu*, the oldest collection of Japanese poetry. However, *seken* now refers to "human relationships with people one knows, such as people at workplaces, from schools and hometown as well as people who met through hobbies." (Osawa et al. 2012: 787)

Abe Kinya, a researcher of *seken*, defines it as "the link which connects people," and although it does not have bylaws or rules, something bonds people together (Abe 1995: 16). However, they do not willingly create *seken*. They live in *seken* just because they "believe in their position there." (Abe 1995: 16) Abe also notes that *seken* is not only the link and bond among human relationships but also refers to "all people one knows now, one met in the past and will meet in the future," which generally includes only Japanese not foreigners (Abe 2004: 12). He also puts people living and dead in *seken*. Likewise, those who live in *seken* focus on other people living in *seken*. Thus, "what Japanese think of their identity is consisted of human relationships which are called '*seken*,'" (Abe 2003: 80) and this is a "historical and traditional system" (Sato 2001: 88) that has existed long before the word "society" was introduced to Japan. According to the research on *seken* (Abe 1995, 2001, 2002b, 2003, 2004, Koukami 2006, Sato 2001), "*seken*" is distinct from "society."

In the West, "society" assumes the existence of the "individual"[12] and this was "created by the process of constructing their identity through the absolute thing, the God." (Abe 2005: 14, Hamaguchi 1977) Both words, "society" and "individual," were brought to Japan and translated into Japanese in the early Meiji Era when modernization and westernization were being spread by the pioneers who saw the relationships between society and individuals in the West. The Western sense of an "individual" refers to one who has autonomy and makes their

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[12] According to Abe, *seken* existed in the west, however, it was replaced by society as a result of the birth of the individual. See Abe (1995, 2003, 2005) for more detail.

own decisions, while "society" is the overall network among "individuals" (Hamaguchi 1977)[13]. Before the introduction of these words, there was no word referring to "individuals" because Japanese thought they were a part of a village or country, rather than an individual self (Abe 2002a). Although Japanese started using these words as westernization and modernization developed, "the system of household [*ie*] and its family relationships were maintained." (Abe 2001: 15) The result was an absence of Western meanings of "society" and "individual" in Japan. Table 2 shows the comparison between a western concept of society and *seken*.

Table 2. Comparison of a Western Concept of Society and *Seken*

Society	***Seken***
Contractual relationship	The relationship of bestowal and reciprocity
Individual equality	Seniority
Individual time consciousness	Common time consciousness
A cluster of individuals	Absence of individuals
Possibility in change	Impossibility of change
Individualistic	Collectivistic
Rational relationship	Irrational / spiritual relationship
Division between sacred/profane	Combination of sacred/profane
Value substantiality	Value ceremoniality
Equality	Exclusive (Division between *uchi/soto* [*in/out*])
Nonauthoritative	Authoritative

Source: Sato (2001: 97).

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[13] Eshun Hamaguchi is a researcher of Japanese studies. He characterized the Western people as "*kojin moderu* [individual model]" and Japanese people as "*kanjin moderu* [interpersonal model]." (Hamaguchi 1977: 55) A Japanese is not an individual who has autonomy but is a "*kanjin*" who is conscious about one's self through interpersonal relationships. This is why he categorized the Western people as "individualism" and Japanese people as "*kanjinshugi* [*kanjin*-ism]." (Hamaguchi 1977, 1982, 1998)

These differences suggest that "Japanese individuals construct interior and exterior selves through behaving and speaking distinctively according to is appropriate to *seken*" (Abe 1995: 30). They explain why Japanese "self," as well as the way of interaction, is more complex than in the West. The characteristics of human relationships in Japan imply that Japanese are likely to value the reputation of *seken* not of themselves. It suggests that Japanese are more afraid of being excluded from *seken* than afraid of the laws because *seken* is the place to "administer justice." (Abe 2003) In this sense, what Butler (1993) means by "punishment," which people are always at threat of, might be different in Japan and the West. Japanese are afraid of judgement and "punishment," which are reputations of what others in *seken* think. Because Japanese prioritize the interests of the *seken* they belong to, *seken* becomes rather exclusive and even discriminatory.

There are two conditions for acceptance by *seken*: 1) construction of a relationship of bestowal and reciprocity; and 2) an understanding of seniority (Abe 1995, 2001, 2002b, 2003, 2004, Koukami 2006, Sato 2001, Setagawa 2002). These two conditions suggest that the Japanese are expected to do "*hairyo*," which is paying attention to other people's feelings. Japanese are expected to do so otherwise they cannot "maintain 'correlative, coexisting relationships'" (Sato 2001: 154, 2002: 95). Koukami (2006) expands on Abe's ideas and proposes five characteristics of *seken*: 1) the relationship of bestowal and reciprocity; 2) seniority; 3) common time consciousness; 4) discrimination and exclusion; and 5) mystique. The first three are principles and the last two are characteristics of *seken*.

This paper does not aim to examine the structure of *seken*; thus, *seken* in this paper refers to human relationships and people they know, as well as shared norms and values within these relationships, which require people to prioritize others' feelings. It takes the role of "adjudicator" (Imaeda 2008: 106), regulating people's behavior and oppressing others who do

not belong to the same group. In sum, to live in s*eken*, which is discriminatory and exclusive, means that people must be constantly careful and need to value "the force of sameness" instead of "accepting differences." (Koukami 2006) Japanese children are socialized not to have a "personality," instead, to prioritize the sameness with others, which means that they are educated to follow the rules and norms in *seken*, which results in binding them (Abe 2003: 197). Thus, Japanese are expected to empathize with others in order to harmonize *seken* because their relationships are symbioses. However, it also implies that if a person belongs to *seken* and behaves appropriately to norms in *seken*, they will be protected; thus, Koukami (2006) describes *seken* as a "safety network."

2.1.1. Appropriate Japanese selves: Prioritizing others' feelings

Lebra (2004) states that the task of the "Japanese self is to focus on the multiplicity and shifting of self within the social context," (38) a complex contrast to the self in European sociological models. One aspect of the manifold Japanese self is the "front [*omote*] zone," which "combines propriety and distance." (Lebra 2004: 42) The front zone operates in Japan in conjunction with the "interior [*uchi*] zone" where the self's behavior is based on "intimacy accompanied by familiarity," this includes "family and close kin, and can be extended to family like groups or institutions [*miuchi*]." (Lebra 2004: 66-67) It also could include peer intimacy. The differences between front and interior zones are a matter of "wrapping" where the interior zone is more protective but inaccessible to outer world while front zone requires one to present carefully a "packaged version of self." (Lebra 2004: 67-68) Therefore, since the interior zone prioritizes love and trust, one can be more relaxed and informal and allowed to be less respectful of politeness, unlike the front zone, where respect and sociability are prioritized.

In the front zone, interaction with other selves is in "hierarchical asymmetry between

self and others" (Lebra 2004: 43). One's behavior is perceived as polite and associated with "honor and pride" (Lebra 2004: 44). This also implies that one needs to be sensitive to seniority and uses honorific expressions [*keigo*]. An example of politeness is "*kizukai* [alertness and caring attention to other's needs or feelings]" in response to expectations from others to behave in ways that will make them feel good. *Kizukai* requires "*enryo* [self-imposed restraint]" to avoid causing people to feel "*meiwaku* [trouble, burden, inconvenience, annoyance, displeasure, discomfort]." (Lebra 2004: 43-44) One example of how to maintain relationships with others in a front zone is gift giving and feasting and attending ceremonies, such as funerals and weddings, which is required in *seken*.

Caring about others' feelings requires one to judge what "appropriate behavior" is in each setting. Hamaguchi (1977) states that Japanese behavior is based on "situations" they are in. Hamaguchi (1977: 11-15) gives an example of how Americans and Japanese behave on a bus and described that Americans behave based on shared values and group norms regardless of the situation while Japanese behavior changes situationally regardless of shared values and group norms. Moreover, studies of identity formation in Japanese children emphasize how public education about Japanese cultural norms prescribes appropriate behavior for each setting, which simultaneously suppresses "inappropriate" private emotions that might disturb the situation (Peak 1989). Cousins's study (1989) of the influence of cultural meaning systems on the selves of Japanese and American college students' self-perceptions supports the view of Japanese self as being comparatively situational. These examples summarize the common understanding that, while individualism is emphasized in Western society, it is absent in Japan, because Japanese behavior is heavily dependent on group situational settings where conformity is emphasized. Thus, one needs to maintain a balance between others' and one's own "face," which refers to "self-display that is at once acceptable to distant others and defensive of self-esteem." (Lebra 2004: 62) The determination of "appropriate behavior" is according to how

one is reputed, in other words, "the scrutiny of *seken*." (Lebra 2004: 64) Once one is situated in a front zone, its appearance is seen through the *sekentei*. *Sekentei* literally means the body of *seken* and can be defined as "the imagined *seken*," (Lebra 2004: 65) the reputation of *seken* or the eyes of *seken*. People identify themselves through their relationships with others who belong to the same *seken* or in front settings.

These characteristics of Japanese selves show Japanese interaction is based on the interdependent self. It has been shown that the construction of the Western self is likely to be more by "independent construal": individuals are responsible for the social environment, which is determined by the "internal attributes of the self." (Markus and Kitayama 1991: 226) Hence, an independent self is more likely to "express self" and "be direct" about what it thinks, while the interdependent self is more likely to "occupy the proper place" and "be indirect," so trying to read other people's minds (Markus and Kitayama 1991: 230). Japanese have to be interdependent selves because their behavior is dependent on the proper place. In this way, one prioritizes "other-esteem" over "self-esteem" in order to maintain the balance in front settings, and favor front over interior (Lebra 2004). When they meet new people, Japanese have to make sure which *seken* these new people belong to, but their individual personality is less important (Abe 2003). An individual in Japan is recognized as a part of group, such as their family or company (Nakane 1970). Thus, s*eken* could be also understood as a "reference group" (Abe 2003, Inoue 1977) because "*seken* is a place where one needs company in order to be who they are." (Abe 2003: 21) It means that people's behavior is heavily dependent upon a reference group because they gain the meaning of their existence through their relationships with people who are in the same *seken* and this is why their behavior is ruled by *seken*.

According to Inoue (1977), people's life spaces consists of three concentric circles [see Figure 1]. When Japanese perceive one to belong to the interior [*uchi*], they are inclusive. Within the interior zone, people identify themselves through the group and harmony is one of the most important elements. Relatives and people with more intimacy are included in this zone, and which is considered a safe place. On the other hand, when people perceive that someone belongs to the exterior [*soto*], they become more exclusive. In between the interior and exterior, there is *seken*. Who belongs to a *seken* is interchangeable; thus, this creates interpersonal conflicts. In this way, Japanese are expected to be interdependent selves. What they follow is the "commandment of *seken*," and conformity with others in a group is very important because nonconformity would cause exclusion, which is equal to losing their presence in the Japanese context.

I : *Miuchi* (relatives) and someone with intimacy → The interior

II : Reference groups of *seken*
① Narrower *seken*
② Wider *seken*

III: Others → The exterior
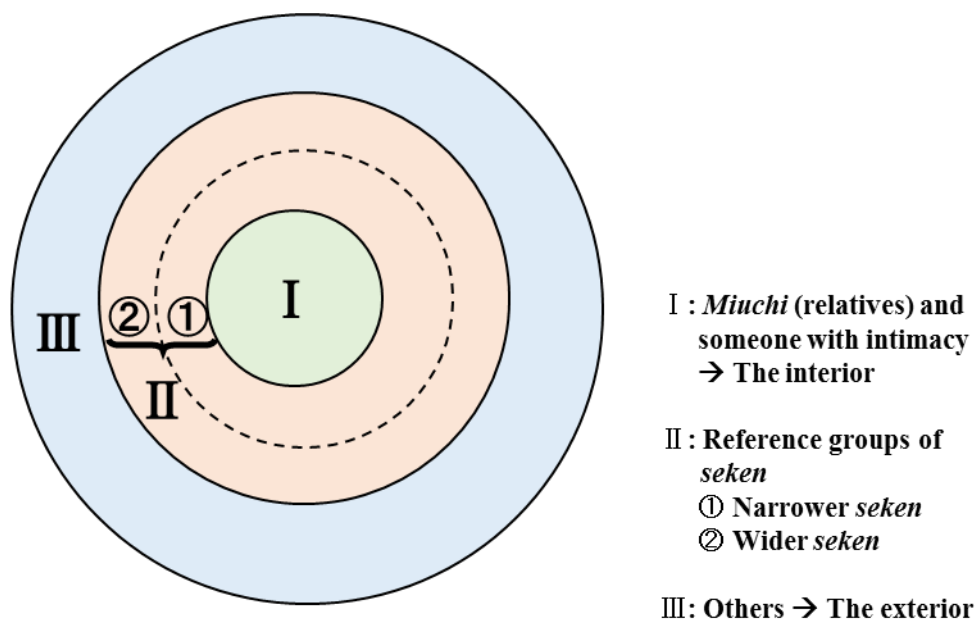
Figure 1. People's Life Space in Japan: *Seken* as a Reference Group

Source: Inoue (1977: 91)

Japanese selves are strongly interconnected with how others perceive them and they try not to trouble the *seken* in which they belong. Thus, prioritizing other-esteem is expected for their survival. Another characteristic of Japanese self should be mentioned here. *Tatemae*

[external pretense][14], is a self-presentation in the exterior [*soto*] zone, which is in contrast to the interior [*uchi*] zone and paired with the front [*omote*] zone (Lebra 2004). In contrast to *tatemae*, *honne* [internal truth] takes place in the interior zone, where intimacy is prioritized and one can express feelings more directly. The aim of mentioning these two concepts is to point out that while the front zone and interior zone refer to *seken*, the exterior zone is society. According to Abe (1995, 2003), Japanese adjust their behavior and self-presentation in *seken* and society. Thus, even though the western meaning of "society" and "individual" are absent in Japan, it does not mean society does not matter or exist in Japan.

Nakamura (2011) explains that people's lives take place in *seken*, which exists within the larger society. He points out that *seken* functions more specifically in people's lives than society, while society is more structurally functioned (Nakamura 2011). In other words, in society people are monitored by laws and regulations, while in *seken* people's lives are influenced by specific norms and values. For example, issues occurring in Japan but which are not a *seken* issue, such as LGBT issues, are considered to be a "social" issue. Non-heterosexuals in Japan are not as protected and secure as heterosexuals; thus, they are institutionally or "socially" discriminated against and oppressed. At the same time, non-heterosexuals are also excluded and discriminated against within human relationships which value the sameness with others, in *seken*. This is why Japanese live a "double standard" life (Koukami 2006: 42) and their experiences would be expected to be much more complicated than those in the US. If discrimination of non-heterosexuals exist in two levels, social and *seken*, non-heterosexuals and their families in Japan may have different experiences compare to ones in the US.

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[14] There are arguments on whether *tatemae* is replaceable with *honne* [internal truth]. Not to say this is more or less important, however, this paper does not aim to argue about this in depth. Here, I just introduce *tatemae* and *honne* as one of the characteristics of Japanese selves in *seken* and outside of it, in society.

2.1.2. Air *and* seken*: Majority wins*

In relation to *seken*, there is one more important aspect to understanding Japanese behavior, "*kuuki,*" or air. In this paper, I will write *air* to refer to *kuuki*. Unquestionably, air is invisible however it rules Japanese behavior strongly and powerfully. Yamamoto (1983: 30) is a theorist of "*air*" and he points out that *air* is created by "'the concept of a sense of presence' toward an object[15]." This process would personalize an object as a god and makes people empathetic in order to absolutize it. As a result, *air* is fostered and becomes "'the criteria for judgement' which is very powerful and has absolute power." (Yamamoto 1983: 22) Therefore, if someone ever tried to resist and behaved inappropriately compared to what is expected of them by *air* expects, they will be punished or excluded. Yamamoto also clarifies that *air* exists only in Japan but not in the US. For Japanese, the real criteria for making decisions is based on *air* like "the *air* will not accept it"; thus, even this is invisible yet powerfully affective on them.

The descriptions of *air* might be familiar because it is alike to *seken*. To be sensitize to *air* and *seken* means to always be conscious about what majority perceive. Koukami (2006) says *air* is created by fluidization of *seken*. Corroborating Abe's arguments Koukami introduces five characteristics of *seken* mentioned above, "If some of these features which construct '*seken*'becomes deficient, it is '*air*.' Thus, when all the characteristics are maintained and working, it becomes consolidated as *seken*." (Koukami 2006: 96-97) He also points out that younger people care more about *air* than *seken*. He gives the example of students who are not much involved with *seken*, such as the community where they live or *seken* created by workplaces. They are less likely to care about giving out midsummer or year-end gifts, which are rituals in Japan to maintain the harmony of *seken*. Thus, younger people have to negotiate

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[15] The original Japanese term is *rinzaikantekihaaku* [臨在感的把握].

with society, *seken* and *air* in order to survive in Japan.

2.2. The Mechanism of Discrimination and Stigmatization in Japan

Discriminations take place within interactions, and the place of interactions for Japanese refers to *seken* not society (Abe 2003). Discrimination is reproduced within *seken* where discriminators live. Abe uses the example of *hisabetsu-burakumin* [discriminated against Japan's feudal outcast group] to explain the mechanism of discrimination in Japan. Accordingly, "those who are called as 'discriminators' exist and comprise 'society,' and the mechanism of discriminatory '*seken*' or exclusive mechanism tolerates the existence of *hisabetsu-burakumin* to be excluded, which cause continued discrimination against them." (Abe 2003: 55-56) It means that discrimination in Japan is perpetuated, reproduced and preserved by the mechanism of discriminatory *seken*, in which discriminators exercise discrimination. This is why it is significant and necessarily to take the mechanism of *seken* into account when looking at discrimination in Japan.

The mechanism of discrimination is reinforced because *seken* characteristically does not tolerate someone with "scars" or problems. Someone is associated with a "scar" when s/he "troubles [*meiwaku*]" others in *seken*. This is why people exclude those with scars in order to protect safety in their *seken*. It is possible because an "individual self," who has autonomy and is respected to have their opinions, is absent in Japan. Instead identity is heavily dependent upon the *seken* a person belongs to. Thus, if people do not exclude people with scars, the *seken* they belong to would be under threat. It implies that protecting the safety of the *seken* means protecting themselves. *Seken* excludes not only those who are scarred but also the families of those people. Abe (2003) gives an example of how *seken* treats criminals and their families who are considered to be with a "scar." He explains that a criminal "gets expelled from '*seken.*'"

However, that is not the end of the story because the criminal's father and mother also get expelled because they are deemed to be 'family of a criminal' and they are unable to continue normal association with the decent people [*seken-nami*].'" (Abe 2003: 28) Abe (2003) analyzes how families of criminals also become targets of exclusion from *seken* due to *kegare* [impurity, unclearness or disgrace]. *Kegare* is deeply rooted in harmony with "natural world." Here the "natural world" means the world which includes animals, where naturalism takes place, and in which reproductive activities are primary concerns. Thus, if something is not following the natural order, it would be considered as *kegare*.

As explained above, Western modernization was brought to Japan in the Meiji period while traditional culture, *seken*, remained to rule people's lives and relationships, even after the terms "society" and "individuals" were introduced to Japan. Moreover, Western modernization also produced the Western sense of homophobia in Japan, where the *nanshoku* culture became pervasive homosexual acts. With the combination of the effects of Western modernization and the characteristics of *seken*, non-heterosexuality can be considered *kegare* because non-heterosexuality is against the natural order, in contrast to heterosexuality, which makes procreation possible. In addition to this, homosexuality was understood as disease due to AIDS, which presumably threated the harmony of *seken*. Furthermore, non-heterosexuality is an "individual" lifestyle, which is different and it represents being against what is expected in *seken*, to be the same as others. Then, *seken* cannot accept non-heterosexuality if this sexuality is stigmatized as *kegare*. Therefore, non-heterosexuals are forced to bear a "scar" that results in excluding them from *seken*. To consider all the characteristics and features related to Japanese behavior, selves and norms; thus, it is imaginable that the experiences of non-heterosexuals and their families would be different from those in the US.

2.3. The Purpose of the Study: Why Japan?

Theories and studies of non-heterosexuals and their families developed in the West as reviewed in Chapter 1. Since 1990, gay studies and queer studies have developed in Japan as well. However, there is little Japanese research on the families of non-heterosexual members. Moreover, not many studies of non-heterosexuals and their families are accessible for non-Japanese speakers and researchers. While the concepts and terms in these studies are also used in the West, these studies have not taken cultural differences and norms fully into account. In other words, these studies have taken the Western concepts for granted; thus, neglecting to question their applicability. Western researches are not fully aware of different cultural specificities; thus, their works still remain Western centered. However, examining the experiences of non-heterosexuals and their families in the Japanese context with considerations for cultural norms and their effects would contribute to the studies of non-heterosexuals and their families in the West. As reviewed in Chapter 2, there are distinctive interaction norms and family norms in Japan.

These norms get reinforced by the characteristics of *seken*, upon which Japanese behavior and identity are heavily dependent. Within this environment, the experiences of non-heterosexuals who have stigmatized sexuality, and their families will presumably be complex. Due to persistently strong gender norms in Japan, it is predictable that female members' experiences become even more complicated. For families of non-heterosexuals, it can be expected that the value of mother-child relationships will affect mothers' perception of children's sexuality as well as their family, in which they take the primary creative roles. Speaking of human rights and equality for non-heterosexuals, it is premature to say that Japan needs to "catch up" with Western counterparts because "Western modernity is not everyone's modernity," (Jackson et al. 2008: 3) instead, modernity "has been built on a different history,

with different cultures and traditions and also a different relationship between tradition and modernity." (Jackson et al. 2008: 6)

That said, this paper emphasizes the importance of including both non-heterosexuals and their family's perspectives in order to fully picture their experiences in the Japanese context. The gender differences are also acknowledged in this paper. This paper investigates three main questions. First, how do non-heterosexuals come out to themselves and others and how are their experiences affected by Japanese norms? Second, what do families of non-heterosexual members experience after they discover the presence of non-heterosexual members and how are their experiences affected by Japanese norms? Third, do families of non-heterosexuals reunify their family after the coming out event? If they do, how did they change and who plays crucial roles in this? The first question requires looking at the obstacles people face in their "coming out" and "not coming out" stories, as well as their ways of negotiation. To answer the second and third questions, this study will focus on not only how the presence of non-heterosexual members affect family relationships, but also how family members negotiate with society outside of the family [*seken*].

For all the questions, cultural considerations and sociological perspectives are important because the experiences of why and how non-heterosexuals and their families struggle and confront conflicts are heavily related to social interactions. Responding to these questions is contributory in several ways. By looking both at non-heterosexuals and family members in relation to the effect of cultural norms, the validity and applicability of Western-centered literature will better defined. It is contributory in helping offer new and different insights into the previous research mostly developed in the West, where cultural specificities are absent most of the time. By seeking the possibility of what families of non-heterosexual members become after coming out could contribute to family studies. Finally, the findings of

this paper are hoped to be somewhat helpful for Japanese scholars, as well as non-heterosexuals and their families who are struggling to verbalize what is happening and what is causing them struggle. Meanwhile, this will also help us see reasons why Japanese are said to be behind or underdeveloped in human rights and equality for non-heterosexuals, as well as why Japanese gay liberation seems "slow" to make progress. I will be grateful if this paper can somewhat provide better environments for non-heterosexuals and their families.

2.4. Research Methods: Field Research in Japan

To investigate the questions raised above, in-depth interviews and participant observations were conducted. The field research for non-heterosexuals was conducted in the summer of 2010[16], research on family members was conducted from the winter of 2012[17]. The interviews included individual interviews, group interviews and e-mail interviews. These three interviews require different techniques and have both advantages and disadvantages. Both face-to-face interviews and group interviews were semistructured interviews that allowed the interviewer to observe participants' facial expression and tone of voice as well as ask them extra questions for more details. Face-to-face interviews allowed the interviewer to probe respondents' inner feelings, values and perspectives which cannot be found just by observation (Bryman 2008, Konno 2009). Group interviews gave the interviewer an opportunity to observe discussions of the interview questions, which allowed participants to elaborate ideas more fully (Bryman 2008, Yoshizumi 2009). However, some participants did not want to talk about their inner feelings in front of others, which is typical of Japanese care for others' feelings. Unlike face-to-face interviews and group interviews, e-mail interviews were structured interviews.

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[16] This research was approved as CHS No. 18141 by the University of Hawai'i Committee on Human Studies.

[17] This research was approved as No. 2012006 by the Research Ethics Committee, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Graduate school of Human Sciences, Osaka University.

This gave participants more time to think about how to answer the questions, however, it is also introduced the difficult of grasping how they felt from their written words (Bryman 2008). In sum, however, differences in interview methods did not produce major apparent differences in the results of this study.

Before the interviews, a consent form for participation in the interview and tape recording were presented. The interview took place only when participants accepted these conditions. A place and time were designated by participants to be the most convenient and comfortable. All recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed. When participants did not agree to tape-recording, notes were taken during the interview and transcribed afterwards. If interviews were conducted public places, I offered to buy their drinks and some took the offer and some did not. I also brought souvenir gifts to participants from families and all of them accepted it. For conducting participant observations, I introduced myself as a student researcher, and got permission to take notes. All participants are identified by pseudonyms, except one person who asked me to use his real name. These pseudonyms are all family names in order to avoid using first names, which are more gendered, and to accommodate a person who identifies as MTX.

In the following chapters [3 to 6], some respondents' narratives are cited in the past tense and others' are in the present tense, according to when they confronted the issue and struggle of coming out. Those who talk in the present tense felt that they were in the situation when interviews were conducted.

2.4.1. Non-heterosexual respondents and participant observations in non-heterosexual communities in Japan, 2010

The research began with a pilot study, which analyzed five blogs written by people who

identify themselves as non-heterosexuals in Japan. The blogs tell about their life struggles. There are many more blogs that I have identified and studying blogs was a convenient way to begin the research and begin to understand how people think and write about their struggles with their sexuality. However, I needed to go beyond what was written in the blogs so direct fieldwork in Japan was conducted during the summer of 2010. The fieldwork included both interviews with individuals at various stages of the coming out process, and participant observation of the meetings and activities of three sexual minority groups that are involved in different aspects of the coming out story.

The total sample consisted of 24 non-heterosexuals, 22 of whom participated in face-to-face, in-depth interviews, and two who were interviewed through e-mails. Nine out of the sample of 22 people participated in-group interviews due to convenience and timing. There were four group interviews, with two to three people per group. Reasons for joining a group interview were because they were a couple and also because some were hesitant to attend the interview by themselves. Twenty three out of 24 people allowed me to use a tape recorder.

To begin my field research, I contacted three of the five bloggers through the comment function on their blogs, and asked if they would be willing to have an interview. Two replied and showed interest in this research, but unfortunately, one person was geographically and economically difficult to reach to conduct the interview; hence, her interview was replaced by e-mail interviews. Her partner also participated in my research and responded to interview questions in the same manner. Since only two bloggers showed their interests in participating in this research, some respondents were collected through the introduction from acquaintances in sexual minority communities and the interview sample was expanded through snowballing methods. Another effective way to find participants was through attending events and organizations' meetings in LGBT communities. I handed out my card to anyone who was

appropriate to this research and introduced this research at meetings in the LGBT groups, and then asked them to e-mail me if they were interested in participating. Fortunately, most of them decided to participate. Subsequently, the dates, times and places were arranged through e-mails. Some interviews were conducted in private rooms of a *karaoke* shop and one was at respondent's office, but most of the interviews were conducted in bars, coffee shops, or other public places. Some of these bars and restaurants were in the areas where sexual minorities gather.

Appendix 1 shows the respondents' brief backgrounds. They ranged in age from 20 to 47. Twenty percent of the respondents were students and about 40 percent of them were office workers. Their occupations included entrepreneur, freelance worker, elder care worker, researcher, sanitation worker and sports instructor. Almost 60 percent of the participants graduated from a four-year university while about 12 percent of them have a two-year college or technical school degree. Only one person has a doctoral degree while two respondents were in master's programs and three of them were in undergraduate programs. Nearly two thirds of the participants were in a relationship with a same-sex partner. All but one of the remaining people were not in a relationship with anyone. Alternative sexuality can be seen in Seto's self-identification as *okama*, which is a very ambiguous term meaning a pot or vessel. Seto was included in this study because their self-identity was not necessarily that of a transgendered person; instead, it emphasized bisexuality, which is included in non-heterosexuality. Their hometowns differed; some of them were from urban areas but many were originally from rural areas. However, their current living locations were likely to be urban areas, such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. Almost 36 percent of the respondents lived in the Kanto area including metropolitan Tokyo. Fifty-four percent of them lived in the Kansai area which includes Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe. About 10 percent of them lived in the Kyushu area. More than half of the interviews took place in the Kansai area and most of the remainder were in the Kanto area. The

face-to-face interviews ranged from 30 minutes to a little more than an hour.

Observation research at three different sexual minority groups was conducted in addition to seeking people to interview. The first group was called Girls Chat (G-chat). G-chat is community based and is a private sexual minority group. G-Chat is pseudonym because this is a more private community which is only known through word of mouth. *LGBT no Kazoku to Yūjin wo Tsunagu Kai* [The Organization to Connect Families and Friends of LGBT] (Families of LGBT) was, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the organization that is designed to support family and friends of people who came out. The third organization was called the Kansai Rainbow Parade 2010 (Kanpare 2010), which is a parade organization in Osaka. Notes were taken during the meetings as a participant observer.

2.4.2. Respondents from families of non-heterosexual members and participant observation at families of LGBT since 2012

The field work from 2012 to 2015 included both interviews with family members of non-heterosexuals and participant observation of the meetings at Families of LGBT. The total sample consisted of 24 family members [12 families] and all participated in face-to-face in-depth interviews. The 24 participants included ten mothers, five fathers, five sisters, one brother, one grandmother, one grandfather and one cousin. Respondents are designated by their family name followed by the relationship to the non-heterosexual member, such as "Aragaki mom," which refers to the mother of a non-heterosexual child named Aragaki. As seen, the relationship is abbreviated: Mother as mom, father as dad, brother as bro, older sister as o-sis, younger sister as y-sis, grandmother as grandma and grandfather as grandad. One cousin, Itou, was included in this study for two reasons. First, Suzuki mom, who was the first person in her family to hear of her daughter's non-heterosexuality, has consulted Itou about her confusion and struggles.

Thus, Itou has looked closely at how Suzuki mom has changed her thoughts and attitude toward the disclosure. Second, Itou and her non-heterosexual cousin had lived together in their childhood; thus, their relationship is close enough to say that they were "raised like siblings." Itou is included when this paper says "siblings." Five out of the 24 participated in group interviews since they are couples and agreed to participate with this condition. Miyazato o-sis had a different situation, where she brought her friend who knows about her non-heterosexual sister. Miyazato o-sis openly talks about her non-heterosexual sister to that friend, hence, it is not considered to influence the result. Twenty-three out of 24 participants allowed me to use a tape recorder.

These samples were gathered through introductions by non-heterosexuals who were at LGBT support groups as well as participants of Families of LGBT. Some of the non-heterosexuals who introduced me to their family members also introduced other non-heterosexuals who disclosed to their family members. Thus, I contacted them and asked their family members whether they were interested in participating in the research. When I knew participants' contact information, I directly contacted them through e-mails and phone calls. At that time, the document describing the research was sent and asked their permission. If I did not know their contact information, I asked non-heterosexuals to hand it in to their family members. Some of them invited me their houses, and other interviews took place at coffee shops and restaurants. I interviewed one person at a hotel lounge.

Appendix 2 shows participants' backgrounds and their relationships to non-heterosexual members in their families. The diagram includes the names, gender and sexual orientation and age of non-heterosexual members when interviewed. It also includes family members' ages, relationships and how they learned about non-heterosexual members, as well as non-heterosexual members' age when they came out to family members. Some notes are

added to indicate some information, which helps better understanding of respondents' narratives. Parents ranged in age from 49 to 68 and siblings ranged from 23 to 32. Grandparents were both 85. Among the ten mothers, five have daughters and rest have sons. Among the five fathers, two have daughters and other three have sons. Five sisters out of six have non-heterosexual sisters and one has a brother. One brother has a non-heterosexual sister and the grandparents have a non-heterosexual granddaughter. How participants learned about non-heterosexual members differed, however, almost half of them heard directly while the other half overheard it from another family member. Almost half of participants were the first person in their family to know. Among the six married mothers Suzuki grandma is retired, half of them work part-time or help a family-operated business. Almost 46 percent of the participants graduated from a four-year university while about 33 percent of them have a two-year college or technical school degree. Only one person graduated from a graduate school and one was a student of a graduate school. Two respondents graduated from a high-school and one from a junior-high-school. Among parents' educational backgrounds, four out of five fathers and four out of ten mothers graduated from a four-year university while the rest of the mothers graduated from two-year college or technical school. A quarter of married people experienced divorced.

In addition to interviews, I have conducted supplementary observation research at Families of LGBT since 2012. Almost all the participant observation was conducted at the Kobe office, but few times in Tokyo and Fukuoka. Field notes were taken during the meetings. Numbers of participants differed by meetings, however, an average of 15 to 30 people attended every meeting. Most of participants were mothers of sexual minority children. While there were few fathers, they mostly came with their wives. There were sexual minorities who seek advice from parents' generation. Among the participants, there were 2 to 3 people who were interested in learning about LGBT issues, such as student researchers, business consultants, workers from government offices, teachers, doctors, TV producers or allies. Participants came

from different cities.

Meetings begin by reading the rules which participants are expected to follow. The rules include to respect and listen to other participants' opinions, not to judge others and to protect the privacy of participants. Therefore, I introduced myself as a student researcher and promised participants that I would protect their privacy. The meetings lasted 3 hours and the first half was usually taken up by the introduction of each participant and the second half was usually used for questions from participants, and discussion. The meetings were led by executive members and they made sure every participants got chance to talk, if they wished. After the meetings, participants, especially parents, went to cafés to discuss more. Usually, they gathered based on their children's sexuality to listen to advice and information from other parents.

CHAPTER 3. NEGOTIATING WITH "PERCEIVED HOMOPHOBIA": 24 NON-
HETEROSEXUALS' COMING OUT EXPERIENCES IN JAPAN

The previous two chapters suggested the importance of taking cultural differences into account because of their effects on non-heterosexuals and their families. How do these norms influence non-heterosexuals' experiences in the Japanese context? And how do they cooperate and deal with their struggle to negotiate with others and the norms of *seken*?

This chapter introduces the narratives of non-heterosexual respondents. Heteronormativity and homophobia are linked sources of constraint that can inhibit non-heterosexuals acceptance of their own sexuality and coming out (Altman 1993, Eaklor 2008). Coming out is not a one-time event (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, Sanbe 2012), rather it is a continuous process of negotiation. It is a process of negotiation because "coming out of the closet," whether being actively out or outed by others, means to "redefine public and private boundaries, and gay identity appears within this process." (Vincent et al. 1997: 95) Thus, the question posed in this chapter is, what particular problems are associated with coming out in Japan and how are they negotiated? With whom, how and what do they negotiate with when they come out to themselves and heterosexual others? And more specifically, how do Japanese cultural norms influence coming out experiences. How do non-heterosexuals living in Japan negotiate heteronormative situations? Answering these questions make it possible to see whether the Western models of "coming out" are sufficient to explain the experiences of non-heterosexuals in Japan's strongly conformist culture.

3.1. Overcoming Internalized Homophobia and Accepting Social Exclusion

To live in a heteronormative environment means to be socialized and expected to be heterosexual. Heteronormativity makes any other sexualities invisible and carries a stigma

when it is unveiled. In this environment, realizing non-heterosexuality and admitting it would be even more difficult experiences for an individual because one has to deal with both internal and external prejudices to become who they are. Ten out of the 24 respondents experienced self-denial and rejection of themselves and their non-heterosexuality. Murase (personal communication, August 8, 2010), a lesbian woman, said it was hard to accept attraction to other women because she, "was scared of being different from others and the majority." Due to heteronormativity, non-heterosexuals became confused when they discovered their sexuality because they believed heterosexuality was the only correct sexuality. Their confusion was also intensified by negative attitudes toward non-heterosexuals, by homophobia. Fuse (personal communication, June 31, 2010), a lesbian woman, believed that "being lesbian meant being mentally ill" and Matsumoto (personal communication, July 31, 2010), a lesbian woman, also thought it was "disgusting." This implies that they were aware that being non-heterosexual is behavior that society and *seken* do not approve of. For them, accepting non-heterosexuality means having to accept that they belong to the same group as they have biases against. Therefore, they tried to deny their feelings toward people of the same-sex and suppressed their true desire.

Inner conflicts force non-heterosexuals to live a contradictory life, in which they deny themselves while they also date a person of same-sex. Yaguchi (personal communication, August 3, 2010), a lesbian woman, clearly said that she could not hold hands with her girlfriend or be open about her sexuality in public because she was worried about what others might think of their relationship. She also stated that she did not want to be seen as a lesbian. Fuse, Matsumoto and Yaguchi's narratives imply that they internalized negative images of non-heterosexuality, a kind of internalized homophobia. When individuals internalized homophobia, they felt that they would always be a target of homophobia. Additionally, they could not accept the fact that they were different from others. Murase explained, "I thought I would be left out

by other girls." They used different tactics to convince themselves and others that they were "normal." They tried to believe attractions toward same-sex friends were friendships and actually dated people of the opposite sex (Fuse, Murase, Sawada, Sunagawa, Yaguchi). Murase explained that she dated men in order to belong to girlfriend groups. They saw "hope," as Yaguchi put it, in experiencing men, because it made them believe they could "go back to normal." (Murase) However, they failed to "go back to normal" and all the tactics they tried made them realize their non-heterosexuality even more.

From respondents' narratives, it was clear that the fear of accepting their own sexuality was created by what Japanese are likely to prioritize: being a part of the majority. Belonging to a majority group and achieving conformity are highly important because the majority is "normal" for Japanese regardless of what the objective truth might be. In the US, non-heterosexuality is treated as "sinful" behavior and prohibited by canon law. Americans would fear religious sanction. However, in Japan, where it is conformity rather than religion that matters, non-heterosexuals in this study were not only afraid of being non-heterosexuals, who are stigmatized, taboo and "disgusting" (Matsumoto), but also were afraid of being different from others. This led to exclusion from groups they belonged to as a result of being non-heterosexual. Since Japanese respondents knew that non-heterosexuality was not accepted in society and *seken*, embracing non-heterosexuality meant exclusion, which is the same as losing the purpose of existence in Japanese contexts. This is what they feared.

There was variation in how long people denied their feelings, however, there came a time when respondents had to acknowledge their sexuality because their desires toward people of the same-sex became too strong or because they experienced loneliness due to inability to disclose the issue to anyone. Before feelings toward people of the same-sex got too strong, they suppressed individual desire. This implies that they performed "*enryo* [self-imposed restraint]"

to achieve conformity, which ironically resulted in self-denial and caused isolation and loneliness. Respondents reported trying to overcome self-rejection by 1) searching for information about sexuality and interacting with other non-heterosexuals or sexual minority groups, and 2) by seeking acceptance from friends and family.

Six out of ten respondents overcame the fear of accepting their sexuality by the first strategy. Matsumoto felt she "lost all hope" about being a non-heterosexual, but then she read a helpful book written by a person who identified as a lesbian. Matsumoto also used an Internet bulletin board to consult with other non-heterosexuals about her struggles. She realized that "there are respectable lesbians in real life," which dispelled her negative images about them. Subsequently, she started going to sexual minority community events, including a pride parade, that helped her accept her own sexuality. Higuchi (personal communication, July 30, 2010), a bisexual man, and Fuse both used the Internet to look for the community. They searched the words, lesbian or gay "very nervously." (Fuse) Fuse said that her struggles to accept her sexuality diminished after she made friends via the Internet. She used a bulletin board to make friends in the non-heterosexual community and she actually met them later. "Everyone was so kind and accepted me and that was most helpful. After that I could start thinking there is nothing wrong with being a lesbian." Consequently she felt better and was eventually able to accept herself. Higuchi was struggling to accept his sexuality when interviewed. However, he was able to start accepting himself after making contact with the community. As he put it, "I couldn't know myself, and couldn't have made friends with whom I could talk about sexuality openly, if I didn't go there." These stories show how sexual minority communities in Japan helped people who have difficulties accepting their sexuality, as scholars elsewhere have also shown (Cass 1979, Coleman 1982, Plummer 1975, Troiden 1989). These communities are also helpful in gaining conformity, which is especially important for non-heterosexuals who were isolated from majority groups. These communities treat being who one really is as a good thing

despite their minority identity, which suggests that they are organized differently from majority Japanese groups, which value *enryo* and hierarchy. In this respect, LGBT communities stand outside of Japan's oppressive mainstream social order.

Four other respondents overcame fear of accepting their sexuality through the second strategy, acceptance by heterosexual others. Those respondents, except Sawada, came out to heterosexual friends that helped them to become comfortable with their sexuality. For example, Sunagawa (personal communication, July 22, 2010), a gay male activist, had justified his feelings toward other boys as friendship because he had acknowledged heterosexuality as a normal sexual behavior. However, there was a point where he had to acknowledge his sexuality because his feelings toward other men got so overwhelming that he could not deny them anymore. At the same time, he began disclosing to his male friends. He said, "Continuing to have a conversation with my friend about my love on the phone made me settle down and feel comfortable with my sexuality." Sawada had a rather different experience. Sawada was outed to her brother by a person she dated. At that time, one of Sawada's brothers also told her that he was gay and that their other brothers already knew this. Sawada was relieved to find a person with whom she could share experiences. Moreover, the feeling of guilt toward her parents started to wane and she believed, "It's OK to be who I am now." The case of Sawada may be unusual. However, being accepted by others first was another way that respondents overcame sexual self-denial.

Their fear of accepting their sexuality was partly created by the need to conform. Before respondents realized their non-heterosexuality, they lived in heteronormative situations and never questioned them. After the realization of their sexuality, they had to negotiate their differences with heterosexual cultural norms. However, these two strategies helped them gain conformity and high self-esteem and made them believe that they are as normal as

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heterosexuals and not alone. They also realized that not everyone was homophobic, and that their fears were mostly imagined. Eventually, they started becoming more comfortable and accepting of their sexuality and constructed non-heterosexual identities. Their experiences resemble Cass's and Coleman's stages, in which people feel conflicted about accepting their own sexuality. However, it was also obvious that behaving "appropriately" so as to maintain interdependent relationships and to conform are prioritized in Japanese contexts; thus, accepting non-heterosexuality meant accepting some degree of social exclusion. Because of these dominant cultural values, becoming fully comfortable with their sexuality is not the end of coming out, rather it is the beginning "being out," of having to continually negotiate a non-heterosexual identity.

3.2. Concerns about Burdening or Causing Trouble [meiwaku] to Others

Even if respondents dealt with their inner conflicts and overcame internalized homophobia, disclosing it to heterosexual others was very different story. Among my respondents, those who used the two previously described strategies for accepting their own sexuality realized there are people who respect non-heterosexuality. Yet, they still pretended to be heterosexual until they came out to other heterosexuals, who they feared might be homophobic. Unless one comes out, one is always assumed to be a heterosexual. Thus, non-heterosexuals are put in a situation where they are compelled to decide how to live in heteronormative situations. Coming out here refers to coming out to people who are not members of a sexual minority. Coming out to heterosexual others, or in heteronormative situations, involves the risk of possible backlash, while coming out to sexual minority communities is a strategy for self-acceptance.

I asked how respondents felt before coming out. Seventeen of them said they

experienced fear. I asked why they were scared. Toba (personal communication, July 16, 2010), a pansexual woman, looked at her past and said, "I was worried about changing the relationships I had with people I came out to." Kawabata (personal communication, June 26, 2010), a lesbian woman, explained what she specifically feared: "I'm worried that people will look at me with prejudice, that people might feel I'm gross or disgusting, or that my female friends would reject going to a public bath[18] with me." Koyanagi (personal communication, June 26, 2010), a lesbian woman, also said, "I hesitate to come out to female friends because they may misunderstand and think I'm attracted to them." Yaguchi stated that she did not want others to see her as "strange" or "deviant" and these feelings reinforced her fear of coming out. From their narratives, the source of fear was primarily concern about relationship issues. They are aware of possible risks or negative consequences because they believed that people they had fear of coming out to might be homophobic, which would damage their relationships. This belief is understandable especially for non-heterosexuals who experienced struggles with their own acceptance of non-heterosexuality.

While respondents feared coming out, they at times expressed guilt about hiding an essential part of their identity or lying to their friends and family. These feelings got bigger as they became more comfortable personally with their sexuality. Also, the closer the relationship, the more desire for being understood and guilt of telling lies increased. It is especially understandable in the Japanese context. Japanese shift their behavior situationally. They are allowed to show their *honne* [internal truth] in front of intimate others, such as family and close friends, because *uchi* [interior] is considered as a safer place, while in other places they present *tatemae* [external pretense] in order for them to prioritize other-esteem. Another example of particular Japanese characteristics is that, as many of the respondents said, coming out was a

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[18] Going to public bath is a traditional Japanese habit, and still practiced today. Kawabata was afraid of her female friends would think that she was thinking of them sexually.

way for them to be relieved and to stop lying to people they love. But honesty for them was "egoistic." Iwatani (personal communication, June 26, 2010), a lesbian woman, clearly said, "I think coming out is '*ego* [egoistic]'… because I can openly talk about myself to the people to whom I've already come out. Also, I don't have to pretend to be a heterosexual because people know me as a lesbian." Asked how such behavior is egoistic, she answered, "It's egoistic because it's my desire that I want people to know about me." Asked, "Is it also egoistic for heterosexuals to tell their friends about their boyfriend or girlfriend?" She answered, "Heterosexuality is considered to be normal in this society. Of course there are people who know about homosexuality, but many have biases against it. If we think about it, it's hard to come out; however, at the same time, I want them to understand. This is like I'm forcing them to understand." The last statement specifically shows the dilemma non-heterosexuals confront, and also reminds us that Japanese selves are characteristically expected to care for and show concern about others' feelings.

Applying Lebra's argument (2004) about the "front [*omote*] zone" of the self, in which people are expected to behave according to social conventions appropriate to their social roles, disclosing "private" or "personal" issues could be perceived as "*meiwaku*," something that causes trouble or is a burden for others. Since Japanese society is generally composed of interdependent selves, in which the individual "occupies one's proper place" (Markus and Kitayama 1991), the "proper place" is defined by heteronormative roles in which individuals are expected to be heterosexual. Disclosing non-heterosexuality is a violation of the Japanese injunction to be attentive to the needs of others and not to burden them with one's own personal issues; thus non-heterosexuals practice self-restraint, "*enryo*" and refrain from making others listen to their personal issues. Also, coming out to close friends or family members can be egoistic because it may unconsciously threaten family and friendship bonds, a violation of the interior [*uchi*] zone of the Japanese self (Lebra 2004). They are afraid of losing the relationships

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and breaking ties with friends and family. This is why coming out is perceived as egoistic by some respondents. Thus, even if one has constructed non-heterosexual identity, coming out to heterosexual others appears to be confrontational in contexts where conflict is not supposed to occur.

However, this does not seem to be the case for Americans because free expression of one's feelings is more acceptable in that society (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Once people in the US accept their own sexuality, they are likely to adopt non-heterosexuality as a way of life, regardless of consequences for relationships. This was what Cass and Coleman assumed to be the hallmark of individualism. Hence, in the Western context, coming out may be perceived as a strategy for establishing non-heterosexual identity, which makes sexual minorities visible in a heteronormative society so they can live as they want. On the other hand, people in the Japanese context may perceive coming out as an optional tool for individuals seeking to negotiate among heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals in order to coexist in heteronormative settings.

3.3. Sexuality is a Private Issue

Besides the fear of causing trouble for others, many of my respondents agreed a major reason for not coming out to larger society, including certain relationships or *seken*, was because it was "meaningless," (Matsumoto, Miyake, Shimizu, Ueda) or "does not have any advantages." (Iwatani, Miyake) They believed their sexuality was a private issue that was not part of those relationships. In the following sub-sections, how non-heterosexuals decide to not come out at workplaces and to their families are examined. The influence of gender differences is significant.

3.3.1. Women's job to harmonize workplaces

Matsumoto explained, "I don't come out at my workplace because no one cares if I am a lesbian, but they expect me to be an independent worker." Miyake (personal communication, July 31, 2010), a lesbian woman explained, "I don't plan to come out at my workplace because I don't see any advantages of coming out there." As revealed in their narratives, they "chose[19]" individual worker as the expected primary identity. Another narrative was that people believed coming out at work put their employment at risk. Hayakawa (personal communication, July 24, 2010), a bisexual woman, said that coming out "may affect my working conditions" so she would not come out. Workplaces are usually places where "private" issues do not matter. Even if coworkers ask "private" questions, they expect "private" to refer to heterosexual life. Thus, non-heterosexuals either hide their "private" lives or pretend to be heterosexuals at the workplace. Thus, many of the respondents struggled, trapped between how coworkers perceived them as heterosexual and their desire to correct that assumption.

The choice not to come out at work differed by gender. Araki, Matsumoto, Miyake and Wada (personal communication, June 27, 2010), a lesbian woman, and Yaguchi had similar narratives. Matsumoto, for example, noted how "women are still expected to quit their jobs after marriage. So, if a woman is working in her thirties, other workers start asking, 'Why isn't she married yet?'" Thus, career women were "seen as pitiful women or losers" (Matsumoto, Miyake) who could not succeed in getting married and quitting their jobs. Hayakawa said that telling lies at her workplace was "stressful," but they could be free from these stereotypes and have an easier life by coming out at workplace and being open about themselves. Still, work environments make it difficult for women to do so. Muta (2008) introduces examples of women

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[19] They do not have a real choice because they could come out without problems if friends, workplace and family or even larger society accepted non-heterosexuality.

who found it difficult to speak up about their experiences of sexual harassment at workplace due to "*wa*, the principle of group harmony." (57) According to Muta, women, especially in office environments, are expected to be the ones who maintain harmony at work. Thus, complaining of sexual harassment would be understood as a non-harmonious behavior in Japan. Likewise, disclosing female non-heterosexuality at work could be treated as troublesome behavior because it threatens the patriarchal and heteronormative working environment; thus, disharmonizing working environments. Moreover, the boundary between public and private "reinforces the oppression against women, and at the same time, creates an ideological foundation for staying in the 'closet.'" (Vincent et al. 1997: 94) Hence, the distinctive narratives of female respondents about coming out in the workplace were predictable because in Japan's cultural norms women are expected to put concern for others' feelings first in order to maintain harmony, and this is reinforced by the boundary between public and private. While men are less likely to be judged in their careers by their marital status or to face gender inequality, those who work at big companies are still expected to get married. However, this expectation did not play a role in my research since there were few male respondents and they were not working for big companies.

3.3.2. The spell of parents and well-socialized children

Even though pressure in the workplace could vary by gender, the pressure for marriage from family was present regardless of gender. Taniguchi (personal communication, July 14, 2010), a lesbian woman, who vacillated about coming out to her family, said, "I was hesitant because I wouldn't be able to achieve the happiness that my parents expect from me, of marrying a man and having children." Endo (personal communication, June 26, 2010), a lesbian woman, explained "I want to come out to my mom so she will stop asking me about marriage. But I don't want my mother to blame herself that her way of raising children was

wrong because I'm a lesbian." Both respondents said the consequences of coming out to their parents might be too upsetting and therefore not worth the risk. This is also noticeable that they prioritize parents' feelings over their identity.

Family was where they belonged and acquired Japanese cultural values. Relationships with family are the interior zone for Japanese. Lebra (2004) compared family relationships in the US and Japan and explained that Americans are more likely to "favor the sexual bond" with the spouse, whereas Japanese prioritize the "kinship bond of parent and child." (69) This is especially significant between mother and child because parenting still refers to mothering in Japan. In this interior zone, an individual presents facets of the self to intimate others, resulting in a natural intimacy with family members or close friends.

Respondents' families assumed that heterosexual marriage was the only way to pursue happiness. Although coming out to their parents and being "accepted" by them would make their own lives easier, my respondents were socialized to believe that pursuing heterosexual marriage defined happiness. Thus, they prioritized family ties over personal sexual identity and even believed that non-heterosexual relationships can never provide happiness. Coming out to family meant questioning the modality of heteronormative family, somethings that is said to cause "family collapse." (LaSala 1998, 2000, 2010, Savin-Williams and Dubé 1998) Non-heterosexual children perceived that coming out could damage important relationships, and they feared being excluded or banished from family.

Besides being concerned about family relationships after the disclosure, another common narrative among respondents who were hesitant to come out to parents was that they were concerned not only about their parents become too upset and showing negative reactions, which would result in hurting their own feelings as well, but also causing their parents trouble

or worries. Endo's narrative of her concerns for her mother to blame herself exemplifies how much non-heterosexual children are concerned about their parents' wellbeing. Not only that, and more importantly, non-heterosexual children also care about troubles their parents may confront in their parent's *seken*, in which parents are responsible for children's troubles. Ueda (a personal communication, June 26, 2010), a lesbian woman, exactly explained, "I don't mind telling [my sexuality] to my parents if I only thinking about myself. But I assume my parents care about *sekentei* [the reputation of *seken* or others] so I've been avoiding telling them. I don't want to hurt them." Ueda told me she was not planning to come out to her parents when the interview was conducted. Ueda's narrative suggests that her choice of not coming out to her parents is to avoid putting her parents in position to become a target of discrimination in *seken*. As a result, those who decided not to come out to their parents pretended to be a heterosexual children, which represented an "appropriate" behavior in front of their families to maintain harmony at home and in *seken*.

Some respondents said that reason why they decided not to come out to their family members, especially their parents, was because it was "too personal." For example, Koyanagi said, "You don't talk with your parents about what you do in bed, right? It's the same for me. I don't feel it's necessary to talk about what I do in bed regardless of which gender I'm sleeping with, so I won't [come out] to my parents." Her narrative suggests that people who decided not to come out to their families, especially their parents, used the same logic as people who chose not to come out at work. They treated talking about non-heterosexuality as something "too private" to reveal in those settings.

3.3.3. Non-heterosexuality is made to be "private"

The question of whether disclosing one's sexuality is really a "private" issue should not

be neglected. After all, heterosexuals generally assume everyone is heterosexual and heterosexuality is never questioned, while non-heterosexuality is always questioned. In such heteronormative circumstances, heterosexual identity is not something they need to hide. In other words, "heterosexual identity is clearly divided into private and public parts"; thus, the sexual parts, such as what happens in bed, is "purely protected in the name of privacy," while all the attitudes of non-heterosexuals and their identity are "perceived as sex and their whole identity are made invisible in the name of privacy." (Vincent et al. 1997: 93) Even though "private" is defined differently for heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals (Vincent et al. 1997), non-heterosexuals are made numb by these differences and treat their stories, as well as coming out, "private" issue. Yet, it is noticeable that this boundary is created by heteronormativity, hence, non-heterosexuals are continually made vulnerable unless this boundary is questioned and redefined. For non-heterosexuals in Japan also need to deal with internalized constraints which, in addition to the consequences of homophobia like many in the US face, are the product of socialization to cultural norms.

From respondents' narratives, it is evident that they were aware of possible risks or perceived negative consequences *after* coming out. They therefore felt fear and were hesitant to come out in some situations. While their perceptions of negative consequences of coming out were produced and reproduced by heteronormativity and homophobia, their determination of whom they would or would not come out to was derived from their perception of how homophobic and heterosexist heterosexual others were. This calculation of what sort of self to display reflects characteristic Japanese concern for adjusting one's behavior to fit the social definition of the situation (Cousins 1989, Lebra 2004, Markus and Kitayama 1991, Peak 1989).

3.4. Caring about Others and "Perceived Homophobia"

Once respondents prioritized individual desire over concerns about others, they started coming out to people they thought they could trust and who they believed would understand. Coming out here is distinct from seeking acceptance from others, which was discussed in the previous section as a strategy for acceptance of their own sexuality. The motivation for those people mentioned earlier was their overwhelming isolation and confusion about their sexuality. However, the motivation for coming out in this section was based on non-heterosexual's desire to be understood by close friends or family, after they already had accepted their sexuality to some extent. They prioritized their desire to be understood over the fear of how others might perceive them as they violated "*enryo* [self-imposed restraint]" norms (Lebra 2004). If they came out to their friends or family here, they have overcome their rejection of sexuality through interacting with non-heterosexual subcultures.

Araki (personal communication, June 26, 2010), a queer woman, said that "I would be in agony, feeling guilty about telling lies to close friends about myself." Thus, she came out to her close friends and family. Higuchi had not come out to many people when interviewed, and explained he would only come out to people who he really wanted to know him. Iwatani also decided to come out to her close friends, because she wanted them to understand who she really was. Two respondents (Ozaki, Hayakawa) described the stress of telling lies about an essential part of themselves and they decided to come out in order to be rid of these stresses. When Ozaki (personal communication, June 26, 2010), a lesbian woman, decided to come out to her parents, she thought, "Why should I tell lies to the people I love? Me being a lesbian is a part of myself. I cannot live my life without their support." Ozaki's narrative, especially when she said she thought she cannot live her life without her family's support, also showed the reality of vulnerable non-heterosexuals in Japan. As explained by Sanbe (2014), non-heterosexuals

depend highly on their parents' support in order to survive as non-heterosexuals because Japan does not secure any rights for non-heterosexuals.

It should be noted that even in the US coming out to family members is especially considered risky and many non-heterosexuals face these difficulties (D'Augelli 2002). As reviewed in Chapter 1, there are parents who react negatively to coming out, they may even kick non-heterosexual children out of the home or become violent toward them. These reactions negatively influence non-heterosexuals' mental health (Hammelman 1993, Hetrick and Martin 1987). Hiding an essential part of their non-heterosexual identity from their family members is somewhat stressful for non-heterosexuals in both the US and Japan. However, since non-heterosexuals in Japan "prioritize consanguine family like their parents and siblings," (Sanbe 2010: 48) and Japanese parent-child relationships are stronger, tensions around revealing non-heterosexuality in front of family members could be more stressful for non-heterosexuals in Japan as mentioned in a previous subsection.

After having come out several times, respondents experienced "positive" and "negative" reactions. Those who experienced positive reactions thought that they were "accepted" (Nakayama, Seto, Shimizu) and friends and family were "very supportive" (Taniguchi); thus, they felt they became closer to people after coming out because they could be completely themselves in front of friends and family (Araki, Kawabata, Matsumoto, Miyake). Although some respondents chose others who could respect their sexuality, many of them were surprised, and at the same time happy, about unexpected positive reactions. Since their fear of coming out revolved around relational issues, positive reaction helped deflate their fear of coming out.

Yet, some people did experience "negative" reactions. Sunagawa came out to a female friend, but she replied, "I can't accept that [you are gay]." Higuchi came out to his male friend,

but the friend stopped contacting Higuchi after the disclosure. Noguchi (personal communication, July 17, 2010), a gay man, described coming out to his parents. The first sentence his father said was, "You, fix it." Murase had a brutal and violent experience with her friend's boyfriend, because he felt that Murase threatened his relationship with his girlfriend. Murase came out to a female friend at her part time job, and the friend told her boyfriend. The boyfriend came to a New Year's party at work and started behaving violently toward Murase, using abusive language, such as, "You fucking lesbian!" Murase recounted her experience: "I couldn't call the police because I am a homosexual and was afraid of my parents and other workers knowing about my sexuality." Murase's experience in particular exemplified how Japanese allow relationships to define their identity. Additionally, my respondents characterized their "negative" experience as being ignored: their friends acted as if their coming out did not happen, making them feel as if their coming out and the issue of sexual minorities were invisible.

The important factor here is how respondents perceived "positive" and "negative" reactions. Their perceptions were based on their relationships to others. "Positive" reactions meant that they could keep current relationships and become closer to those they came out to. On the other hand, being ignored by friends and family and being treated as if their coming out did not happen, was perceived as "negative" reaction, because being invisible in a group meant their friendship or relationships were disrupted in Japanese context. One feature of Japanese bullying is "to do nothing," which is unlike direct violence. Ignoring one person in a group creates unity among the bullies (Koukami 2006). Thus, those who perceived that their coming out was treated as if "nothing happened" took it negatively: they felt they were excluded by their friends and family. However, it is also possible that heterosexuals who "ignored" friends' coming out might actually have been doing *enryo* [self-imposed restraint] because the issue seemed "too personal." This particularly illustrates that while the topic of [hetero]sexuality is

talked about quite often among friends and family, non-heterosexuality is construed as a "private" issue (RYOJI and Sunagawa 2007). Yet, to be critical, the topic of sexual orientation is a "public" issue. Thus, ignoring or even doing *enryo* can be considered to be a form of homophobia. This is especially true in Japan because excluding a person from a group is often a very painful experience for Japanese.

Although it is undeniable that people experienced some negative reactions after coming out and non-heterosexuals are still stigmatized in society, my respondents' experiences of coming out, especially positive ones, also reveal "perceived homophobia" as another source of struggle they confront in Japan. Respondents were aware of possible risks or perceived negative consequences *after* coming out. They therefore choose not to come out in some situations. Sunagawa, who now lives openly as a non-heterosexual but could not initially accept his sexuality and had fear of coming out, said, "Those who can't come out think negative things will happen after coming out. But… I wonder if consequences will turn out to be all negative." Not only Sunagawa but also other respondents who came out successfully realized that the consequences of coming out tuned out to be not as bad as they thought.

3.4.1. Seken *reinforces "perceived homophobia"*

"Perceived homophobia" refers to the mindset of non-heterosexual individuals in heteronormative settings: they feel that everyone is homophobic or against non-heterosexuality. When one has Perceived Homophobia, they actually have heard, seen or experienced homophobia. In LGBT communities, whether and how participants come out to heterosexual others including their family are commonly discussed. At that time, non-heterosexuals overheard people's negative experiences of coming out. Not limited to LGBT communities, discussions of the possibilities of negative consequences of coming out appear widely in

literature and media as well. These experiences become a criterion for their determination and produce Perceived Homophobia. If one has not heard, seen or experienced homophobia, yet they have fear of coming out, this is considered as "imagined homophobia" because they just imagine what others *might* think of them based on their negative images and connotation against non-heterosexuality. Imagined homophobia could also be created by someone's general attitude and values. For instance, if one sees that someone has a more conservative or stronger heteronormative mindset, they imagine this person could be homophobic and this becomes "imagined homophobia." Moreover, imagined homophobia may be more likely among non-heterosexuals who are facing difficulties accepting their own sexuality; and who thus, do not talk to anyone about it. It is because the more they struggle with accepting their identity due perceived biases, the less they talk about it with anyone. That results in reinforcing negative images about coming out. Nevertheless, once one interacts with other non-heterosexuals, as most non-heterosexuals eventually do, it is predictable that they share stories of homophobia. Then, their imagined homophobia is proved to be not just imaginary but is somewhat real, and their imagined homophobia would turn out to be Perceived Homophobia. While the commonality of these homophobias is that the actual result remains unknown, the fear non-heterosexuals have *before* coming out is affected by Perceived Homophobia most of the time, because negative discourse about non-heterosexuality is still everywhere and there is a solid fact that their rights are not protected. Mead's concept of "the generalized other" helps explain the construction of Perceived Homophobia. According to Mead (1967), individuals' selves are constructed through interactions in which other people's attitudes are reflected in our behavior. He calls this "the generalized other." Importantly, the generalized other assumes heteronormativity, which tends to render non-heterosexuals invisible. Non-heterosexuals internalize the generalized other and "perceive" that others will see them as abnormal if their sexuality is unveiled. Non-heterosexuals will decide not to come out based on their perception

of generalized homophobia.

To clarify, Perceived Homophobia and internalized homophobia are different. Internalized homophobia is when individuals internalize negative connotations associated with non-heterosexuality. However, Perceived Homophobia is the anticipation of what others will think of one's self *before* coming out regardless of the actual result *after* coming out. Thus, even if one overcame internalized homophobia and constructed non-heterosexual identity, it would not mean they could automatically overcome Perceived Homophobia. Yet, one may overcome imagined homophobia by overcoming internalized homophobia. Still, as mentioned, most of non-heterosexuals confront negative stories about coming out in their lifetime; thus, they cannot be completely free from Perceived Homophobia. While pointing out that Perceived Homophobia and internalized homophobia are different, these two are still interconnected to each other, because internalized homophobia reinforces Perceived Homophobia.

Much of the literature takes the concept of Perceived Homophobia for granted. Cass calls it a consistent fear of a "perceived negative reaction" that influences their decision about coming out (Cass 1979: 234). It is presumable that Perceived Homophobia could be present in the US. Yet, the absence of the concept is not only because their interests were the psychological changes and also their goal was to construct non-heterosexual identity. But more importantly, it is assumed in the West that by the time individuals constructed their identity, they overcame "perceived negative reaction" or Perceived Homophobia. However, this concept is particularly necessary to explain the Japanese case because Japanese non-heterosexuals need to keep negotiating with Perceived Homophobia even after they overcame internalized homophobia and accepted their own non-heterosexuality. While an individual exists corresponding to the existence of society in the West, Japanese belong to *seken*, meaning their identity is depending upon human relationships. They are expected to prioritize others' feelings

to Japanese social order over individual identity. Therefore, it is possible to say that the effect of Perceived Homophobia would be more powerful in Japanese context due to *seken* in which people are expected to behave the same as others.

3.4.2. *Being non-heterosexual in Japan means endless negotiation*

In the West, canon law protects heterosexuality and punishes non-heterosexuals. This circumstance causes people to feel fear of being non-heterosexual. There are non-heterosexual Christians in Japan and they also face the same issues (Horie 2006), yet fear of being non-heterosexual in Japan is probably unrelated to religion. Unlike the US, violence toward non-heterosexuals is not triggered by religious reasons. Moreover, Christians make up only 1.5% of Japan's total population (Ministry of Education 2014). Therefore, unlike the US, where canon law has been shared historically and socially, Perceived Homophobia could be the major obstruction for non-heterosexuals in Japan. Because Japanese prioritize connectedness with others and value being a part of the majority, being different means being labeled "strange" or "deviant"; and thus, excluded. Since the majority treats heterosexuality as the appropriate behavior, non-heterosexuality is considered "inappropriate" behavior. Following these cultural norms internalizes self-constraint [*enryo*], and prioritizes what others think over one's own feelings. This type of self seems to have little self-esteem or self-respect from the perspective of Western selves. However, constraining one's desires and prioritizing others' feelings is expected "appropriate" behavior in Japan. Thus, Perceived Homophobia is created by the expectation of "respectable-Japanese selves," and this is even more reinforced due to the presence of *seken*.

The additional factor of Perceived Homophobia raises the question of the effect of heteronormativity in the US and Japanese context. If interdependent selves need to be

concerned for conformity, where compulsory heterosexuality is shared, the effect of heteronormativity would exert more power over individuals, preventing non-heterosexuals from being who they really are. This could be a Japanese form of oppression that many non-heterosexuals in Japan take for granted because they have been socialized to prioritize cultural norms over individual identity. Conversely, the individualistic Western self can express itself more freely, so individuals can more easily resist or even boldly ignore heteronormative dominance.

It is notable that previous researchers on coming out to own self and others, such as Cass and Coleman, as well as this paper, all treat interactions with sexual minority communities as a strategy to accept own sexuality. However, previous Western theories analyzed psychological processes of how individuals established their non-heterosexual self through coming out to other non-heterosexuals, and concluded that constructing a non-heterosexual identity in their community would automatically bring a "happy" life for individuals. Nevertheless, how and with what non-heterosexuals in Japan have to negotiate unveiled that they rather needed to negotiate with strong cultural norms through interactions within social settings after they overcame internalized homophobia and accepted their non-heterosexuality, because Japanese situational behavioral expectations were indifferent to sexuality. Therefore, becoming fully comfortable with non-heterosexuality is necessary but not sufficient for non-heterosexuals to live in Japan because they cannot always come out even if they are fully comfortable with their sexuality. In other words, constructing a non-heterosexual identity would not automatically bring a "happy" life for non-heterosexuals living in Japan. Furthermore, Perceived Homophobia may be more powerful than actual homophobia for non-heterosexuals in Japan because it is a culturally embedded perception of Japanese heteronormative society. This is why the Western model of the coming out process cannot fully explain the coming out experiences of non-heterosexuals living in Japan.

Therefore coming out is a continuous process of negotiation for non-heterosexuals living in Japan because they have been well socialized to care about others' feelings and it is way too difficult to be free from these expectations. Caring what others perceive and judge are valued in Japan because conformity with others is the very basis of the group. Thus, they need to keep negotiating with the groups or communities, *seken*, they belong to as well as individuals' perceptions of what others in groups perceive themselves, Perceived Homophobia. Non-heterosexuals' fear of self-acceptance and coming out to heterosexual others were created by fears of damaging relationships that are the basis of identity that is not related to sexuality. Their determination of whom they would or would not come out to was the product of what they perceived to be the "appropriate behavior" expected of a Japanese self. In this way, Perceived Homophobia plays an important role in people's decisions to come out and there is a strong reciprocal relationship between the two. In this study, as people came out to more people, their perception of negative consequences decreased. When Perceived Homophobia dominated their lives, it was more difficult to accept their sexuality and come out to other heterosexuals. Because Perceived Homophobia is reproduced by the important values in *seken*, prioritizing others' feeling and the sameness with others, non-heterosexuals may not be able to be free from Perceived Homophobia as long as they are under the spell of *seken* and reputation.

Introducing Perceived Homophobia does not mean we can neglect the fact that there are still many non-heterosexuals in Japan who experience actual homophobia and still struggle with accepting themselves and coming out to heterosexuals. Some of my respondents clearly experienced homophobia, such as physical and psychological violence. However, the important point is that non-heterosexuals living in Japan need to face, adapt to and negotiate with Perceived Homophobia in addition to the heteronormativity and actual homophobia that non-heterosexuals in the US confront. This is why Perceived Homophobia is another contributing factor in the obstacles for non-heterosexuals in Japanese context. This has been said, non-

heterosexuals must continually negotiate their non-heterosexuality to make a secure environment for themselves because no rights or security for non-heterosexuals are guaranteed. It is regrettable to have to say that as long as heteronormativity dominates society and *seken*, a negative relationship between Perceived Homophobia and non-heterosexuals' struggles will continue. The consequences *after* coming out will remain unknown and individuals may experience actual homophobia. Nevertheless, overcoming Perceived Homophobia may be achievable with support from community, friends and family[20]. Continuous negotiation with cultural norms as well as others are the one way for non-heterosexuals to make a comfortable environments in order to live "happily," which in a way, challenges the dominant heteronormative atmosphere.

3.5. Concepts of Stigma and Courtesy Stigma

As seen in previous sections, non-heterosexuals have difficulties coming out to their families, especially their parents. The narratives of why they chose not to come out to their parents imply that they are not only afraid of upsetting their parents but also concerned about their parents to also become a target of stigma as a result of their disclosure. This is known as "courtesy stigma." According to Goffman (1963), courtesy stigma occurs when "individual[s] who [are] related through the social structure to a stigmatized individuals are obliged to share some of the discredit of the stigmatized person to whom they are related" and "live within the

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[20] There were respondents who realized the importance of being a non-heterosexual self in any situation (Nakayama, Ozaki, Seto, Sunagawa). Most of them were heavily involved with political activities. It suggests that they stand in a different world with different norms from general people. In reality, there are still few non-heterosexuals who prioritize being themselves over what others perceived them to be in Japan. Nonetheless, self-acceptance allowed them to tolerate heteronormativity and encouraged them to treat their sexuality as "normal," in which they finally became "selves" in the Western sense. In this respect, they overcame Perceived Homophobia and even challenged heteronormativity. Yet, it also should be noted that just because one can became the Western concept of a "self" does not mean they can fully become "happy" because their rights are not protected at the constitutional level in Japan.

world of one's stigmatized connection." (30) Referring to Goffman, Corrigan and Miller (2004) researched the effect of stigma against families where one of the member has mental illness. They categorized courtesy stigma into two types. First, "vicarious stigma," which is the suffering parents feel empathically because their loved one is suffering. Second, "public stigma," which is the stigma family members experience directly because of prejudice and discrimination by the general population against the family. LaSala (2010), a family therapist and research on non-heterosexuals and their parents in the US, refers to Corrigan and Miller's categorizations of courtesy stigma and indicates that parents of non-heterosexuals experience these stigmas. In parents' narratives in LaSala's research, they became upset when they heard someone spoke negatively about non-heterosexuality, their child would also be a target. This story represented the experience of "vicarious stigma." On the one hand, parents expressed difficulties dealing with people's criticism and prejudice that they were to blame for child's non-heterosexuality, which is understood as "public stigma."

In Japan, Sanbe's research (2014) does not distinguish "courtesy stigma," but she points out that parents in Japan are compelled to aware of being "ones with courtesy stigma" after they overcame negative feelings toward non-heterosexuality and changed their perception which made them realize their new identity as "parents of an LGB child." In other words, discovering new identity make parents realize that they could be subject to criticism because this is recognition where they "became a 'party as family,' and are forced to manage its impression." (Sanbe 2014: 193) Through this chapter, it was clarified that non-heterosexuals are one of a stigmatized group of people in Japan and they have to negotiate their stigmatized identity with cultural embedded norms in each situation. When considering about Japanese norms, which people value kinship and are expected to behave appropriate to situations to gain conformity, it is predictable that family members also would face courtesy stigma. Sanbe (2014) takes "courtesy stigma" for granted without asking what it means in Japanese context.

However, I raise questions in order to see the effects of courtesy stigma: what "courtesy stigma" means to families with non-heterosexual members in Japan and how they negotiate with it.

3.5.1. Parents' responsibility to apologize for trouble caused by their children: Courtesy stigma and seken

As repeatedly mentioned, in Japan, people are compelled to value relationships with others [*seken*] and parents are expected by *seken* to take responsibility when their child makes "trouble." (Abe 2003, Sato 2013) According to Sato (2013: 168-69), parents are expected to apologize to *seken* on behalf of their children who made "trouble" because "they internalize [the ideology of] '*ie* [household].'" As explained in Chapter 1 description of characteristics of the Japanese family, the *ie* system was introduced in Meiji Era Japan and it had lasted until the WWII. However, the norms created by the system are rooted as an ideology which still remains in the lives of Japanese today. The *ie* system prescribed gender inequality in which a husband had rights and a wife did not. Moreover, this system also prescribed parent and child relationships, as a relationship of superior and subordinate. In this sense, the "'hierarchy' in '*seken*' runs through the inside of family." (Sato 2013: 54-55) Unlike the family in the West, which is based on love between individual selves and individualism of each member, Japanese parents do not have tools to resist the pressure from *seken* to take responsibility for child's troubles because they are all part of the *ie* (Sato 2013).

Moreover, *seken* distinguishes what inside and outside are. It discriminates, and excludes people who belong outside of *seken*. Thus, the rules in *seken* tell people what *futsuu* [normality or ordinariness] is and compel people to be the same, not be different. In *seken*, where being *futsuu* is preferred, family members, especially parents, are compelled to be conscious about courtesy stigma because they are socialized to be sensitive about their

responsibility for child's "troublesome" attitudes and behavior. In this circumstance, the more parents are conscious about courtesy stigma, the greater their hopes for themselves, their children and their families to be *futsuu* would become. Likewise, the characteristics of *seken* and courtesy stigma have strong connections: as family members are more conscious about courtesy stigma, they end up perpetuating characteristics of *seken*, which distresses them.

That said, family members' experiences caused by courtesy stigma in Japan appear to be different from what previous research has pointed out. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will introduce family members' narratives of how they felt and reacted when they heard one of their members was a non-heterosexual.

3.5.2. "Coming out" for non-heterosexuals and family members

Before going to the next chapter, one thing should be clarified: the difference in meaning of "coming out" for non-heterosexuals and their families. It is pointed out that family members who found out one of their member was a non-heterosexual also "come out." (Borhek 1993) However, "coming out" for non-heterosexuals and for family members should be distinguished. "Coming out" for non-heterosexuals means coming out to own self and heterosexual others, and it requires them to keep negotiating their identity to others in order to gain a comfortable environment for their lives as well as to avoid disharmonizing the group. Therefore, if family members also "come out of the closet" as they are aware of their identity as the family of LGB members and negotiate it with others, then they might also "come out." This "coming out" refers to not just becoming aware of their identity but also fighting and challenging heteronormativity and homophobia on behalf of non-heterosexual members. This is why, this paper uses the term "to disclose" instead of "to come out" when family members are not necessarily trying to fight but just telling it to others.

CHAPTER 4. EXPERIENCES AFTER THE DISCLOSURE OF 12 FAMILIES IN JAPAN

Chapter 3 unveiled that non-heterosexuals in Japan needed to negotiate not only heteronormativity and homophobia but also Perceived Homophobia due to the cultural norms, and prioritizing others' feelings. Their narratives on not coming out to their parents were especially remarkable. While non-heterosexual children felt it would be easier for them to live freely if they come out to their parents, they were also concerned about parents' reactions. They were afraid of upsetting or disappointing their parents and worsening the parent-child relationships. However, at the same time, they were concerned about parents becoming a target of stigma; thus, causing trouble [*meiwaku*] their parents. How do family members react and what do they experience after they find out one that a member is a non-heterosexual?

From this chapter, the family members' voices will be introduced to closely look at their experiences, such as their initial shock and/or reactions, after knowing one of their members was a non-heterosexual. This chapter particularly focuses on how family members reacted to coming out and going through "understanding" processes. As shown below, my respondents expressed their feeling of loss, responsibility, and isolation that left them confused and their struggles after they discovered one of their member was a non-heterosexual, as previous literature has also shown. Yet, their experiences differed depending upon their gender, type of relationship, background and the coming out order. While parents and siblings experienced differently after the disclosure, mothers' struggles were more complex than fathers due to the expected roles attached to both mothers and women.

4.1. Initial Shock: After the Unexpected Disclosure

Ten out of 24 respondents (Aragaki dad, Fujii dad, Higa mom, Katou mom, Miyazato y-sis, Nakamura mom, Suzuki mom, Suzuki sis, Yamaguchi dad, Yoshida mom) expressed

surprise and knowing the fact that one of their member was a non-heterosexual, which was a somewhat shocking experience. Higa mom (personal communication, April 6, 2014), Katou mom (personal communication, December 3, 2014), Nakamura mom (personal communication, February 27, 2013), Suzuki mom (personal communication, January 6, 2013), Yamaguchi dad (personal communication, February 17, 2013) and Yoshida mom (personal communication, March 6, 2013) were surprised because it was something they did not expect, which made one's "mind complete blank" (Nakamura mom). Yamaguchi dad, whose son told him directly that he is a gay on the phone, "accepted it without much resistance" although he was surprised that a gay child was born from a heterosexual couple. He also thought that his "son's coming out challenged [him] to think what [he had] never thought about." He confessed that he had biased views against non-heterosexuality before his son's disclosure, however, he switched his mindset and believed what his son meant. Respondents were also surprised when they heard about the presence of non-heterosexual members indirectly from other family members. Fujii dad (personal communication, March 9, 2015) and Miyazato y-sis (personal communication, November 29, 2014) were surprised in two ways, one was at the fact his son and her sister were a non-heterosexual, and another was at the fact that non-heterosexuals existed so close to them. Aragaki dad (personal communication, April 7, 2014), whose daughter told him she has a girlfriend via a text message, was "a little surprised" because his daughter had dated men before. Higa mom was also surprised and shocked about her son's disclosure but she was surprised not only because it was something she did not expect, but also she could not connect her image of gay and her son. She said, "My son has never shown the sign of being gay… Homosexuals are like *onee* who are non-masculine and dressed like women or talk like women. I had that kind of images which my son has never shown… So I'm still wondering what makes him gay." Thus, Higa mom still doubted her son's sexuality when interviewed and she seemed to hope for her son to be a heterosexual. Suzuki sis (personal communication, January 19, 2013), who heard

about sister's non-heterosexuality directly on the phone, had a little different experience. She felt shocked and sad because she thought the relationship with her sister was good enough to tell her much earlier than other family members like their mother; thus, she felt the distance from her non-heterosexual sister.

There seems to be several reasons of why the rest of the respondents were not surprised or shocked. Four respondents (Itou, Katou dad, Miyazato o-sis, Morita mom) had wondered if their child or sibling was not a heterosexual; thus, they thought "I kinda knew it" when they actually found out about it. Another reason was, as four respondents (Fujii mom, Kiyohara mom, Morita mom, Morita dad) explained, their children had issues before the disclosure. Their children were hikikomori, i.e., socially withdrawal and refusing to not go to school (Kiyohara, Morita), and repeatedly saying, "I want to die" (Morita) or diagnosed as having Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). It implied that their children had different issues other than non-heterosexuality that worried their parents, hence, being disclosed as non-heterosexual was another subsidiary issue for parents. As Katou dad (personal communication, December 2, 2014) and Kiyohara mom (personal communication, November 2, 2014) put it, "I was relieved for my child that we could finally name our child's longtime struggles" as non-heterosexuality. Their narratives suggested that if family members, especially parents, believed their children had no problems, they could be more surprised and experience greater initial shocks.

Yamamoto mom (personal communication, January 12, 2013) did not take her daughter's disclosure too seriously at first because her child disclosed as a bisexual, of which she thought, "If a bisexual can date both men and women, it's better than a lesbian." Yoshida sis (personal communication, March 9, 2013) also did not take her brother's disclosure too seriously at first because she thought her brother's sexual orientation was just temporary and would change later. However, as she listened more about how her brother had struggled before

telling the truth, she changed her earlier thoughts and felt that it made more sense of her brother, who had not been as masculine as other men. For Suzuki grandparents (personal communication, January 5, 2013), they could not judge whether it was good or bad because they completely had no idea what non-heterosexuality meant. As they put it, "What's that?" Aragaki mom (personal communication, April 8, 2014) had a different experience. She told me when she knew about her daughter's sexuality. She explained, "I don't know how my son and [non-heterosexual] daughter got to quarrel, but I happened to be there. At that time, my daughter said to my son that 'I don't mind [dating] both men and women.' When I heard about it, I kinda got what she was trying to say." However, she has never confirmed it with her daughter while she acknowledged her daughter was dating a woman.

Regardless of gender and relationship, respondents experienced initial shocks because knowing the fact that one of their members is a non-heterosexual was something they did not expect and did not have any knowledge about, which even "challenged" their beliefs and norms.

4.2. After Initial Shocks: Reactions to the Presence of Non-heterosexuality among Family Members

How family members knew one of their members was a non-heterosexual differed. Some of them directly heard from the non-heterosexual member, but some overheard from another family members. And others heard on the phone or saw text messages rather than face-to-face. No matter how they knew of the presence of a non-heterosexual in the family, their reactions can be categorized as, positive or negative, from the perspective of non-heterosexual members. As shown in Chapter 3, non-heterosexuals perceived the consequence of coming out as positive when they felt they were "accepted" (Nakayama, Seto, Shimizu) and family members were "very supportive" (Taniguchi) and this resulted in building closer relationships

with people they came out to. Non-heterosexuals thought it was positive because they could be completely themselves in front of people they disclosed to. They could talk about sexuality issues and introduce their same-sex partners. It was especially positive because they were "accepted" by others even when they prioritized themselves over others' feelings, especially because the latter is highly expected in Japan. On the other hand, non-heterosexuals perceived being ignored, being treated as if their coming out did not happen, and experiencing violence or homophobic words as negative reactions. While some of the non-heterosexual respondents experienced negative reactions, these could result in oppressing non-heterosexuals and causing mental health issues. Here, categorizing family members' reactions into two is important because, as Sanbe (2010, 2014) pointed out, being "understood" by family members are the most important resource for non-heterosexuals, especially in Japan, due to the lack of laws to protect them.

Those who experienced lower initial shocks were more likely to react positively on the disclosure than those who experienced higher initial shocks. As respondents who had suspected one of their family members was a non-heterosexual (Itou, Katou dad, Miyazato o-sis) said that they "kinda knew it," they came up with the possibility of a member being a non-heterosexual or sexual minorities. Parents whose children had had a hard time living their lives (Kiyohara mom, Morita mom, Morita dad), were relieved when they found out that their children's struggle was identified as non-heterosexuality. This implied that when parents believed their children were having no problems were more likely to experience higher initial shocks and their reactions often time became negative. As Nakamura mom put it, "I thought my daughter was thriving" and never imagined her daughter was struggling; thus, her shocks were so deep that she could not even face her daughter's disclosure for two years.

Although family members were surprised at the unexpected disclosure or the fact that

one of their member was a non-heterosexual, some of them did not react negatively (Aragaki dad, Fujii dad, Higa mom, Katou mom, Miyazato y-sis, Suzuki mom, Suzuki sis, Yamaguchi dad, Yoshida mom). Suzuki sis was surprised and became sad because her sister chose to come out to their mother first even though she thought their relationship was close enough to tell her earlier. However, her initial shock was not for her sibling being a non-heterosexual but for the fact that her sister did not tell it much earlier. Yamaguchi dad was surprised that a gay child was born from a heterosexual couple and had bias against non-heterosexuality before knowing the fact, however, he switched his mindset and believed what his son was insisting. Asked why he could switched his mindset, he answered, "Because I believed in my child. I don't doubt what an individual who I trust says… Since then, I thought that my son wanted to tell me to think about something that I have never thought about, like new thoughts." This was why he told his son, "You've struggled with this alone. But I'm so glad you told me!" One possible reason why Yamaguchi dad could switch his mindset and react positively was because he treated his son as a "*shutai* [individual self]," as he repeatedly said during his interview. Yamaguchi dad could do it not only because he was a father but also because he lived separately from his son due to his job. He explained that his wife who raised her child almost by herself got a great shock when Yamaguchi dad told his wife of their son's non-heterosexuality. As Yamaguchi dad explained his wife's reaction, she "was so greatly affected by the fact that she was even unable to eat or talk for a month."

Yoshida mom had a little different experience. Although she was also surprised at her son's disclosure, her surprised feeling was partly created by her son's story about how he realized his non-heterosexuality and his struggle as well as the situation non-heterosexuals face daily. Yoshida mom said, "I've heard non-heterosexuals are targets of discrimination, such as bullying, or some that countries prohibit and even kill homosexuals. I was so surprised with the fact that my son would also be a target of these discriminations and biases. Then I strongly

thought I had to do something about this." Then she read several books about non-heterosexuality and searched on the Internet on whether there are support groups or organizations working on this issue. Then she started wondering, "What schools are doing for this issue?" She went to the Community Service for Human Rights Promotion (CSHRP) in the prefecture where she lives and asked how they deal with this issue as well as how the board of education thinks about this issue. However, she was disappointed and angry at these workers' ignorance. Then she made contact with an author and a governor who came out as a lesbian and got involved with making a support group for families of non-heterosexuals [Families of LGBT]. It took her only a month to get involved with organizing this group after her son's disclosure. She was the only respondent who motivated herself to educate herself and to take actions in such a short time. A possible reason for this is because she did not have homophobia compared to other parents. She had read Boys Love (BL) comics and she also had questioned "why people are against the same sex marriage" when she saw a news story on gay couples in the UK who could not get married[21].

Furthermore, Kiyohara mom and Yamamoto mom did not react negatively because they had some knowledge about gender and sexuality issues. Kiyohara mom participated in a study group on sexuality even before her daughter's disclosure. She participated in this study group in order to get her daughter out of the house because her daughter refused going to school. With other parents and a teacher of sex education in her town, she organized this group and studied about Child Assault Prevention and sexual minorities, which also gave her opportunities to listen to the voice of sexual minorities. Yamamoto mom is a teacher who had an experience organizing a study group on sexual education. Although this study group did not deal with sexual minorities, they discussed gender inequality. Although neither of them connected their

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[21] The UK has legalized same-sex marriage since 2013.

knowledge about sexuality with their children, they did not share wide-spread negative connotations of non-heterosexuality, which are often time created by ignorance.

On the other hand, feelings of surprise and shocks also included negative feelings toward non-heterosexuality. Nakamura mom was the first person in her family to know her daughter's sexuality. One day at a café having lunch with her daughter, her daughter told her that she had someone special, which made Nakamura mom happy like she was even "in heaven." However, the next thing her daughter said was, "She is a woman" and which made her "mind completely blank." She thought, "What is she saying?" and was too surprised to hear what her daughter was saying the rest of time. This experience was like "a bolt from the blue." She admitted that she had negative images about non-heterosexuality; thus, she tried to forget what her daughter told her and decided to never talk about it to anyone for two years. She was disappointed because she thought her "dream to live with [her] daughter's family" was disrupted by the disclosure. Nakamura mom was the only respondent who expressed disappointment a non-heterosexual child would not make a family. She could not think of alternative family styles because she shared heteronormativity. Aragaki sis (personal communication, April 7, 2014) was told directly about her sister's non-heterosexuality. When she heard, she said, "That's disgusting," according to what she heard from her sister, which she did not recall. I asked why it could be disgusting, she answered, "I guess I was worried to tell others that my sister is a lesbian. I was disgusted with the fact that my sister was something I shamed or I had joked about when I was a high school student." However, she did not have trouble after that because she began to know there are many non-heterosexuals like her sister in society and felt "this is not special, [which is almost the same as *futsuu*]." She told this to her brother.

One possible reason why family members expressed negative feelings toward the

disclosure was because they connected non-heterosexuality with sex (Aragaki bro, Fujii dad, Suzuki mom). They associated the disclosure with sex and took it negatively. When asked for her reactions to her child's disclosure, Suzuki mom, who heard directly and was the first person in her family to know about her non-heterosexual daughter, explained, "I strongly connected homosexuality with sex when my daughter came out… so I thought my child raised an issue that I hated or disliked the most." Although she did not tell this inner feeling to her non-heterosexual daughter, she thought she was challenged. As introduced above, Fujii mom (personal communication, March 9, 2015) was a person who was not as surprised as other respondents because of her son's OCD, but said, "I don't want to know about their relationship in detail. When people are dating, they don't just talk and eat dinner together. They form an intimate relationship, right? Otherwise, they are just friends, so it's imaginable. But I don't want to know that part [of my son and his partner], which I also told my son." What Fujii mom meant by "an intimate relationship" was sexual contact. Fujii dad also showed agreement to his wife and added, "I was surprised because [having sex between] man and man? Disgusting! How can he choose to enter that world… I can't do it." Aragaki bro (personal communication, April 8, 2014) also used the word "disgusting" to explain sexual intercourse between two men. When he heard of his sister's non-heterosexuality from Aragaki sis, who said, "Our sister can date both men and women," his first word was, "Disgusting!" Asked why he felt disgusted, he answered, "I felt disgusted because I imagined sex between men, which I couldn't even think of doing it." He continued, "I am unable to disconnect completely from this image and still have mix feelings toward my sister's non-heterosexuality, but, I want to respect her choice."

These narratives suggest that there w two important factors connecting non-heterosexuality with sex: 1) relationships with the non-heterosexual member; and 2) gender. As the first factor, parents were more likely to show negative feelings when they connected child's disclosure with sex, as Fujii parents and Suzuki mom did. It can be because, as Suzuki

mom put it, parents tend to perceive "sex as taboo" more than the younger generation. Although Aragaki bro is considered to be in a younger generation, he connected non-heterosexuality and sex because of his gender. That is the second factor. As Fujii dad and Aragaki bro clearly explained, they imagined sex between two men, which they did not want to do. Non-heterosexuality is easily connected with sexual contact, most of the time, between male non-heterosexuals. They, as are many men, are disgusted with male-male sex because it threatens masculinity but not disgusted with women-women sex because it is often time consumed as pornography.

Distorted and pornographic images of the same-sex couples are based on compulsory heterosexuality, in which, "Men are treated as ordinary human beings while women, lesbians and male homosexuals are made to be sexual objects." (Kazama 2002a: 101) Thus, males are more likely to express negative attitudes toward sexual contact between two men in order to confirm that they are "ordinary human beings" while they are less likely to be bothered by sex between women. In addition, male non-heterosexuality threatens masculinity, which creates homophobia (Kawaguchi 1999, Kazama and Iida 2010, Kimmel 2011, Weinberg 1972). Weinberg (1972: 3) points out that most men become homophobic due to the "fear of abandonment in the direction of passivity," where they feel losing masculinity. Men feel threatening of masculinity because they feel "under tremendous pressure to be the aggressor in sex, and [they] [expect] conformity and passivity on the part of [their] woman." (Weinberg 1972: 3) This is why men are careful how they talk, walk, eat and think in order to maintain and prove their manhood. In other words, they are afraid of being perceived as gay, which is not a real man; thus, they strive to maintain "all the traditional rules of masculinity, including sexual predation with women." (Kimmel 2011: 144) Thus, Kimmel (2011) points out that exaggerated masculinity means to putting women down, which leads to excluding women from the public sphere and this is why "homophobia and sexism go hand in hand." (144) This implies

that men are more likely to be homophobic, not only because of the threat to masculinity but also because of misogyny. In heteronormative environments, men are expected to be sexuality attracted to women. Hence, the sexual identity of heterosexual men "consists of fucking women and not being fucked by other men." (Kawaguchi 1999: 199) Moreover, fathers are more likely than mothers to be disgusted with sexual contacts between two men as Weinberg (1972: 4) describes how having a gay son would mean to "[unman] to him to have given birth to an unmanly son," which assaults fathers.

4.3. Invisible Struggles among Family Members: Differences in Gender, Relationship, Their Background and the Coming Out Order

Although family members also suffered from digesting the news that one of their members was a non-heterosexual due to negative perceptions produced by heteronormativity, their difficulties and struggles differed by their gender, type of relationships, background and the coming out order.

4.3.1. Female experiences of isolation: Invisible minority inside and outside their family

After knowing that one of their members was a non-heterosexual, a feeling of isolation was something respondents commonly expressed. Suzuki mom clearly said that she felt the most difficult thing after her daughter's disclosure was that, "I couldn't tell anyone, anyone in my family. Telling this to my husband was very difficult for me. As the only person in my family who knew about [my daughter's sexuality], I was lonely." However, even after every family member knew her daughter's sexuality, Suzuki mom's loneliness still stayed. As she put it, "I'm still lonely after all. I'm lonely as a parent of sexual minority child." Higa mom did not particularly use the word lonely, however, parts of her narrative implied her loneliness of not being able to tell anyone. When she was talking with her friends, her friends noticed she looked

down so they asked her, "What's wrong?" At that time, she told them about her son's unexpected disclosure. She said, "I felt drunk on being a pathetic parent like I might be showing off that I have different concerns from others. By telling them my concern, I guess I wanted them to feel sympathy for me like, 'You've got serious problem.' I guess I didn't want to bear a problem by myself." Suzuki mom and Higa mom were the first persons in their families to know their child's sexuality. When they are/were still unable to "understand" or "accept" the child's sexuality, they were confused with how to digest it only by themselves, which caused them a feeling of isolation.

Feelings of loneliness were also triggered by the order of when they knew there was a non-heterosexual member among the family. Disclosing one's non-heterosexuality to all family members at the same time is a rare case. This created different dynamics among family members because earlier disclosure gave them more time to think and digest the fact that one of their members was a non-heterosexual. Thus, it created emotional gaps among family members. Those who heard at last were likely to feel more gaps. Suzuki sis heard of her sister's sexuality directly on the phone when her sister was with Suzuki mom. Suzuki sis expressed she was sad because she felt shock for "not being able to notice" her sister's struggle, even though she believed her relationship with her sister was good enough that she deeply "understood" her sister. Itou (personal communication, January 5, 2013) also felt sad because although "they grew up like sisters," (Suzuki mom) she could not hear of her cousin's sexuality directly. She even wondered if she had a "trusting relationship" with her cousin. Miyazato o-sis (personal communication, November 25, 2014) had suspected her sister's sexuality and told this to Miyazato y-sis. However, Miyazato y-sis was directly told by the lesbian sister about dating another woman a year after Miyazato o-sis heard. Miyazato y-sis cried during the interview and explained, "I thought my sister didn't trust me enough to tell me." Miyazato y-sis cried a few times during the interview because she was unable to talk about her struggle and concerns

after the disclosure with anyone, especially with her sisters. According to Miyazato y-sis, she cannot tell her struggles to other sisters because she does not want them to know she is having a hard time "understanding" a lesbian sister. As shown, the coming out order also put respondents in the position where they cannot express their struggles in the family, which results in isolating them. However, it should be noted that only female respondents expressed their loneliness.

4.3.2. Internalized and externalized "motherhood norms": Self-blaming mothers and absent fathers

Self-blaming was a distinctive narrative for mothers. Four mothers (Higa mom, Katou mom, Nakamura mom, Suzuki mom) blamed themselves after knowing of their children's non-heterosexuality while what they blamed themselves for was slightly different among them. Nakamura mom explained, "I wasn't sure the image of homosexuality in my mind, but was sure it is a bit different [from others]… I've lived my whole life as a heterosexual… and I had a sense that homosexuality is something wrong… I thought I raised such a strange child." Although Nakamura mom only remembered her daughter was saying, "Please don't forget, it's not your fault for who I am," after the disclosure, she could not avoid self-blame and tried to forget her daughter's disclosure for two years. When asked why Suzuki mom cried for a couple weeks after she knew her daughter's sexuality, she answered, "I felt how miserable I was as a parent. My daughter had shown the signs if I think about it now. My daughter struggled desperately and she even tried to commit suicide. But I couldn't notice her signs even though I'm her parent. I regretted not noticing her pain. For that, I blamed myself for being such a miserable parent." Although Suzuki mom did not self-blame for her child's non-heterosexuality, her friends' comments made her wonder if her daughter's sexuality was her fault. When Suzuki mom consulted her best friend about her struggle, her best friend's husband said, "You don't

need to worry about it. Why are you so worried? It's not a big deal." But then he continued, "It's just a parent's fault." Suzuki mom was scared to make sure what he meant but his words made her think, "Oh, it's the parents' fault, then it's my fault after all." Although she said, "He is an artist so he has a bit different sense," his word was at least affective to Suzuki mom. She continued, "He also said, 'It's not a serious problem for a human life.' So he might have meant to be encouraging, but I still get stuck with what he said and it still made me self-blame."

Among mothers, mothers of gay sons had different narratives on self-blaming. Higa mom and Katou mom seemed to hope for their children to be heterosexual and tried to find the "cause" of why their sons became gay. Higa mom said, "My son told me his sexuality is neither hereditary nor my way of raising him, but I'm wondering if that's true. I acknowledge it's not because of heredity but it may be because of my way of raising him. He was a clingy child and lived separately from his father, and that's why he doesn't like mother, I mean women. I thought he saw a woman through me that resulted in hating women. I might have shown him the negative sides of women." Asked if she still thinks that way, she answered, "Well, if my son said it's not my fault then maybe it's not. But I don't know. I may be still wondering that he looked at me critically and realized women are somewhat bothersome. He might relativize women through me." Higa mom was divorced almost a decade ago and raised her children by herself, which she has pride in.

Katou mom also had a similar narrative. She said, "[My son] disliked women because he was looking at a mother like me." Asked what it meant by "a mother like me," she answered, "A mother, who didn't choose a child and live freely instead, is a selfish woman. In a normal condition, you've got to be patient to build a family, especially when a child was born. But I chose my life over a child… so I blamed myself for not raising my child and made my son feel lonely, which could result in him seeking other men not women." Katou mom divorced when

her child was six years old. She had custody when divorced, however, her ex-husband asked for custody after a while. The judge decided to give a custody to Katou dad for economic reasons since Katou mom quitted her job when she got married and was dependent economically on Katou dad. Asked what happened when her ex-husband asked for custody, she answered, "My son and his father had met once a week and he visited his old place where he was comfortable and everyone was there except a mother. If he stayed with me, he had to stay at home by himself [because I started working after the divorce]. Plus, I started dating another man after divorce so he visited me sometimes. I guess my son didn't like it and compared where he was staying and his old place… One day, my son started saying, 'My mother threw me and dad away.' Since then, he started not coming to my place. He started holding a grudge toward me." Katou mom's self-blame for raising a non-heterosexual child is strongly connected to her regrettable feelings for not raising a child by herself instead of "prioritizing [her] life over her child." Now, she thanks her son for meeting and even introducing his partner to her. Thus, although she still hopes her son will have a "normal or ordinary [*futsuu*] marriage" in which a man and a woman to get married, she seemed to show her respect to her son in compensation for not raising him and this was how she could rid of her regret.

How mothers blamed themselves differed depending upon their backgrounds and relationships with their children, however, it seemed common among these mothers that their primary identity was mother. Nakamura mom had pride in what she had done for her children and how she raised them. Suzuki mom emphasized her role in her family and seemed that she has strong pride in raising children. Higa mom's narrative implied that she took pride in raising two children by herself and letting the children get an education. Katou mom had different experiences, yet she seemed that she strongly identified herself as a mother. It may be because she still wants to emphasize she is a mother while she regrets losing custody. Moreover, those

mothers who strongly believed in their child being raised with no problem tended to blame themselves when they faced the reality that their child had a "problem." Thus, Kiyohara mom did not blame herself for her daughter being a non-heterosexual because he daughter was so called "a child with a problem" since her child was not going to schools. Kiyohara mom was even relieved with her daughter when her daughter finally realized her non-heterosexuality and told her. Additionally, Kiyohara mom had knowledge about diverse sexuality through a study groups mentioned above. What these differences may imply is that mothers would be challenged by the disclosure because they perceived non-heterosexuality was a "problem" due to lack of knowledge.

Mothers not only felt guilty by self-blaming but also were scared of being blamed or denied by others. Suzuki mom, who took the role in her family of telling the rest of the family members about her daughter's sexuality, said, "I decided to get a divorce if my husband said even a word of homophobia, blamed me or treated homosexuality as an epidemic." Katou mom was afraid of telling her son's sexuality to her parents because she thought her parents would blame her. "My parents are still blaming me for not raising my son. They often said, 'How dare you let go of your child who you sacrificed yourself over giving birth to.' So if I told them about my son's non-heterosexuality, they would say, 'See, you have only yourself to blame.'"

Furthermore, as Suzuki mom experienced being blamed by her best friend's husband, Yoshida mom was also told by her husband that, "It's your fault that he is a gay." Whether who blamed mothers, others or self-blame, mothers became only a target among parents of blaming for children being a non-heterosexual. This exemplifies how "modernistic motherhood norms" (Inoue 2013, Yamada 1994) are still strongly shared in Japan. Moreover, blaming mother and child's non-heterosexuality were somewhat connected because while mothers self-blamed for children's non-heterosexuality, both mothers and fathers self-blamed for children's mental

illnesses. When Fujii parents found out about their son's OCD, they blamed themselves for pressuring their son so much that it caused him become OCD. Morita mom (personal communication, July 12, 2014) blamed herself for her daughter's mental instability. Unlike Fujii parents, Morita dad (personal communication, July 27, 2014) did not blame himself for his daughter's mental instability when his daughter finally have Adult Children (AC) diagnosis, which is often time understood as "mother's fault." Morita dad explained that AC is "caused by failing to convey mother's love. So my daughter had always been anxious about being abandoned by mother so she couldn't even talk to her mother." Because Morita dad read about AC which is often said to be triggered by the lack of mother's love, he did not blame himself unlike Fujii dad.

While feelings of loneliness were expressed among female members and self-blame for a non-heterosexual child was only heard among mothers, fathers' narratives and presence were likely to be absent in most families. For non-heterosexual children, the most difficult person to come out to is their fathers, while mothers are likely to be the first person to come out to. This results in leaving out of fathers within a family. This could be one of the reason why it was difficult to conduct interview male family members. When I had interviews with the Suzuki family, I was invited to their house. While I was staying at their house, I asked Suzuki mom if it was possible for her husband to participate in the interview. He declined. When Fujii's parents showed their willingness to participate the interview, I asked them to interview separately. I met their son [Fujii] at a support group when he told his coming out stories. I approached him after the meeting and asked him if he could ask his parents to participate in the interview. However, I received an e-mail from Fujii saying, "According to my mom, my dad knew my sexuality indirectly because my mom told dad about it, and also my dad wasn't involved with this so much so it wouldn't be helpful to interview my dad by himself." Then, it resulted in interviewing Fujii's parents together.

Although when Miyazato o-sis and y-sis were concerned about whether her non-heterosexual sibling had come out to their parents or not, their concern was only in coming out to their mother, not father. Their father is, as Miyazato o-sis put it, "He is a so free man! I think he would be OK even if my sister came out. He is the sort of a person who wouldn't stop his children even if they said they want to go to war-zones." On the other hand, they described their mother as "conservative" (Miyazato o-sis and y-sis) who would even "get sick" when she knew about her daughter's non-heterosexuality (Miyazato o-sis). Miyazato o-sis added, "My mom likes good looks first of all. And my [non-heterosexual] sister is the cutest girl among the sisters. That's why my mom had the highest expectations for that sister and wanted to raise her like a feminine-cute-girl, although my sister didn't turn out like my mom expected." All stories about the absent fathers suggest four points: First, fathers have fewer connections with their children; second, fathers are less likely to be expected to be involved with family affairs; third, mothers are more likely to have expectations than fathers for their children; and fourth, mothers are more likely to take the initiative in family affairs, especially concerning children. These four points also affirmed that Japanese family consists of the mother-child relationship, in which "modernistic motherhood norms" are highly expected.

Katou dad, Morita dad and Yamaguchi dad did not express these feelings. Katou dad was divorced and is a custodial parent; thus, his relationship with his child was much closer than other fathers. Morita dad was also close to his daughter, especially since his daughter could not talk and even meet her mother for two years. During this time, Morita dad built a concrete relationship with his daughter. Yamaguchi dad has a little different background. He was a business bachelor who only met with his son once a month since the child was little. While Yamaguchi dad was apart from his family, he communicated with his son through exchanging letters. Thus, unlike other fathers, Yamaguchi dad was able to build a father-and-son relationship without intervention of mother. This was partly because his son disclosed to

him first.

However, there was one thing in common among all fathers. They were less likely to show their emotions during the interview. While mothers or female members could explain why and how they felt sad or were surprised, fathers' explanations were vague. They might not show their emotions on purpose. Aragaki dad and Fujii dad did not show their negative attitude in front of other family members although their narratives were somewhat understood as homophobic and they still have difficulties "accepting" their children's sexuality. In fact, when I asked whether they have discussed the non-heterosexual member with other family members, Aragaki bro answered he made sure with his father if his father knows about his daughter dating another women. Then Aragaki dad responded, "Yea, I know. Her girlfriend is a nice girl." This is why Aragaki bro thinks that "everyone in my family accepts [our non-heterosexual sister]. I don't see anyone in my family who doesn't like the fact." Even though Aragaki dad expressed his inner feelings that he has difficulties "understanding" his non-heterosexual daughter, he hides his inner feelings in front of his family. Asked why Aragaki dad and Fujii dad do not show what they think, they answered they try not to say strongly. Aragaki dad said, "It wouldn't make a difference even if I oppose what my daughter is insisting. Also, I don't want her to die if I am against her too strong." Fujii dad does not talk with his son about sexuality because his son "has mental illness so I don't want to cause more trouble by saying something to my son." Fathers who said they did not have difficulties "accepting" their children's non-heterosexuality were less likely to verbalize their inner feelings. When I interviewed Katou dad, he answered he has never worried about his child for being a non-heterosexual. However, in the interview with his ex-wife [Katou mom], she recalled that he confided to his sister his worries about his son's sexuality. Although fathers do not necessarily feel they are isolated from other family members, their relationship with non-heterosexual children does not much change, unlike other family members, who felt closer after coming out.

4.3.3. Fear of "family collapse": Undermined mother's identity and the purpose of their existence

Concern about family relationships after coming out was common among female members. Itou is a cousin of Suzuki and they have grown up like sisters. Itou worried about the parent-child relationships when she heard her cousin's coming out story from Suzuki mom. "I worried about their parent-child relationship, not my cousin's homosexuality. I imagined my cousin came out in her desperation like she took her life for that. So if Suzuki mom couldn't take it positively, I thought my cousin would be disappointed, which would lead distrustfulness of her mother. I didn't think Suzuki mom's love toward her daughter would change, but my cousin would sense Suzuki mom's turbulence that would result in distance between them." Itou sympathized with Suzuki mom more than her cousin because Suzuki mom looked confused and Itou has been a listener for Suzuki's mother even today. Suzuki mom went to talk to Itou right after her daughter told her about coming out at a reunion.

Miyazato y-sis was also concerned about two types of relationships: relationships among siblings and a parent-child relationship if her non-heterosexual sibling disclosed to their mother. During the interview, she cried few times. Asked why, she answered, "This is my first time talking about this issue with someone. I don't have anyone who I can talk to about this issue." Asked why she cannot talk about this with her siblings, she answered, "When my sister came out to me, I wasn't sure what it meant, but I couldn't tell it to my sisters. I didn't want them to think I'm not accepting." She thinks having concern itself means that she is not "accepting" her non-heterosexual sister; thus telling her concerns to her siblings means to worsen their relationship. The second concern she expressed was for the parent-child relationship if her non-heterosexual sister decided to disclose to their mother. Although their mother suspected her daughter and her female partner's relationship, only the sisters knew

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about it. Miyazato y-sis said, "My concern is about when my sister would disclose to our parents." Asked how it concerns her, she answered in tears, "I wouldn't worry if parents can accept my sister after all. But if they couldn't, I wonder if my family will become apart." This is why she said, when asked whether she has ever attended support groups, "I've heard about a group which is to support family members of non-heterosexuals. I want to go and hear whether family relationships are changed after coming out or not." Miyazato o-sis was not as seriously concerned as Miyazato y-sis, however, when asked if she has any concerns, she answered, "I'm worried about my mom. She is super conservative so she would be sick if she was compelled to face the fact." Miyazato o-sis was not necessarily concerned about family relation like Itou and Miyazato y-sis, however, only female members mentioned about their feelings concerning family affairs.

Among female respondents who were concerned about family affairs, fear of "family collapse" was specific to mothers, especially mothers of lesbians. Suzuki mom told me a story which concerned her the most. On the day after her daughter's disclosure, her daughter also told her that she would come out to friends at a high-school reunion held in her hometown. Suzuki mom stopped her and said, "That would trouble me," which caused them to quarrel. Suzuki mom recalled this incident and said, "I thought coming out at a reunion will create a rumor among the community since it's small. I worried her friends might tell their parents about my child's sexuality and my other family members would know it through rumor. Hearing directly from my daughter and hearing from other people create a total different consequence. Also, it's sad that others know my daughter's sexuality while my family members don't. So I worried about damaging our parent-child relationship the most." Nakamura mom said similar things when asked how she felt about the disclosure, "I thought, 'How I can live with a non-heterosexual daughter or tell it to other family members?'… I thought it would destroy my family. I was scared because my daughter being a lesbian meant being a target of bashing from

society and breaking apart the family that I have built over 30 years of my life… I didn't know what would happen, but I was just so scared to be isolated from *seken* by having such a daughter."

Their narratives have two things in common. First, these mothers blamed themselves to bear and raise a "problematic" "such daughter" and they acknowledged that this was something they would be blamed for by *seken*. As mentioned, parents are expected to apologize when their child makes "trouble." This implies that parents will be blamed if their child is considered "problematic" in *seken*. Identifying as a non-heterosexual means being different from others, namely, problematic and unacceptable, because most *seken* shares heteronormativity, and *seken* values sameness to maintain harmony. This is especially expected of mothers, because a parent-child relationship usually refers to the mother-child relationship. Second, these mothers identified themselves with their families. In other words, they shared "modernistic motherhood norms," in which mothers are expected to take care of their children. Nakamura mom believed that she would lose the 30 years of her life she has spent building her family because of her lesbian daughter. Suzuki mom thought, when her daughter would come out at a re-union, that if other people knew her daughter's sexuality before their family members knew, this would cause a bad family relationship. These mothers' beliefs could mean that "accepting" their non-heterosexual daughters meant to accept their failure as mothers who could not successfully take their role, which would undermine their identity. They felt their family would "collapse" when their daughters disclosed their sexuality. Thus, the more strongly mothers identify themselves with their family, the weaker their presence will be when they confront "problems" among their family.

Undermining their identity is understandable when considering what roles mothers are expected to play. Parsons (1955: 45-47) points out that mothers [or wives] belong to "the

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expressive area," in which their roles "concern the 'internal' affairs of the system, the maintenance of integrative relations between the members, and regulation of the patterns and tension levels of its component units." Moreover, Meguro (1980) describes that women are expected to bear "the role of 'housekeeper'" which includes "the role of 'wife,'" "the role of 'mother'" and "all the roles concerning family." (161) These roles are not simply assigned to women. Women or mothers also "gain fulfillment and independence" through establishing mother's identity that provides them the purpose of existence (Tama 2001). Therefore, women are only given the purpose of their existence through being a mother and they "gain an honor for positive evaluation in raising a child while they have to be responsible for negative evaluation in raising a child." (Tama 2001: v) This is why mothers' concerns or struggle would be more complex than other family members and their concern for "family collapse" is somewhat understandable.

4.4. The Process of "Understanding" Non-heterosexual Members

How family members dealt with their initial shocks, their inner conflicts and negative feelings toward non-heterosexuality were depended on individuals. Some talked to their friends to organize their confusion and get rid of isolated feelings (Higa mom, Nakamura mom and Suzuki mom). Others gained information about non-heterosexuality (Yoshida mom, Yamaguchi dad, Nakamura mom, Yoshida mom, Suzuki mom and Suzuki granddad), went to support groups to meet other families or non-heterosexuals (Morita mom and dad, Yoshida mom, Yoshida sis, Suzuki mom and Higa mom), talked to non-heterosexual children or siblings (Suzuki mom, Itou, Suzuki sis, Yoshida mom, Yoshida sis, Aragaki sis, Morita dad and Kiyohara mom) and some met with a partner of non-heterosexual members (Suzuki mom, Itou, Suzuki sis, Suzuki grandparents, Nakamura, Aragaki mom, dad, sis and bro, Morita mom and dad, Kiyohara mom, Katou dad and mom, and Fujii mom and dad).

It should be noted that not all family members come to the point where they try to confront non-heterosexual members and ther issues. They pretend to forget about the disclosure and try not to deal with non-heterosexual members. Yet, they also cannot completely forget about the disclosure and know that at some point that they need to confront the issue. Aragaki dad does not want to "accept" his daughter is a non-heterosexual, nevertheless, he also has started reading and watching TV programs that deal with sexual minorities after his daughter's disclosure. Asked why he checked these news and programs, he answered, "I guess I have something on my chest [after the coming out]. I guess I might try to understand [sexual minorities'] feelings which I don't know about. But it's not easy to change what I have believed in and taken for granted." This does not mean to suggest that every family member would change their attitude and take steps like Aragaki dad, however, there are still many non-heterosexuals and their family members who come to an accommodation.

4.4.1. "Understanding" is a mother's role: Emphasizing an "adjustment role"

Those who took actions dealing with the issue were in the process of "understanding" non-heterosexual members and this was one of the important processes that helped both non-heterosexuals' good health and family members overcome their struggles. Most of the respondents tried to confront the fact and to "understand" non-heterosexual members. Although motivations for moving into an "understanding" process would differ among people, many of my respondents shared the common idea that "family members should at least show their 'understanding' of non-heterosexual members." It suggests that their shared commonality was based on intimacy and love within a family. However, the passion to try to "understand" non-heterosexual members was different among parents and siblings. Yoshida mom clearly explained, "I thought I had to do something to help my son… And I expected his sister to be as motivated as I was because we are family. But parents and siblings were different after all."

Parents are more likely to feel responsibility to "understand" their children "because they are the parents." However, even among parents, mothers were more likely than fathers to feel or at lease express strong responsibility to "understand" or "accept" their children.

It was notable the mothers of lesbian daughters, who felt their families would "break apart" or "collapse" due to the presence of non-heterosexual daughters, emphasized it was their responsibility to "understand" their children. For Nakamura mom, the word of another child motivated her to confront her lesbian daughter after two years. Her son, who had struggled with his sickness in his childhood, said that "I had been struggling more with what others in *seken* perceived me to be than my sickness. Others always judge minority people regardless of what kind of minority group they belong to. So, if my sister tries to convey her messages to society as non-heterosexual, don't you think we should support her?" (Nakamura mom) These words "woke [her] up" and made her regret "never being thoughtful for [her] children but only trying to protect [her]self." From this narrative, we see that she regretted not noticing her daughter's struggles as well as felt responsibility to understand her daughter "as a mother." Suzuki mom motivated herself to gain knowledge about non-heterosexuality in order for herself to "understand" her child. She said she felt responsible for telling her daughter's sexuality to other family members even when she still had difficulties "accepting" her daughter's non-heterosexuality. As she put it, "to understand my daughter, [letting other family members know its fact] is something I must to do. Otherwise, a parent-child relationship as well as a relationship among siblings are not true relationships." Her behavior gaining knowledge was an important path to face with her non-heterosexual daughter, however at the same time, her motivation was triggered by her belief that if other people were to know her daughter's sexuality earlier than family members, it would worsen her family's relationships. This was why she believed telling her daughter's sexuality to other family members could avoid this consequence and felt this was her role. In fact she said, "I felt like I was given a messenger role

as the first person in my family to know my daughter's sexuality… My role is to prevent worsening family relationships because of my daughter."

These mothers motivated themselves to "understand" their non-heterosexual children by emphasizing their role as a mother. In other words, they motivated themselves in order to avoid "worsening family relationship" as a result of taking a role to adjust family relationships. This role, which I call "adjustment role," is exactly what Parsons (1956) points out. Mothers or wives have been expected to maintain the integrative relations among nuclear families in industrial society. These mothers felt their family would break apart because they felt the presence of a non-heterosexual child would undermine their identity as well as their purpose of existence. However, they rather actively took an adjustment role which helped them get rid of their fear of losing their purpose of existence and regain their identity as a mother. Thus, they felt they could avoid "family collapse."

In addition to Nakamura mom and Suzuki mom, there were other mothers who were afraid of "family collapse." They emphasized that "understanding" their non-heterosexual children was part of their role. Morita mom repeatedly used the phrase, "as a mother," during the interview. Her daughter had repeatedly said she wanted to die for a long time and her daughter had difficulties with her life. Her daughter told her about non-heterosexuality when her daughter was 21 years-old. Morita mom was relieved that her daughter's realization of non-heterosexuality could finally free her from struggles and depression. However, a few years after the disclosure, her daughter started refusing to see, talk or meet with her. Then her daughter was given a diagnosis as an Adult Children (AC). Morita mom and dad, and their daughter, read books, went to a support groups on AC and learned that their daughter "didn't receive mother's love well." (Morita dad) Morita mom also said that she realized when she read a book that she could not give her daughter enough love and attachments, which were the root of her

daughter's struggles (Morita mom). Her experiences with her daughter made her feel responsible for supporting her daughter. She criticized mothers who throw their children out of their house after disclosure because she believes that mothers are the one who gave birth. She also pointed out that not "accepting" a non-heterosexual child means, "not accepting the fact that they gave a birth to their child." (Morita mom) Although Morita mom seemed to strongly blame herself for AC, her feelings of regret reinforced her desire to "understand" and support her daughter, in which she not only emphasized and reproduced mother's role but also used it as a strategy for overcoming her struggles.

Yoshida mom began to take actions right after her son's disclosure and told me a story of conflicts with other family members. When asked whether she discussed about her gay son with other family members, she answered, "When I was talking with my husband, I asked him if he was fine with my son's situation, in which he would be a target of discrimination. But my husband said, 'Well, be calm.' He was so calm. I don't think what I am saying applies to all parents. But I think mothers take their children's struggle as their struggle, like I did. But my husband saw this issue objectively so it was not his struggle." Yoshida mom's experience suggests that mothers would be likely to subjectify their children's struggles and problems while fathers are more likely to distance themselves from their children and their struggles.

In fact, father respondents did not express their sympathy when their non-heterosexual children were targets of stigma or discrimination. Katou dad heard from his son that he was rejected by a host family because he came out as a gay when he was going to study abroad. Asked if he thought about anything when he heard about his son's story, he answered, "Not really. If he said so [that he is a gay] as a grown up individual, I can't deny or stop him because it's his life. He needs to be responsible for living own life. So I don't have to say anything." The differences between mothers and fathers confirm that mothers are more likely to be

connected with their child and they also internalize a mother's role, which is understood as sanctified maternal love as well as expected mother's role or "modernistic motherhood norms."

4.4.2. Changing the perceptions on non-heterosexuality: Realizing heteronormativity and homophobia are everywhere

During an "understanding" process, gaining knowledge about non-heterosexuality, talking with non-heterosexual members, knowing how they have struggled and meeting with a partner of non-heterosexual members were effective ways for family members to gain a better understanding of non-heterosexual members. Those mothers who blamed themselves for bearing and raising their non-heterosexual child also gained knowledge that it was not their "fault" and were thereby relieved (Nakamura mom, Suzuki mom). Moreover, gaining knowledge about non-heterosexuals can help family members, especially parents, to overcome their disappointment. They learn that non-heterosexuals can also become as "happy" as heterosexuals, which allowed parents to reconstruct new life plans for non-heterosexual children (Nakamura mom, Suzuki mom). Nakamura mom rejected acknowledging her daughter's non-heterosexuality for two years. However, after she gained a broader understanding of non-heterosexuality, she started hoping for her daughter to make her own family. As she put it, "I saw lesbian couples in the US who made a family and raised kids… I'll be more than happy if my daughter does so. If my daughter adopts children or makes a new family, I'll be happy to raise the kids with her."

Once family members knew about how non-heterosexuals are discriminated against and struggle, they also began to realize that they were/could be an oppressor for non-heterosexuals. Furthermore, their realization also made family members notice that heteronormativity and homophobia are everywhere. Suzuki sis and Miyazato y-sis cried during the interview. They

cried because they realized that their words during daily conversation might have been hurting non-heterosexual sisters. Miyazato y-sis regretted it. As she put it, "I had asked [a non-heterosexual sister], 'Don't you have a boyfriend?' before she told me [about her sexuality]. I had no idea of my sister's non-heterosexuality. And I think these kind of questions might have made my sister uncomfortable." Although Yoshida sis did not cry over her regret, she clearly said, "I regret deeply what I had said to my brother before he disclosed his sexuality. I had assumed he liked girls and said, 'Don't you have a girlfriend?' or, 'Is there any girl who you like?' I regret that so much." These narratives of regret were more common among siblings than parents. It could be partly because the conversation in matters of loves take place more among siblings than parent-child relationships. This realization also made some respondents conscious and pay more attention to the issue of sexuality on media, such as TV and newspaper, as well as daily conversation with others. Many of the respondents began to pay more attention to the news and TV programs depicting sexual minorities' issues. If these sources convey positive messages about non-heterosexuality, it helps them to change their perception positively. However at the same time, they feel uncomfortable and upset when watching variety shows and soap operas making fun of cross dressing men and neglecting the presence of sexual minorities.

Respondents also expressed their uncomfortable and upsetting feelings with any heteronormative and homophobic discourses took place in their daily lives. They began considering the feelings of potential invisible sexual minorities who might confront with these situations. When asked if respondents have heard or seen behavior and discourse with prejudice against sexual minorities, Itou explained, "I haven't heard anything about it from my friends but I've seen a man hug another man and the latter man said 'Stop it, that's disgusting.' I got upset looking at the situation where a man who hugged another man could possibly be a gay but was told 'disgusting.'" Itou got upset because she connected these scenes with what she

has heard from her cousin. Her cousin told her how uncomfortable and isolated she could feel because of heteronormativity in everyday life, where everyone assumes others to be a heterosexual.

For the respondents, workplaces and drinking with their coworkers[22] were stressful places where "gay jokes" and teasing unmarried people as being gay are tolerated. Some family members had a dilemma if they should point discrimination out or not. Yoshida sis expressed her stress and fear of correcting coworkers and business partners about being homophobic as well the strong responsibility she felt in doing so. When talking about whether she ever felt fear of telling others about her brother, she explained, "I have [felt fear] when I heard someone make homophobic comments and thought, 'I have to say something! I have to correct them!' I get stressed out with the feelings of duty correcting someone in front of many people… I've been in the situation where I want to correct them but couldn't." Asked why she thinks she is responsible, she answered, "I feel responsible as a person who knows the facts [that non-heterosexuals are target of discrimination even if they are invisible]. I've become friends with non-heterosexual after my brother's disclosure, and since then it's not only my brother's issue but my non-heterosexual friends' issue as well. I recall their faces, the faces of my [non-heterosexual] friends." The feelings of responsibility and fear of correcting others are interconnected with respondents' struggle over how they talk about non-heterosexual member to others, which will be discussed later in more detail. As people digested and "understood" the fact that one of their member was a non-heterosexual, they felt more responsible for

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[22] It can be also called a "business drinking party." In Japan, drinking after work was more common in the past, yet, people still do it. It is not a requirement for workers, however, they are expected to participate and this is the unspoken expectation, or *air*. Drinking with coworkers is thought to improve communication and relationships among coworkers (NHK 2014).

correcting others for homophobic and heteronormative comments.

4.4.3. Construction of heterosexual identity

Knowing a family member was a non-heterosexual caused family members to think about their own [hetero]sexuality. Some respondents began to question their sexuality when they gained knowledge that sexuality is diverse and each person's sexuality could vary. Yoshida sis went to a self-help group where sexual minorities gathered. I asked her if anything changed by being involved with other non-heterosexuals. She answered, "I have. It helped me think about my sexuality." She met a person at a group who thought her sexuality was hetero, but realized her non-heterosexuality after she got involved with people in that group. Since then, Yoshida sis started wondering about her own sexuality and had some experiments, although she concluded that she was not a non-heterosexual. Higa mom also imagined the possibility of being a non-heterosexual, because she wanted to convince both herself and her son to become a heterosexual. One day, her son asked if she ever thought about having a woman be her life partner. She answered, "No, I haven't. But I don't even know what's going to happen in my future. I may change my mind because people's hearts are changeable, right?" She emphasized that people's feelings like love are changeable in order to show her son that his non-heterosexuality also could change later. Yet, trying to "understand" non-heterosexuality gave family members opportunities to think about their own sexuality.

As seen above, disclosing non-heterosexuality to others may shake their heteronormative mindset. However at the same time, their experiences also reveal exactly what Halperin (1995: 44) points out: "Heterosexuality defines itself without problematizing itself, it elevates itself as a privileged and unmarked term, by abjecting and problematizing homosexuality." This is why, as Halperin continues, "Heterosexuality, then, *depends* on

homosexuality to lend it substance – and to enable it to acquire *by* default its status *as* a default, as a *lack of difference* or an *absence of abnormality*." (Halperin 1995: 44, Emphasis in original) Homosexuality is always defined as deviant by heterosexuality. Thus, in this process, heterosexuality has become "naturalized." (Kawaguchi 1999) It suggests that while questioning one's own [hetero]sexuality could be a step to acknowledge non-heterosexuality on the one hand, reconstructing heterosexuality through the existence of non-heterosexuals would reproduce a hierarchy because, "homosexuality and heterosexuality do not represent a true pair, two mutually referential contraries, but a hierarchical opposition." (Halperin 1995: 44)

CHAPTER 5. HOW FAMILIES "ACCEPTING" NON-HETEROSEXUAL MEMBERS AS *FUTSUU* [NORMAL] REPRODUCES HETERONORMATIVITY

Chapter 4 presented the overview of family members' experiences after the disclosure and demonstrated how they took steps to confront the issue in order to "understand" non-heterosexual members. Going through "understanding" processes, many family members began to have positive perceptions of non-heterosexuality, and this change was a step for them to "accept" non-heterosexual members. However, there are still few family members who actually stand up to challenge heteronormativity and homophobia. Most of family members have yet to figure out how to negotiate it with themselves, non-heterosexual members and general others. Many respondents who went through "understanding" processes perceived they also "accepted" non-heterosexual members. But we still need to know how family members "accept" non-heterosexual members and what "accepting" mean for them.

This chapter focuses on how family members "accept" the fact that one of their members is a non-heterosexual. This chapter further examines how their experiences and decisions are interrelated with the norms of *seken* as well as how they negotiate its fact with *seken*. To see, it will help search the meaning of "acceptance" for family members in Japanese context.

5.1. Superficial Positive Reaction: "Understanding Gaps" between Mother and a Non-heterosexual Child

"Understanding" or "digesting" the fact that one of their members is a non-heterosexual was not easy for many family members. Almost half of my respondents had these difficulties in the past or when interviewed. Moreover, even when family members thought and said to non-heterosexual members that they "understood" and "accepted" their disclosure, non-

heterosexual members did not always perceive family members' reactions in the same way. For some non-heterosexuals, their family seemed standing in a superficial position where the degree of "understanding" did not match. Suzuki mom, Higa mom and Katou mom did not reacted negatively when their children disclosed directly and they even expressed that they were happy to hear their children's coming out. Thus, their reactions could be perceived as positive, however, it turned out to be somewhat negative for the non-heterosexual children.

Suzuki mom was the first person in her family to know her daughter's sexuality. Suzuki mom had been conscious about her daughter since high school. Thus, Suzuki mom was glad when her daughter asked her to make time because she anticipated that her daughter was going to confess something important. After her daughter's disclosure, Suzuki mom was surprised because it was something she did not expect, but she was rather happy that they had a good parent-child relationship in which her child chose her to tell at first. Moreover, Suzuki mom was relieved that her daughter's confession was not something relating to death. This was why she told her daughter, "You are you. No matter what you are, it doesn't change the fact that you're my child. So your coming out wouldn't change our relationship. I'm glad you told me. Thank you." It made more sense for her when she heard the word "homosexuality" because her daughter did not like to wear a skirt and liked tomboy styles in her childhood. However, simply being told did not mean she "accepted" her child's non-heterosexuality. As she put it, "I was relived but didn't reach the point where I fully understood. I understood what had caused my daughter to struggle for a long time… But I didn't have any knowledge about homosexuality nor did I understand what it meant, so it was hard to say that I accepted my daughter's non-heterosexuality. I didn't have any tool to understand it so I wasn't able to digest what it meant right after her coming out." However, when Suzuki mom stopped her daughter from coming out at a high-school reunion, her daughter changed her attitude and said "I knew you had bias!" and left for the reunion. After this incident, Suzuki mom asked Itou to

communicate with her daughter so they were able to avoid misunderstanding. Yet, Suzuki mom's attitudes made her daughter perceive that she did not "truly understand" her.

Higa mom asked her son, "Why you can decide you are gay?" and she said she never got a convincing answer. Then her son said, "Please read these books and study about non-heterosexuality. You said you're not biased but I think you still are. I don't think you truly understand what I told you." She responded to her son, "I have, I've studied about it. But I still don't get it. I guess I'm not truly understanding." She thinks her son is still too young to decide his non-heterosexuality and said, "My son pointed out that I'm not fully understanding him. And I think I don't. I don't panic or anything, but I'm not fully accepting it. I understand [what he said] but still wonder why he can decide his sexuality in his 20s. I told him it's too early…I still think nobody knows what the heart turns out to be. It's changeable. I don't deny [non-heterosexual] but I'm not sure why you can say your heart will never change." Even though Higa mom was proud of her son's courage to tell his sexuality, her question made her son think she does not "truly understand" his non-heterosexuality, as Higa mom also admitted.

Katou had lived with his father after his parents' divorce. Katou disclosed his sexuality to his father first when he was 19 years old. After about a year later, his grandfather passed away. In the funeral parlor waiting room for family, he came out about his sexuality in front of all of his relatives. Katou mom was not at the funeral, but before she heard of her son's sexuality from him, her sister-in-law told her of his disclosure. Before she actually heard directly from her son that he wanted to introduce someone special who was a man, she did not take it seriously. Her son and his partner were married in the US and since his partner is an American they are protected by the law if they live in the US. During our interview, Katou mom said a few times, "I wish my son was a girl," when the tape was not running because we had to move from one place to another during the interview. I asked what she meant when she said she wished her

son was a girl. She said, "I wish for a *futsuu* [normal or ordinary] marriage as a parent. I may look like I understand, but I don't really… I still think marriage is between a man and woman. A *futsuu* marriage as *seken* says. Marriage between two men is not *futsuu* right? So I've never disclosed about my son to *seken*." Although Katou mom did not show negative feelings when her son came out, she was worried about disease like AIDS so she texted her son. "I told him he could pursue *futsuu* marriage if he ever begins to like women… Or because I wondered about disease, I asked him about possibility of getting AIDS." Her son texted her back, saying, "I shouldn't have told you if you say these things." She recalled this and said, "I asked him genuinely, but his response made me realize I shouldn't have reacted like this anymore. I thought I should swallow it and understand him otherwise he'll step away, which I want to avoid since we finally got closer. [Her son had said, "My mother threw me and dad away," and after that he stopped interacting with her until he was close to 20 years old]. Even though this is something I cannot tell *seken*, I should show him understanding so that he'll come close to me." Thus, she concluded, "You know, I have no right to disrupt their relationship. Also they look happy and his partner is a good person. That made me relived in a way."

Katou mom repeatedly used the word, *seken*. From the interview with her, she was referring to *seken* as being people she knows, such as her friends and coworkers. It also should be noted that Katou mom's purpose in not reacting negatively to child's sexuality was different from Suzuki mom and Higa mom. Her parent-child relationship was different from the other two mothers because Katou mom lived separately from her son for a long time. However, what is common among these mothers and children is that "understand" means something different for parents and children. For parents, it meant that they just acknowledged the new information about their children. For children it meant that their parents fully "accepted" non-heterosexuality and they thought their parents were ready to fight with them. This is what Sanbe (2014) describes as gaps between parents and children in terms of "understanding." Sanbe

refers to Iguchi (2007), parents are more likely to feel responsibility to "understand" their children due to "self-definition of understanding." This means that parents strongly believe understanding their children is their duty. Their belief is constructed through expectations which they also internalize, and feel responsible for "understanding" their children, regardless (Sanbe 2014). This is also common among American families. Borhek (1993) is the mother of a non-heterosexual child who and illustrates how to come out to parents, as well as how to deal with children's coming out. She encourages LGB children who would be possibly disappointed by parents' reactions from a parent's standpoint. She describes these gaps in understanding as triggered by several factors, which eventually fade away as parents accept their children. Accordingly, parents want their children to have a "better" life than themselves, however, the disclosure makes them realize that their definition of "better" might not coincide with the one their children think of, because parents expect their children to share close values. Borhek (1993) analyzes the difficulties parents face in "understanding" their children's disclosure because they feel they lost control over their children.

Thus, the mothers' and children's gaps in "understanding" were somewhat presumable. Parents have lived heterosexual lives in which they never experienced being excluded from heteronormativity. Some of them even shared homophobia. Even if they did not, they shared a common understanding that non-heterosexuality is something people make fun of. Moreover, they never exposed themselves to LGBT communities or spaces; thus, they may perceive these places as mysterious and dangerous. On the other hand, non-heterosexual children have already exposed themselves to a broader understanding of LGBT. Many of them are presumably aware of the existence of LGBT spaces and support groups, and they might even make non-heterosexual friends to talk to. It implies that non-heterosexual children acknowledge heteronormative society and *seken* on the one hand and LGBT communities, in which it is safer for them, on the other hand. Due to the different worlds parents and children see and experience,

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it is easy to imagine that parents cannot understand their children all the time and vice versa. It is worth mentioning that parents, especially mothers, are expected by their children and larger society to understand their children.

However, understanding gaps might be bigger in parent-child relationships in Japan due to the absence of the Western sense of individuality. In the US, individuals can express their opinions freely and become who they are, while Japanese cannot because their existence is dependent on human relationships or *seken*, in which they prioritize their identity and opinions over others' feelings. LGBT communities are usually organized differently from majority Japanese groups. These communities rather encourage people to be who they really are while heteronormative majority Japanese groups do not encourage people to express openly about themselves because it disharmonizes the atmosphere in which hierarchy and self-imposed restraint are valued. In this respect, LGBT communities resist Japan's oppressive mainstream social order. That said, parents in Japan may be more unaccepting, confused and feel difficulties "understanding" their children because they see their children as too independent.

5.2. "Acceptance" or Self-justification? "Accepting" Non-heterosexuality as Futsuu [*Normal*] *or Not Special*

Rejection, denial and negative feelings toward non-heterosexuality were partly created by the belief that non-heterosexuals are different from others; thus, not *futsuu* [normal or ordinary]. Higa mom explained her son is "special," that is he is different from others. Although she is partly happy for her son to talk about his struggles and concerns to other non-heterosexuals at support groups he is involved in, she is also concerned for her son to be involved too much with other non-heterosexuals as she put it, "These people gather and talk only among themselves. It seems that minorities gather only with minorities. It's OK, though

I'm concerned that my son thinks in the way these people think. Well, maybe not, but I feel like they tend to be special [or too different from others]. I want them to be *futsuu*." She questioned what people are saying about more recognition being given to non-heterosexuals today. As she put it, "Is that true? Maybe young people are more likely to accept [non-heterosexuals] as it became *futsuu* because of the effect of TV. But I can't stand that [non-heterosexuals] are teased and made fun of… I want them to be *futsuu* like they don't even need to be depicted as strange… It will take time to treat them as not special." Higa mom's narrative suggested that she thought that treating non-heterosexuals as *futsuu*, was the sign of "acceptance."

In fact, one of the effective ways for respondents to overcome their negative feelings toward non-heterosexuality and "accept" them was to evaluate non-heterosexuals as "good people" or "hard workers" (Yoshida sis, Yoshida mom, Suzuki grandparents, Suzuki sis) as well as acknowledging them as "not special" or "*futsuu*." When Yoshida sis met non-heterosexuals other than her brother, she thought "everyone is just as *futsuu* as other human beings. Even though they are categorized and named as [LGBT], they are good people." Aragaki sis and bro had similar narratives. Although they reacted, "That's disgusting" when they knew their sister's non-heterosexuality, they think non-heterosexuality is "*futsuu*." Aragaki sis felt it is *futsuu* as she talked with her sister and knew there are many non-heterosexuals other than her sister. This implies that people feel it is not *futsuu* if one is a minority and being minority is perceived as being different; thus, this person is somehow wrong. In other words, one can be categorized as *futsuu* when there are many more others. This is exactly what *seken*'s rules tell individuals to believe. *Seken* expects one to be the same as others, which means majority point of view rules. Thus, once more people are recognized in a group, they could be categorized as *futsuu*. Furthermore, there were family members, especially parents, who changed their perceptions positively on non-heterosexuality and "accepted" their

children because they were relieved by the fact that their non-heterosexual children also can make a family of their own. And this family is relatively different from "*futsuu* family," which consists of a heterosexual marriage and children. Knowing that non-heterosexuals can also make their own families could be a reason for parents to "accept" their children. Such positive perceptions may be considered full "acceptance" of non-heterosexual members and reversal of heteronormative and homophobic mindsets.

However, it should be questioned whether non-heterosexuals always have to be "good people" or "hard workers" or make their own family to find acceptance. "Accepting" non-heterosexual members because they are "good people" or "hard workers" could reinforce the stratification between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, because it suggests that non-heterosexuals can be "accepted" or acknowledged as *futsuu* only when they could cover up their "inferior" sexuality and become "good people" or "hard workers." Parents' expectations for their children to make an own family also imply that they "accept" their children as long as their children make a family as heterosexuals do. However, hoping for non-heterosexual children to make a "happy" family is just a substantial life plan parents expects their children to persue. It also suggests that parents "accept" their children if their children can prove that they are *futsuu* to others because it also means that parents can prove to *seken* that their children are *futsuu*; thus, are as happy as heterosexuals. This exemplifies how making a family is considered to be the sign of "happiness" regardless of the reality. Their attitude could be understood as "acceptance" behavior on the one hand, however, it could be pressure, stress and oppression for non-heterosexuals.

5.2.1. Proving non-heterosexuality as futsuu [normal]: Better than some other deviancies

Speaking of "acceptance" with conditions, many respondents "accepted" non-

heterosexual members with compromise deals. Many family members pointed out that they should be happy for non-heterosexual members to just exist (Kiyohara mom, Fujii mom and dad, Yoshida mom and sis, Katou mom and dad, Suzuki mom and grandparents, Morita mom and dad) because they heard non-heterosexual members' struggles could be suicidal. There were also common narratives among parents in which they compared non-heterosexuality with other "deviant" behavior to justify non-heterosexuality. For instance, they feel it is better than "committing crimes" (Katou dad, Higa mom, Suzuki mom), being "transgender and getting surgery" (Katou dad, Fujii mom and dad), having other diseases that threaten their life, having alcohol addiction (Suzuki mom), "committing suicide" (Suzuki mom, Higa mom), hikikomori, i.e., social withdrawal or having other mental illness (Higa mom). For example, Fujii parents said they did not much have difficulties "accepting" their son, not just because they think their son's relationship with a partner is temporary, but also because, as they put it, "If son becomes like Ai Haruna [who is a famous MTF transgender on TV] by changing his appearance, I guess I would worry more." (Fujii dad) Their son came out as a bisexual, but when they heard his disclosure, because they did not have enough knowledge, they confused being gay or bisexual with being transgender; thus, they thought their son would go through transforming his appearance from male to female. However, they were relieved after they knew their son would not change his gender. Therefore, Fujii mom added, they would be more worried about their son if his appearance looked different from his sex on the family registry when considering what *seken* would say about it. It suggests that they would not be worried as long as their son is not labeled as deviant by *seken*. Moreover, these comparisons made them relived that their children were not as bad as other deviancies. This is understandable because Japanese tend to confirm that people are *futsuu* or above *futsuu* by comparing with others and this provides them positive psychological effects (Sano and Ooishi 2009).

One reason why some parents compromised with their child's sexuality was due to

bisexuality (Fujii mom and dad, Yamamoto mom). When Yamamoto mom's daughter disclosed as a bisexual who can date both men and women, she thought "that's advantageous" because "being a lesbian would be more difficult." However, she realized it was not that simple after her daughter told her, "That's not such an easy issue." Although Fujii mom and dad said they are "accepting" his son dating with another man, it seemed like they were "allowing" their son's relationship because they believe it is just temporary. They emphasized that they are not worried because their son is a bisexual not a gay. Fujii mom clearly said, "We might be strange parents, but we are relieved because he said he also likes women." Even though the daughter of Kiyohara mom also disclosed as a bisexual, she did not feel hope in bisexuality but wondered "how she will turn out to be." Kiyohara mom no longer wonders because when interviewed her daughter had married another woman in Canada and they were living as a family in Japan. The narratives of bisexual children's parents suggest that bisexuality is assumed to be an escape route, in which they can go back to heterosexual life and pursue heterosexual marriage if they are tired of oppressed non-heterosexual life. This gives hope to parents.

Parents comparing non-heterosexuality with other "deviancies" and gaining relief from children being bisexuals were used as tools during "accepting" process. With these tools, parents can convince themselves to recognize their children are *futsuu* and above *futsuu* in order to survive in *seken*. However, it also should be pointed out that even if they could protect both themselves and their children by comparing with other "deviancies," they could not escape from the force of *seken*. Moreover, "accepting" non-heterosexual children with the wishful thoughts for bisexuality, which they think is an escape route, has two pitfalls. First, prejudices, stereotypes and ignorance about bisexuality remain. Second, it reproduces the sexual dualism, heterosexuality versus homosexuality but not non-heterosexuality. Both pitfalls make bisexuality invisible.

5.2.2. Is treating as futsuu [*normal*] *real "acceptance"?*

As introduced above, family members had negative feelings toward non-heterosexuality due to the reality that non-heterosexuality is treated as "not *futsuu*" in *seken* and treated unequally in society, while they also believed they "accepted" non-heterosexual members by recognizing it is "*futsuu*." What it means to be *futsuu* for them is not to get a special attention. One aspect of this is that they "accept" non-heterosexuality and are against heteronormativity by treating non-heterosexuality as *futsuu*. However another aspect of this is that they just "tolerate" non-heterosexuality as they made comparison and reassured non-heterosexuality is *futsuu*, which makes them feel better and believe they "accepted" it. Altman (1993: 59) points out that "the difference between tolerance and acceptance is very considerable, for tolerance is a gift extended by the superior to the inferior," while acceptance is that "one accepts the equal validity of their style of life." This is why Altman points out that tolerance is one kind of oppression against non-heterosexuality.

Therefore, to be critical, insisting a non-heterosexual member is not different from others, which makes them *futsuu*, reinforces reproducing heteronormativity because once individuals are categorized as *futsuu*, this gives authorities the reason to keep ignoring confronting this issue. Today in Japan, non-heterosexuals do not enjoy equal rights as heterosexuals do, which forces non-heterosexuals to live more difficult life. If they are "tolerated" by people surrounding them and can live "*futsuu*," they seem to not have problems living in Japan as non-heterosexuals. However, as abundant previous research has pointed out, the lack of protections by the law negatively affect non-heterosexuals when they try to be independent, make a family or attend a partner's sickness or death. When considering that being "accepted" by *seken* is the most important task for individuals living in Japan, only overcoming heteronormativity and homophobia do not help ones to live "safely" in *seken*, so "accepting"

non-heterosexuals as *futsuu* could be a strategy for living in Japan. However, this strategy also potentially neglects fundamental issues non-heterosexuals face and the force of heteronormativity.

5.3. Decisions of Not or to Disclose

While family members thought they "accepted" non-heterosexual members with these compromise deals, they could not fully avoid how others perceive a non-heterosexual member and themselves. In other words, "accepting" a non-heterosexual member does not mean family members now can be free from any fear of being discovered by others that one of their member is a non-heterosexual. Some family members were put in the situations where they were compelled to disclose about non-heterosexual members, while others decided to disclose about it. As mentioned before, if non-heterosexual members came out openly and publicly, family members did not necessarily need to disclose on their behalf. It also meant that family members "had no choice." Thus, even if family members were still not ready for being found out by others, the visibility of non-heterosexual members might require family members to also be out. Either way, disclosing was one of the most challenging experiences for family members. Moreover, difficulties would vary depending upon whom they are about to disclose to such as other family members, who still do not know about non-heterosexual members, or relatives, neighbors or friends. In this subsection, I will introduce narratives on reasons of why family members do not disclose and how they deal with the situations where they are compelled to disclose. Then, how family members actually negotiate with others when they disclose will be examined.

5.3.1. Reasons for not disclosing: People with less intimacy

Most respondents insisted that there are others who they think do not need to know

about non-heterosexual members. Many parents decided not to disclose about their non-heterosexual children to their parents. Respondents felt more difficult disclosing it to someone older than themselves because they believed that older generation are more conservative than their generation so they will not understand what it means. Katou mom has no will to tell her parents about her son's sexuality because she believes her parents "are too old and they cannot catch up with what's going on in the present moment." She also thinks it would make them struggle: they would think what they have done to make their grandson to become gay. Yamamoto mom decided not to tell their parents, including her ex-husband's parents, because, as she put it, "As they get older, they have less things to live for. They were looking forward to seeing my daughter's wedding and great-grandchildren… I don't want to disappoint them so I won't tell them as long as my daughter doesn't." Even though Suzuki mom told her parents about her daughter's disclosure after all, she was not planning to do so and even stopped her daughter because she thought her parents would face difficulties understanding it. She said, "I stopped my daughter from telling her grandparents about it because my parents experienced wars that made me think they believed men have to be manly and go fight with guns and women have to be feminine. They went through the time when gender division was clearly made. So I thought they wouldn't accept it." However, it turned out that her parents showed "understanding" to her daughter's non-heterosexuality even though interviewing Suzuki grandparents revealed that they still have difficulties "understanding it," while they also emphasized that they support their granddaughter's happiness regardless. Although an interview with Yoshida mom's husband was not conducted, she told me he made a choice not to tell his mother when she asked him if he would tell his mother about their son. He said, "You don't have to tell her. I don't know how much she would understand it."

There was a common narrative among the respondents who are married or engaged. They tended to be hesitant to disclose non-heterosexual members to their partner's family. They

felt hesitant because they thought the relationships with their partners' family are not as close as their family of origin. Itou clearly said she rather not disclose it to her partner's parents. It was partly because Itou is a cousin; thus the relationship between her non-heterosexual cousin and her partner's family are "institutionally far." She also added it is not worth the risk telling about her cousin to her partner's family. This implied that it would be much easier for family members to discuss non-heterosexuality with someone they trust and feel intimacy. Therefore, family members' decision not to disclose was not only because of generational gaps they felt, but also because of the level of intimacy. They did not want to disturb their *miuchi* [relatives and close friends in the interior zone] in order to maintain the harmony of kinship.

It should be also noted that kinship has become weaken compared to the past. This significantly affects family members, making them feel it is not necessary to disclose about non-heterosexual members to their *miuchi*. Yoshida mom and her non-heterosexual son decided to tell her side of family and relatives, including her aunts. However, her family decided not to tell her husband's side of family because they live in a place far from where Yoshida mom and her family members live and they only meet once a while. In this circumstance, they felt pity, especially for a grandmother, because they would not be able to take care of her after the disclosure even if she panicked. They also decided not to disclose it to the husband's siblings and their children because they do not have chance to see them often.

The relationships with neighbors have also grown weaker these days, which make family members feel they do not have to talk about non-heterosexual members. Most of the respondents said they do not talk about something related to family affairs with their neighbors. Yet, it also depends on where they live. It is assumed that if one lives in urban areas, they would have stronger connections with their neighbors. Unlike disclosing about non-heterosexual members to *miuchi*, it is easier for friends. The intimacy level differs by friends. If one feels

more intimacy, they feel easier about disclosing it. In other words, they feel more less compelled to disclose it to someone who has less intimacy. Also, there are shared ideas that relatives and kin are difficult to break off the relationship while friendships are easier because they can choose friendships. Thus, if some of their friends behaved negatively on the disclosure, family members felt easier than relatives to stop interacting with them. Similar to friends who has less intimacy, family members felt unnecessary talking about non-heterosexual members at workplace or to coworkers. Many of them believed that workplace is a place to work where they barely discuss inner feelings or something "private," which was also heard among the respondents of non-heterosexuals mentioned in Chapter 3. Yet, if workplace is smaller and the relationships with coworkers are closer, they feel more intimacy with coworkers that may make them choose to talk about their "personal" stories.

It is important to point out that the decision to not disclose about non-heterosexuality is not a "real" choice for family members because they are often time put in the situation where they are compelled to choose whether or not they disclose about non-heterosexual members. They do not need to make this decision if non-heterosexuality is a widely acceptable way of life. For example, Katou mom often faces situations where her relatives, coworkers and friends ask her about how her son is doing. At that time, she talks about her son without mentioning his sexuality. Asked why she does not, she answered "I don't think they would understand what it means. I don't want to say that to people, who especially talk complex things, because it's unnecessary. But I would say it to some people who I think would understand." Yet, she still believes that disclosing to others is a right thing to do for her son. Whether family members actually have desire to come out as a family or not, there were several respondents who said that they are hesitant to talk about it because it could out non-heterosexual members, especially when non-heterosexual members are in the closet.

Mothers were more likely than other family members to be situated where they were compelled to choose whether they disclose about non-heterosexual children or not. It is because mothers are thought to be closer to their children and appropriate person to ask about their children unlike fathers. As mentioned, Katou mom and dad got divorced and Katou dad has custody. However, Katou mom faces situations where her friends, family and coworkers ask her how her son has been doing, while Katou dad does not. This suggests that mother and child relationships are thought to be tighter than fathers. In other words, mothers are still highly expected to take care of their children regardless of who the children have actually grown up with.

5.3.2. No need to come out because it's futsuu [*normal*]

There was a respondent who feels it is unnecessary to disclose about non-heterosexual members because it is *futsuu* [normal or ordinary] or nothing special. Aragaki mom feels it is unnecessary for both herself and non-heterosexuals, including her daughter, to strongly insist on their presence. When asked how she felt when she knew about her daughter's non-heterosexuality, she said, "I think people would be distant if you insist your opinions too strongly. I think people would understand you without insisting… That's why I think people would understand what my daughter has to say more if she does not push her opinions on them. When you push your opinions, people will get more aggressive and even push you back. I think [non-heterosexuals] come out publicly because they think of themselves as special. But I don't think [non-heterosexuals] are someone special." She added a story about what she felt when she saw groups of people who participated in some kind of a liberation movement in her town. "I saw groups of people who wore some sort of black uniforms and insisted their opinions so strongly. I think general people wouldn't accept it even if they try hard doing something for the movement. What I'm trying to say is that you can say what you have to say but you need to

think about how to say." Moreover, because she believes non-heterosexuality is not something special, she thinks "you don't need to keep it secret but also don't need to say out loud."

What Aragaki mom said may be an ideal where no one is labeled based on sexuality. However, it would be difficult to change the perceptions of sexual minorities today in Japan by just being silent because invisibility reproduces discrimination and perpetuates heterosexual hegemony. Her opinion could be interpreted as oppressive because not insisting on the presence of non-heterosexuality in heteronormative environments means that they do not exist; thus, their rights and protections are not secured. Yet, she was clearly showing her respects to sexual minorities and her daughter being publicly out. Moreover, she showed her support to her daughter as she has recommended her friends, neighbors and coworkers to read articles which her daughter wrote as an out-out-the-closet non-heterosexual.

5.3.3. Just disclosing, but not coming out on behalf of non-heterosexual members

There were respondents who chose to disclose about non-heterosexual members. Nakamura mom actively discloses about her non-heterosexual daughter on her behalf. She was the only respondent who actually "came out" as the mother of a lesbian daughter. It was possible for her because her daughter came out publicly and openly and, as she said, she "had no choice [about being out]." However, her daughter's publicly coming out helped her "make a virtue of necessity." As she endured being a target of negative attitudes from others, she decided to take actions and began being involved with activities, including organizing support groups for family members, attending parades or enlightenment events and writing articles in newspapers and flyers as the mother of a lesbian daughter. She said, "I'm no longer afraid of anything. I'm more close to death, then I made a virtue of the necessity to support." Although Nakamura mom admitted that in accepting her daughter's disclosure she even tried to forget

about it for two years, she now thinks, "I'm proud of my daughter who spread a message widely to change society so I want my daughter to do her best as long as she can. I'm also glad to make good use of myself and to show my face in public, [recognized as the mother of lesbian daughter]."

Yoshida mom also had a strong desire to come out. However, she decided not to because her son is still in the closet. Thus, she is more worried about outing her son through her coming out. Asked why she wants to come out, she answered, "I can come out as long as my son is OK about it. I rather want to tell it to as many people as possible because it will help eradicate sexual discrimination around people I come out to… I'm sure there are one or two sexual minority people around where I live. I want to ask them if there are members who do not get married among their family and tell them the possibilities of being sexual minorities. I think, I want to say out loud to let many people know about it."

It should be noted that even though Nakamura mom and Yoshida mom are proactively involved with public awareness activities, their husbands are not. When I asked Nakamura mom if she had talked with her husband about her worries concerning her daughter, she said "not really. He doesn't even tell anything about me being involved activities. He was like, 'If you want to do it, go ahead.'" Yoshida mom began taking actions right after her son's disclosure because it made her wonder how the education system deals with this issue. At that time, she and her husband fought many times because of the motivational gaps between them. When she asked her husband if he is not worried about his son being a target of discrimination and prejudice, he answered, "I'm not saying that. But in spite of that, it's more important that our son becomes strong enough to live his life. Society will not change right away. So we need to keep an eye on him. " Then Yoshida mom said to him, "I know, so I will. But public awareness activities are as important as that." Then he responded, "I leave it up to you. Instead, I'll earn

money allocated for your activities."

Moreover, most of the participants of the NPO for family members [Family of LGBT] are mothers. It implies that mothers are more likely than fathers to feel responsible doing something for their children and at the same time, they are expected to do so because of their role in their family. As introduced in Chapter 4, the absence of fathers was common in this study. Fathers tended to depend on their wives to get involved with children's issues. Only Yamaguchi dad and Morita dad were willing to get involved and they have relatively different father-child relationships from other fathers. Yamaguchi dad has built the relationship with his son while he lived separately from his family for a long time and the son disclosed it to his father earlier than the mother. Morita dad also "had no choice" but to take care of his non-heterosexual daughter because she could not interact with her mother for two years after she received the diagnosis of Adult Children (AC). During this two years, Morita dad took his daughter to support groups and events for sexual minorities and for AC, and he even talked with his daughter on the phone late at night to cheer her up and these were all his roles.

Like Yoshida mom, Miyazato o-sis also expressed a desire to talk about her non-heterosexual sister to others. However, her motivation was rather different from Yoshida mom who wanted to disclose about her son as a part of an enlightenment activity. Although Miyazato o-sis still avoids telling certain others who she thinks are prejudiced, she still wants to tell them because "I'm free of prejudice. I want to talk about it with my friends because it's a story of my family. I want to tell them in daily conversation that my sister came visit me with her girlfriend." However, she tries not to talk about it especially at her hometown because it is where her non-heterosexual sister and their parents live and work, and where her sister does not want to be out because she is concerned about negative effects on her career. Similar to Miyazato o-sis, Aragaki sis also expressed reluctance to hide her sister's non-heterosexuality

in daily conversation with friends and coworkers. Even though she was hesitant to tell coworkers about her non-heterosexual sister since she saw them talking behind a transgendered coworker's back, she still feel it would be easier for her to talk about her "private" matters. She also said that she is rather trying to talk about her sister to others. As she put it, "I've discussed with my sister about it since her disclosure, which made me become interested in the issue of sexuality. I also heard from my sister that there are still many sexual minorities who are kicked out of their house, which made me become more sensitive about this issue. This is why I proactively tell others like my friends about my sister's non-heterosexuality." She also added, "I think everyone should know there are sexual minorities around them."

There were few respondents who feel a responsibility to come out as a family member for the sake of enlightenment. Yoshida sis expressed her strong responsibility to come out even though she still does not do it to certain others. After she attended Family of LGBT, she realized there are many people who do not know about this issue. Thus, she started feeling that it is her duty to spread it. "I began telling my friends and coworkers about my gay brother even though I have to think about possible consequences for my brother because it's his private story." Because her brother is in the closet, she felt stronger responsibility when she decided to disclose to others as she said "I said to my friends that 'my brother is [gay]. I told them not to tell it to anyone, but they might. I don't mind them telling it to others but because I was the one who said that in the first place, I felt I needed to be ready if someone asked me about it when it spread at my workplace because of me." Although she feels terrified correcting some coworkers who are prejudiced against sexual minorities at drinking parties after work, her strong responsibility in correcting them is triggered by her belief, "As a person who knew about the reality [of LGB], I feel a responsibility to correct someone who does not still know about it." However, when I asked whether she would come out as the sister of a gay brother if he is OK about this, she said, "I'm unlike my mother who is highly engaged with activities. Even

though I respect what my mother is doing, I have a sense that people in my generation are more live-and-let-live types in which they are less bothered by others. So I don't necessarily think I have strong desire to come out, especially because it's related to my brother's privacy. But if I decided to come out, I would choose friends or people who are trustworthy."

Although Kiyohara mom, Yamamoto mom and Katou mom did not feel responsibility coming out, they think telling about their children's non-heterosexuality to as many people as possible would be necessary. Among them, Kiyohara mom was more willing to tell it to more people as she said, "I don't think of changing my lifestyle, for example being involved with activities, even though those who are more active think of me as not doing enough. But I think if more people know about the existence of non-heterosexuals, it may make their life easier. I think ignorant is not good." She also told me that this was why she participated in the interview. Asked if she also cares about it when she tells her friends about her daughter, she responded "I do. I have a little hope that if my friends changed their perception about [LGBT] and tell this to their friends so that more people would be familiar with this issue. Then I can do that [although I cannot participate in activities]." She was motivated by her daughter's painful experiences with ignorant and insensitive people. Similar to Kiyohara mom, Yamamoto mom also has a will to support her daughter by letting others know about the issue of non-heterosexuality. Even though she still "chooses" whom she talks to, she has handed out flyers of support groups to which her daughter belongs at her workplace and talked about it to coworkers. She said, "Since my daughter asked me to spread the information about the issue of sexual minorities which my daughter are striving, I thought I have to support my daughter as a parent." She also explained how she deals with someone who is homophobic. "I want to tell them this is not something good or bad," and she also, "would tell them the fact that there are certain amount of sexual minorities."

Although Katou mom also expressed her will to spread the fact that there are non-heterosexuals, she still feels hesitant to tell about his son and his involvement of activities to others. As she put it, "I haven't come out to *seken* except my best friend…But I sometimes feel like telling people who I think would understand it." Asked if she has a will, she answered "I do. I want to acknowledge my son… I'm thinking of telling more people about my son. My son told me he started his own activity so I also want to help him. I want to make *seken* to take non-heterosexuals for granted. I'm beginning to think of telling about my son to others little by little because I want to make an environment where my son has an easier life."

Morita dad thinks it is unnecessary to come out on behalf of the non-heterosexual's parent even though he has told to some of his coworkers about her daughter. He said, "People don't ask me when my daughter is getting married as often as people ask my daughter… I don't hide about my daughter but also don't actively say because I assume many people have only as little knowledge as myself in early period of time when I wasn't sure what non-heterosexuality was about. So they wouldn't understand unless I explain to them 100 percent, which is troublesome." Asked why explaining 100 percent is necessary, he said that "I want people whom I tell to have legitimate information about non-heterosexuality and my daughter. So if I couldn't talk about homosexuality including how they struggle, why they become and what my daughter and family went through, I rather wouldn't tell them because incomplete information would not rid of their biases. So when I tell them about it, I also mention about support groups and a parade… I'm not sure how much I can commit to these activities when someone asked me, however, I think it's very important to tell others there are a certain amount of non-heterosexuals in order to make changes."

Yamaguchi dad thinks it is unnecessary to disclose about his son to others. When asked if he has confronted the situation where he needed to talk about it, he answered, "I guess my

son has probably come out to people who know both my son and me [so I don't need to tell them] so I count on my son. But I have my own challenges." Asked what challenges, he answered, "Like participating your interview. I do whatever I can and whatever it takes as a parent [of gay son] to make changes. I don't think this is something my son and I have to do together. I'll do it for myself." He did not explain what he meant by "his challenges," so it remained unsure. Yet, it could mean he has a strong will to keep supporting his son, challenging against discrimination against his son and himself or fighting for human rights. However, he gave me an impression that he was with a strong resolve for being a father of gay son to keep "challenging."

5.3.4. Disclosing non-heterosexual members as futsuu [normal]

Family members' motivations for coming out varied. Some people did it for the sake of public awareness, and others talked about strong responsibility. Coming out as a family could signify a challenge against heteronormativity, however, most family members were not involved with awareness activities; thus, they stopped at just "disclosing" it. Even among family members who disclosed about non-heterosexual members to others, most of them did it in daily conversation.

As introduced, Kiyohara mom tries to tell about her daughter to as many people as possible because she hopes to increase the numbers of people who know about non-heterosexuals. When asked how she tells it to her friends, she answered, "I don't want to consider my daughter's non-heterosexuality as something special, like something I cannot tell others. I often just mention it in daily conversation with my friends who are talking about our kids. I don't want my friends nor myself to think about it as something special…" When I asked what it means not to think about non-heterosexuals as something special, she responded, "I

don't want to think everyone has to be the certain way, push general ideas on them, such as getting married at certain ages." This is why she does not tell about the reality non-heterosexuals are facing, such as their struggle over discrimination and stigmatization, as she educates others. Aragaki sis also proactively tells about her non-heterosexual sister to others. Asked how she tells them, she answered, "I tell them like it's something as *futsuu* [normal or ordinary] as telling them about where you live. We talk about who I live with, and I just tell them that I live with my sister and her girlfriend." Asked how these people have reacted, she said, "They were like, "'A girlfriend?!' or 'Aren't you uncomfortable living together?' So I said, 'No, I live with them and am not uncomfortable at all. It's just a *futsuu* [normal or ordinary] thing.'" As she repeatedly said, she tells others her non-heterosexual sister is *futsuu* unless she was asked to give them more explanations. Disclosing about non-heterosexual members being *futsuu* may not be considered as "coming out" on behalf of non-heterosexual members; because once something is treated as *futsuu*, problems, issues and obstacles become invisible. Yet, it is worth mentioning that family members emphasized non-heterosexuality being *futsuu* in both cases, whether they came out or not.

5.4. Family Members' Experiences of Courtesy Stigma

There were family members who actually "came out" in some extent, however, it was challenging for most of family members. They felt uncomfortable for others to know one of their family members is a non-heterosexual. Their uncomfortable feeling was present before "accepting" a non-heterosexual member in the first place. Nakamura mom put it like this, "I didn't want *seken* to know about my daughter. I was afraid that I'll be blamed… I was just so scared that *seken* would find out about it." Yet, the eyes of others remain even after family members "accepted" a non-heterosexual member. Family members' fears can be explained by the concept of "courtesy stigma."

As introduced in the end of Chapter 3, the concept of courtesy stigma was defined by Goffman. The previous research on families of non-heterosexual members in the West and Japan also have shown that family members' experiences are influenced by courtesy stigma. Again, courtesy stigma is a stigma that "individual[s] who [are] related through the social structure to a stigmatized individuals" experience because of "the discredit of the stigmatized person to whom they are related." (Goffman 1963: 30) Thus, the families of non-heterosexual members would presumably experience courtesy stigma because they are related to non-heterosexuals who are stigmatized. LaSala (2010) refers to Corrigan and Miller's (2004) categorizations of courtesy stigma, vicarious and public stigmas. However, I prefer to categorize courtesy stigma into two different levels: "Experienced courtesy stigma" and "perceived courtesy stigma." [See Figure 2]
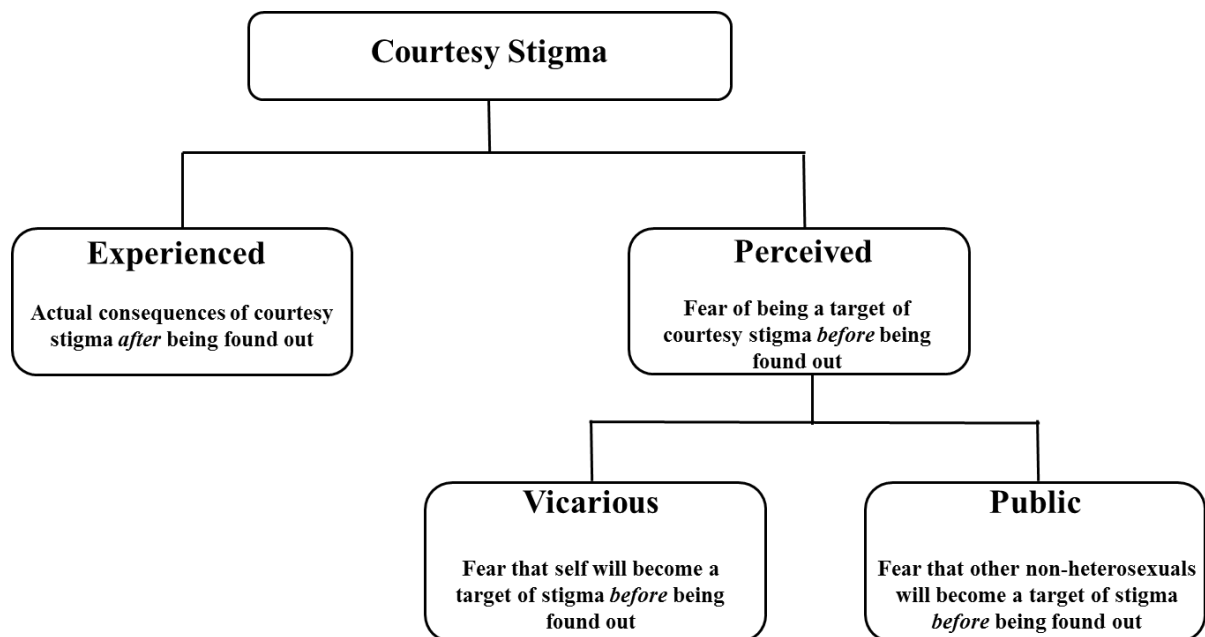
Figure 2. Categorization of Courtesy Stigma

"Experienced courtesy stigma" refers to negative comments and attitudes from others, including being blamed for damaging relationship with relatives, friends and neighbors that family members actually experienced *after* others found out that one of a members was a non-heterosexual. On the one hand, "perceived courtesy stigma" refers to the fear for family

members to become a target of stigma as well as their fear for non-heterosexual members to become a target of stigma *before* others discover the presence of non-heterosexual members. This way of categorizations is especially significant and intelligible to explain family's experiences in the context of Japan. As mentioned countless times, Japanese belong to *seken* where they will be a target of exclusion unless they can behave "appropriately" to roles and situations. In this environment, family members need to negotiate with others in order to survive well in *seken*. It means family members would also avoid situation that disrupt relationships with others by prioritizing others' feelings. Therefore, these categorizations help us see the barriers are to "coming out" as the family of a non-heterosexual member. Furthermore, in this paper, Perceived Courtesy Stigma is divided into two types as Corrigan and Miller defined: "public stigma" and "vicarious stigma." (Corrigan and Miller 2004) It is expected that family members would feel empathetic and suffer when their loved one is suffering when considering how kinship is valued in Japan [See Figure 2]. However at the same time, it is also predictable that family members would face direct prejudice and discrimination by others due to the characteristics of *seken*.

In this section, the respondents' experiences of being affected by "courtesy stigma" as well as how courtesy stigma is perceived by family members will be examined.

5.4.1. "Experienced courtesy stigma": Negatively changed the relationships with relatives, neighbors and friends

Among the respondents, few confronted Experienced Courtesy Stigma. Yoshida mom and Suzuki mom confronted it unexpectedly, while Nakamura mom confronted with it as she had fear for this *before*. Courtesy stigma is supposed to be produced by the general population, however, Yoshida mom confronted with it from her husband. When Yoshida mom told her

husband about her son's disclosure, her husband said, "Well it's because he has a strong mother and two older sisters." Asked what he could mean, she said, "He was like, 'Our son is saying [that he is gay] because of you and his energetic two older sisters. It's your fault.'" Suzuki mom was told by her friend's husband that her daughter's non-heterosexuality is her fault. On the one hand, Nakamura mom had fear of Perceived Courtesy Stigma, however, some of her perceptions turned out to be true. Even though her worries about being wiped out or kicked out from her workplace did not happen, the relatives of her husband behaved negatively when her daughter was about to publish her book in which she came out as a lesbian. At that time, their relatives told her daughter, "You are the shame of the Nakamura family." Today, Nakamura mom still interacts with her husband's relatives, yet they have kept silent about her daughter's non-heterosexuality. Her daughter's coming out also influenced Nakamura mom and her siblings. As she put it, "My siblings don't have positive perceptions of my daughter's sexuality." Even though they used to have relatively a good relationship with each other, her siblings started behaving differently; thus, their relationship has changed negatively. Her daughter's publicly coming out also affected the relationships with neighbors. When the newspapers depicted her daughter's coming out and neighbors read it, they stopped communicating and tried to make distance from Nakamura mom. Nakamura mom tried to rebuild the relationship with them by asking to come to lecture meetings about non-heterosexuality. Some of them confessed that they were not sure how to communicate with her after they found out about her daughter's non-heterosexuality. Even her coworkers who were close to Nakamura mom changed their attitude after her daughter's coming out. Some of them even told Nakamura mom that "Homosexuals cannot get married and have their own children. It'll cause a population decline." Moreover, some of her friends did not appreciate her daughter's coming out. Although Nakamura mom tried to rebuild the friendships, some of them refused to listen to what she had to say.

In this study, there were only a few respondents who became targets of Experienced Courtesy Stigma, which does not mean their experiences of courtesy stigma are not real and serious. Yet, this suggests three possibilities: First as a positive reason, their fear of Perceived Public Stigma does not take place all the time even *after* they told it to others. However, it does not mean family members who have the fear of Perceived Courtesy Stigma are protected from being a target of Experienced Courtesy Stigma; second, there are many family members who do not disclose to others, hence, it is impossible for them to experience courtesy stigma in the first place; and third, even if they decided to disclose it, many of my respondents rather carefully chose to whom they disclosed. It means they chose people who would not cause them to face Experienced Courtesy Stigma; thus, they rather avoided negative consequences. Because Nakamura mom did not really have a choice of being out, she was unable to choose people in order to avoid Experienced Courtesy Stigma.

5.4.2. "Perceived courtesy stigma": Caring about whether non-heterosexual members and themselves become targets of stigma in the seken *they belong to*

As mentioned in Chapter 4, gaining knowledge about non-heterosexuality and how a member has suffered made respondents recognize that heteronormativity and homophobia were widespread. This made them conscious about the unequal treatment and prejudice non-heterosexual members and themselves would face. Many of my respondents expressed their fear *before* telling others or before others found out about non-heterosexual members because they perceived the non-heterosexual members as well as themselves would be treated negatively when others discovered the facts. In this section, family members' narratives on their worries for a non-heterosexual member to be a target of stigma [vicarious stigma] will be introduced first. Then, their narratives on the fear for themselves to be a target of courtesy stigma [public stigma] will be further examined.

When Yamamoto mom heard her daughter's bisexuality, she felt that "I didn't have much of a problem with whom my daughter dates. But I felt sad my daughter could confront prejudice when she openly says her sexuality to society." Morita dad had been to pride parades twice and walked the sidewalk and listened to what people talked about while watching the parade. He explained, "I could hear what people in *seken* said when I was walking apart from the parade, you know. They were like what I used to think of non-heterosexuality, such as, 'They're disgusting.' I guess it cannot be helped how *seken* perceives for now… They wouldn't be disgusted if they found out their kids were actually a member of sexual minorities." Here, Morita dad used the word *seken* many times, however, it rather referred to "society" because he was talking about people who would less possibilities having connections with him and his daughter. Here, Yamamoto mom and Morita dad were worried about how anonymous people would judge their children.

One common narrative among respondents was the concerns about the future of non-heterosexual members. When asked what worries Itou, she answered it was her cousin's future, in which she wants to become a teacher. Itou said, "I worried about how workplace would treat her. I thought being a student would be easier than the workplace… My cousin was saying she's going to come out at job interviews. I wondered if it wouldn't risk her getting a job. I also worried how other teachers and parents would think of her… I thought it would negatively affect her getting a job." Even though Suzuki mom did not show this concern when interviewed, Itou and Suzuki sis have heard from Suzuki mom that she was also worried about her non-heterosexual child facing difficulties getting a job due to non-heterosexuality. Miyazato o-sis also tries not to tell about her non-heterosexual sister at her hometown even though she wants to tell as she put it, "My hometown is small. I wonder if my sister would be uncomfortable with me talking about it in her hometown where she actually lives and works." Similar to their concerns, Higa mom also expressed worries about her son who wants to become a teacher. She

was against her son trying to be out of the closet and looking a job. As she put it, "I told my son that he would be at a disadvantage in getting a job if he comes out [at job interviews]. I think practically. I don't think it's a good idea for him to be open about his sexuality… I think his openness would put him at risk." Her anxiety increased when her son was able to pass the first certificate examination for teachers but not the second. Higa mom doubted that her son failed the second examination because of his sexual orientation. Although Itou did not necessarily oppose her cousin being out while searching for a job unlike, Higa mom, both were anxious about non-heterosexual members being treated unequally when their sexual orientation was unveiled. Kiyohara mom said she is relieved because her daughter wants to pursue an academic career, which Kiyohara mom thinks less homophobic than companies.

A common narrative among siblings was how no protections for non-heterosexuals would affect the lives of their siblings. Miyazato o-sis said, "My concern is that she wouldn't be able to get married legally with her girlfriend. It was said when the 3.11 earth quake happened that if something happened to your partner, you are not going to be the first person to get contacted because they don't belong to the same *koseki* [a family registry], which is sad. People wouldn't acknowledge them as a family even though they are the closest to each other." This is why she has recommended to her non-heterosexual sister to make a family of own. She thinks her sister is a FTM transgender, though she would not mind if her sister was a lesbian. Miyazato o-sis said, "I'm telling to my sister to ask her girlfriend to bear children." Aragaki bro also had a similar narratives. He explained, "I feel sad for my sister that she cannot get married legally in Japan so far. So it means they cannot have children. I feel especially sad to think about my sister's golden years where no one takes care of her." However, he continued, "But if my sister and her girlfriend decided to be together for the rest of their lives, I think they should adopt children and raise them together." Among siblings, Aragaki sis did not express it like Aragaki bro did. When asked if she is concerned about her sister, she answered, "I think

society is awful because there are no protections for lesbians or same-sex couples. But I don't worry about my sister because you can live even if you are poor." Aragaki sis was even optimistic about her non-heterosexual sister maybe because she and her sister have had discussions about how the marriage system is controversial, which made her change the perception on marriage. She said, "I didn't know the marriage system is bogus because only heterosexuals are protected. I used to believe marrying meant to achieve happiness, but I don't think it anymore." The conversation with her non-heterosexual sister made Aragaki sis not to conscious about her sister who cannot legally get married in Japan.

Even though there was not much difference in parents' and siblings' narratives concerning non-heterosexual members being a target of stigma [vicarious stigma], parents were more likely than siblings to take it personally or seriously. Thus, some siblings seemed to be even optimistic about their non-heterosexual siblings and cousin's situation, even though they acknowledged vicarious stigma. When asked if Suzuki sis had any difficulties "understanding" her sister, she answered, "Not really. I guess I don't think about it as deeply as my mom does… One day, my mom said she was worried about my [non-heterosexual] sister would be at a disadvantage when she starts working. This made me concerned a little bit, but I told my sister that I'll help her in any ways and be on her side. I didn't think so much about what I will do for her unless she asked me to do so." Yoshida sis started being worried about her brother when he told her about his experiences and concerns. Her brother confessed that he was bullied at junior high school so Yoshida sis was concerned about if her brother was also bullied at a high-school when he disclosed. Also, her brother told her that he has to die alone and it made her think, "He thinks that because same-sex marriage is not accepted in Japan. But I was going to tell him that 'I'll accept you as a sister.' I strongly believed and still believe that I'll be always on his side because he is my brother no matter what… I've always been ready for him to support and encourage when he is down... I don't want my brother to struggle over prejudice, so I've

thought, 'It'll be alright [because I'll be always by your side].'" Aragaki bro said that he is worried about the relationships between his sister and her friends when they found out his sister's non-heterosexuality. His non-heterosexual sister is openly involved with activities at their hometown; thus, even if she does not disclose her sexuality to her friends or their families directly, people would find out in some way. He said, "My sister has a lot of friends but I wonder if these friends would say something behind her back [when they found out about her non-heterosexuality]." Miyazato y-sis also said that she is hesitant to talk about her non-heterosexual sister to friends because she is afraid of her friends would think of her sister "disgusting."

While some family members expressed worries about non-heterosexual members becoming targets of discrimination [vicarious stigma], many of them also expressed fear that they might be targets of stigma when others found out that they are the family of a non-heterosexual member [public stigma]. Mothers, who self-blamed for bearing and raising non-heterosexual children mentioned in Chapter 4, were afraid of the possibilities of being blamed by others. Nakamura mom was afraid of being pointed out as "the mother of a non-heterosexual child." Katou mom blamed herself for her son's non-heterosexuality. She explained that reason why she does not want to tell her son's same-sex marriage to her parents is because she thinks her parents would blame her. There was one narrative that was specific to siblings. While siblings referred to public stigma as being misunderstood that they are also a non-heterosexual. Yoshida sis said she feels strong responsibility for correcting someone who said something homophobic. However at the same time, she would be anxious about doing so because she is "afraid of something might happen to her." Asked if she ever worried about being mistaken for a non-heterosexual, she said "Yes, maybe that's it."

There were common narratives expressing fears of worsening relationships with people

they know. They believed that they would also be targets of discrimination when their relatives, friends, neighbors and coworkers found out about the fact that one of the member was a non-heterosexual. Nakamura mom was afraid that her relationships with neighbors and coworkers would be negatively affected and, in fact, she faced negative consequences after all. However, she explained what she was thinking *before* she was found out that "I imagined that I would be wiped out. Maybe not wiped out but I was scared that my neighbors would start ignoring me. I also thought I'll be kicked out of my workplace. I was just so scared." Miyazato y-sis, who was a student when interviewed, expressed concern about her work environment if coworkers knew about her sister's non-heterosexuality. "I wonder if my sister's non-heterosexuality would affect my work condition when I start working." Aragaki sis clearly expressed her fear of telling about her sister to certain others because she is afraid of being a target of discrimination, public stigma. When asked how she felt when she knew her sister's non-heterosexuality, she said she was worried about telling others about her sister. Asked what it means, she said, "I used to joke around like saying *homo* [fag] or *lez* [dyke] to let people down… That's why I might have worried that someone would also let me down like I have done to people with jokes." Although she gained knowledge and realized that "non-heterosexuals are *futsuu* [normal or ordinary]," she still has difficulties disclosing it to certain people. She believes telling about her sister to others will benefit non-heterosexuals in general and she wants to contribute as well. However, when asked to whom she feel difficulties telling about her sister, she answered "At my workplace. It is actually where I used to work [because I quit for maternal leave]. We had a coworker who was a MTF transgender in a different department from where I used to work. At that time, my coworkers made fun of her. Although I didn't tell them that my sister is a lesbian, I just pointed out that 'it's not really a big deal.' But they made a weird face and looked at me strangely." Asked what made her afraid of telling about her sister at the workplace, she answered, "I'm afraid of being perceived as different from everyone else. I guess to me, I am

afraid of other people looking at me with prejudice." Asked why she thinks she would be looked with prejudice since she is a married heterosexual person, she answered "I guess I was afraid of being a target of discrimination… I might have worried about being a target of discrimination because I have a homosexual sibling." Aragaki bro, who admitted that he does not fully "understand" and is still bit confused with his non-heterosexual sister but "accepted" her, explained why he feels confused and said, "I guess I'm worried about how others perceive. I talk about my family to my wife and friends. When my friends and I have conversations about blue jokes or something relates to my family members, I'm hesitant to disclose about my sister." Asked whether he is worried about how others perceive him or his sister, he answered, "I guess it's both… My sister is actively involved with social activities [on behalf of sexual minorities] and I wonder if her friends know about it and talk about it behind her back… Plus I may have a feeling that I don't want to tell my friends that my sister is a homosexual."

One obvious reason why family members fear Perceived Courtesy Stigma is because non-heterosexuals are stigmatized in both society and *seken*. However more importantly in the context of Japan, Perceived Courtesy Stigma is the powerful obstacles for family members because they live in *seken* where being different is not appreciated. Therefore, family members need to negotiate with others both *before* and *after* others found out a member is a non-heterosexual.

5.4.3. To avoid disharmonizing seken or spoiling the air

One possible reason why respondents were more hesitant to discuss about a non-heterosexual member with someone they know can be because they did not want to shock others. Higa mom told me a reason why she was hesitant to tell her sister about her son, "I thought it would shock people who have known my son since he was a child more [than

strangers]." Katou mom also expressed concern about shocking her family, friends and coworkers if she disclosed about her non-heterosexual son. Katou mom said she feels difficulty when she has confronted with the situations where people ask her about her son, who married another man and is a coordinator of an organization specializing in sexual minorities. Asked why, she answered "I think they would be surprised if they knew there was such a person [a non-heterosexual] so close to them. I think they would feel shock if I'm the parent of such a person [a non-heterosexual]." Even though Katou mom desires to tell others about her son for his sake and his efforts for activities, she still hesitates because she does not want to shock them. She also continued that it would be much easier for her to talk about it if they reacted by saying, "I see" and treated as if it is *futsuu* [normal or ordinary]. Higa mom and Katou mom' narratives suggest that they do not want to shock people because it means to break the harmony of *seken*. Breaking harmony is considered negative and they know subconsciously in their hearts that disharmonizing could lead exclusions.

Relating to breaking the harmony of *seken*, some respondents were afraid of ruining an "*air*," or spoiling the atmosphere. As Koukami (2006) points out because younger people are more likely to deal with *air*, only siblings expressed a dilemma about either maintaining or spoiling the *air*. Yoshida sis feels it is extremely difficult to correct coworkers and business partners at drinking sessions when they behaved homophobicly. "I'm scared to correct that person in front of everyone… I don't want everyone to think I'm the only one becoming so serious at drinking sessions where everyone is pretty much drunk. I'm afraid that people would think, 'Why are you so serious and trying to provoke us to a quarrel.' At that time I cannot correct them even though I want to." Her narrative implies that she has a dilemma because she thinks becoming a serious at drinking sessions is inappropriate behavior. When I asked if Aragaki bro had ever heard "gay jokes," he answered he has. "I don't think deeply about it but it's like playing with words… When we said the words like homo or les, we don't mean it. We

play at saying, 'You are *homo* [fag] aren't you?' or 'I'm actually *homo* [fag].' In fact, when I went to a cabaret club with my boss, I told girls that 'I'm gay.' Why am I lying? Because it's something fun though it would be rude." Thus, I asked whether making "gay jokes" while he knows about her sister's sexuality put him in a gloomy mood, he said, "Yes, it does make me gloomy. Whenever I heard and saw people who made fun of these people [sexual minorities], it reminded me of my sister's face. It reminds me that my sister likes people of the same-sex. I can picture my sister's face whenever listening to words like homo or les. But how I deal with these is to just let it go… And I feel guilty but I won't deny these people who just joke around. As long as they just make funny stories, I think it's wrong for me to correct them saying 'you shouldn't make fun of them because it hurts them.' I rather think it's sometimes necessary as long as we are just having fun." His narrative could be seen as offensive and cruel no matter how he insisted that he respects her non-heterosexual sister because "gay jokes" is an unacceptable behavior that reproduces homophobia.

However, the point here is that their narratives exemplify what many Japanese are expected to do. Yoshida sis was afraid of being the only person to be serious at drinking parties where having fun was primary expected behavior because becoming serious at this atmosphere meant to ruin the *air*. Aragaki bro feels guilty about saying "gay jokes" even though he cannot stop doing it when he is with friends because he is more afraid of ruining the *air* he is in. Ruining the *air* in Japan means exclusion from the group. Thus, one prioritizes the *air* when people make "gay jokes." One laughs rather than standing up and saying, "It is homophobia," or "Gay jokes are not acceptable." Although parents and siblings dealt with different but similar things, *seken* and *air*, it was common among all of them that their behavior was ruled by the eyes of people they have connections with and the expectation of reading the *air*. In addition, they were afraid of disharmonizing because it would cause them and non-heterosexual members to be excluded.

5.5. OK in Public, but Not in Seken

As previous researchers have pointed out (LaSala 2010, Sanbe 2014), it seems right for my respondents that they became "conscious" about courtesy stigma. However, from the narratives on how respondents had fear of Perceived Courtesy Stigma, it can be pointed out that family members were afraid of courtesy stigma not simply because of stigmatization against non-heterosexual, but because courtesy stigma and *seken* are very much interconnected to each other. Their consciousness about being a target of courtesy stigma was reinforced by their values of caring about others' feelings to preserve harmony in *seken*.

Nakamura mom kept silent about her daughter's disclosure for two years during which they talked about other things. Her daughter was involved with political activities and she decided to come out publicly. At that time, it was something Nakamura mom wanted to avoid the most. I asked how she felt when she heard about her daughter's decision, she said, "I thought homosexuality was something strange. I was even afraid of studying about it." I asked to what she was afraid of, she answered, "I guess the reputation of *seken*. I only had negative images about non-heterosexuality so I was afraid it would be pointed out that 'she is the mother of a non-heterosexual child.'… I worried about myself but not my daughter. I was just terrified for *seken* to know about my daughter." Nakamura mom used *seken* to refer to people she is related to, such as her neighbors, coworkers and friends. She was concerned about people's judgement the most and this suggested that she prioritized her connection to these people, or *seken* over her daughter's identity. Aragaki dad had similar narratives. He is not afraid of being blamed for raising a non-heterosexual daughter but he clearly said he is worried about "*sekentei* [the imagined *seken*, the reputation of *seken* or the eyes of *seken*]" when people knew about his daughter's sexuality. His daughter writes articles in local newspapers and mentioned her non-heterosexuality. When asked how he feels about the possibility that people would read the

articles and found out his daughter's sexuality, he said "I guess I have no choice if people found out about it." I asked if he has desires of not being found out, he answered, "I don't tell others because of *sekentei*." I asked what he meant by *sekentei*, he said "I don't want to be pointed out and called, 'The father of lez.'" He also told me that he might have a feeling of shame. However, he also had mixed feelings. He was ashamed of his daughter's non-heterosexuality on one hand, but he was also proud of his daughter being involved with activities and writing articles in order to change social atmosphere for sexual minorities on the other hand. This was why he said, "I won't hide about my daughter as long as I don't have to tell it to others because it's her life." Aragaki dad's mixed feelings suggest two things: 1) family members do not care about a non-heterosexual member's visibility unless they are not the one who tells about a member's non-heterosexuality and 2) they care less about random people in society knowing about non-heterosexual members, but care more about their connections with other people, or *seken*.

The second point appeared in a different respondent. Higa mom exactly insisted that she rather prefers talking about her gay son to anonymous others but not someone she knows well. Asked if she ever told about it to her family of origin, she answered that she did on the phone to her own sister living in another city. She explained she was hesitant before telling it to her sister. Her sister noticed something was going on with Higa mom so asked what it was, however, Higa mom could not make up her mind to tell. Asked why it was difficult, she answered, "Because she is an aunt who knows my son well. I guess it's easier with some strangers. I think if it's someone who barely knows my son in the first place, it would be easier for them to accept"; thus, easier for her to disclose. Some of the parents, who participated in Families of LGBT, joined pride parades and walked with their banner. Participants of pride parades usually march the main streets of their cities and random people would notice especially when more than 300 hundreds of people march with unique costumes and loud music.

Thus, attending a parade with their banner or messages means they are "coming out" of the closet as the parents of LGBT children. Yet, many of them do not "come out" to someone they know or *seken* they belong to. This story also exemplifies that family members would be less concerned about "coming out" to larger society, which anonymous and random people live, while they are more concerned about "coming out" in front of people they can relate to.

The narratives above suggest that respondents expressed their fear for of becoming a direct target of courtesy stigma [public stigma] only when they talked about the consequences caused by someone they know and will know, such as their neighbors, friends and coworkers; thus, *seken.* They did not necessarily express their fears of becoming targeted by anonymous others; thus, society. This implies that negotiating with someone family members relate to is more important for them in order to maintain harmony and stay connected with their people [*seken*]; thus, *seken* enlarges fear of Perceived Courtesy Stigma because being out in *seken* may lead exclusion from others they are related. This is why their fear is not consolidated and visible but still powerful for some reason.

Figure 3 visualizes the relationships between courtesy stigma and family members, as well as how *seken* takes a role in this relationship. As Figure 3 shows, courtesy stigma takes place both in *seken* and society in Japan. This is why family members picture people's face when talking about the eyes of *seken* or being scared to tell it to others while they do not necessarily picture people's face in society in Japan. Thus, the coming out area for family members is limited to society. *Seken* therefore becomes a blank zone where they avoid "coming out." People who belong to their *seken* are interchangeable, however, as most of the respondents explained, they fear people they know [*seken*] find out about non-heterosexual members but not random people [society]. Because relationships with others are one of the most important concerns for Japanese, they have to negotiate with others situationally in order

to preserve these relationships. Because of that, family members become careful *before* they

disclose non-heterosexuals [Perceived Courtesy Stigma], and this causes them to be unable to

come out in *seken*. Yet, some family members develop a *seken* zone as they disclose to relatives,

friends and neighbors. However, many people still do not disclose to *seken* they belong to.
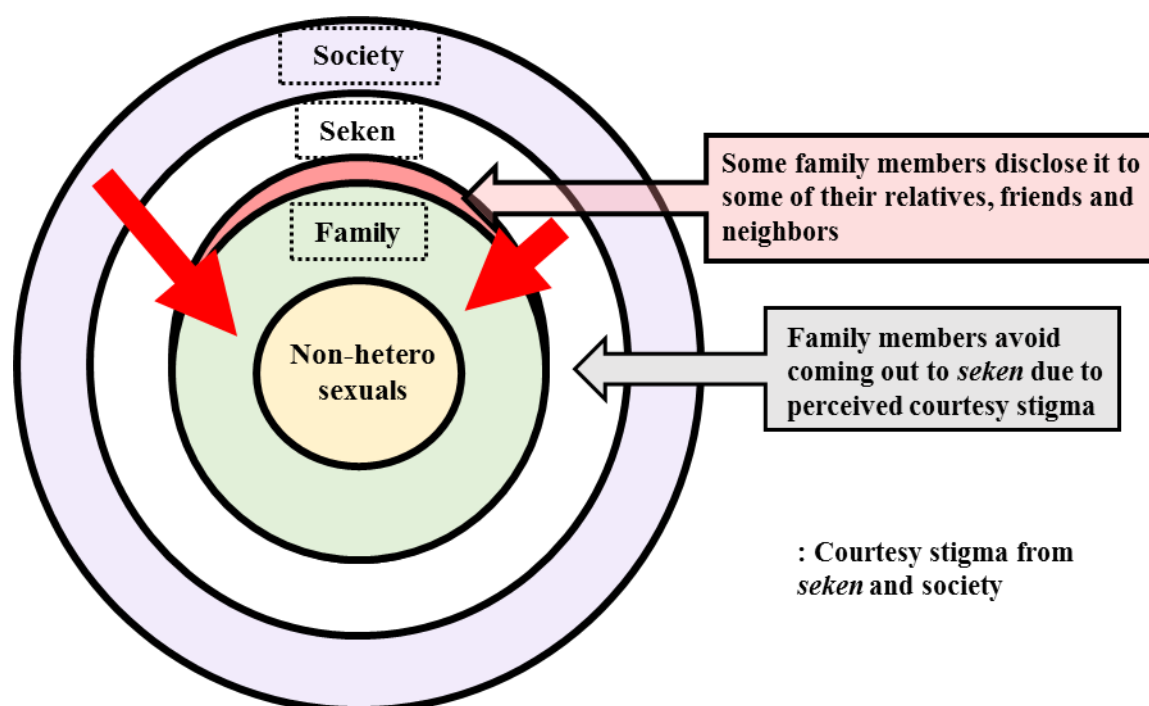

Figure 3. The Role of *Seken* in Relationships between Courtesy Stigma and Family Members

In summation, there are two important points here. First, courtesy stigma exists in two

different level in Japan, society and *seken*, and courtesy stigma in *seken* is more threatening

than the one in society because they care about their actual human connections. This also

suggests that family members in Japan need to negotiate with Perceived Courtesy Stigma in

order to avoid Experienced Courtesy Stigma. They need to find a way to preserve harmony in

seken to avoid exclusion [Experience Courtesy Stigma], while disclosing something that might

break that harmony. Yet, if *seken* is so important for Japanese, "coming out" in *seken* could be

the most effective way to make a non-heterosexual-friendly environment. Second, they used

"*futsuu* strategy" when they negotiated with others about non-heterosexual members. "*Futsuu*

strategy" is a technique family members used when they emphasized ordinariness of non-heterosexual members in order to "accept" them. They also used this strategy when they negotiated with Perceived Courtesy Stigma to avoid Experienced Courtesy Stigma. Hence, they used this strategy when they made decisions whether or not they should disclose about non-heterosexual members to others. Family members emphasized ordinariness of non-heterosexuality because being *futsuu* in Japan means to be included in *seken*. This is a way to gain protection.

CHAPTER 6. RETHINKING OF THE EXPERIENCES OF NON-HETEROSEXUALS

AND THEIR FAMILIES: INTENTIONAL MOTHERS' ROLES IN CREATING THE

"FAMILIES WITH NON-HETEROSEXUAL MEMBERS"

In Chapter 5, it was shown that those who thought "accepted" non-heterosexual members also faced difficulties when they actually disclosed it to others due to courtesy stigma. It was demonstrated that courtesy stigma existed in two different levels, *seken* and society, hence, their experiences became complex in Japanese context. While family members were more hesitant to be found out by people in *seken* or people they know, they were less hesitant to be found out by larger society. Because of that, family members used "*futsuu* strategy" to negotiate with the norms of *seken* in order to avoid becoming a target of courtesy stigma. Even though family members insisted that they "accepted" non-heterosexual members [Chapters 4 and 5], they needed to use *futsuu* strategy. What do family members try to prove by insisting that non-heterosexual members are *futsuu*? And did families change after those members experienced coming out events?

Therefore, this chapter will explore how families of non-heterosexuals changed their style by closely looking at mothers and their roles. Hence, the first part of this chapter will discuss what it means for families to be *futsuu*. The latter part of this chapter will demonstrate how the formation of families has changed after the coming out event. To examine families' experiences from the perspective of mothers and their roles will help underline how families of non-heterosexual members preserve their "family."

6.1. Meanings of being Futsuu *[Normal] for Families: Changes in Family*

As introduced in Chapter 4, most family members were surprised at the fact that one of their members was non-heterosexual. One of the reasons why family members, especially

parents, were surprised and even reacted negatively was because they strongly shared the idea of what family has to look like, which consisted of a heterosexual couple with their own children. In other words, their shared norm of what *futsuu* [normal or ordinary] family looks like, *futsuu* values that are threatened by children's coming out. There could be two different but relational reasons why parents perceived their norm was questioned. First, children's coming out made parents realize that a not *futsuu* child was born from *futsuu* parents. This was why mothers especially blamed themselves for rearing and raising not *futsuu* children. Second, this realization made them reconsider their former family. In this respect, it is understandable why mothers of lesbian daughters thought their family would "break apart" and lesbian daughter's presence would cause "family collapse." Therefore, children's coming out had huge impacts on family members and the family system, which are why coming out to their family is considered to cause "family crisis." (Savin-Williams and Dubé 1998, Williamson 1998)

However, as seen, family members strived to "understand" their non-heterosexual members, because they believed it was what family is supposed to do. Their common mindset suggests that they value intimacy and love within a family. "Love" can be categorized into two type: 1) Love as communication; and 2) Love as a role to perpetuate norms (Yamada 1994: 98). The first one is an emotion experienced through interaction with others while the second one is labeled as "love" only when one sacrifices, forgives and understands other family members; thus, these behaviors prove that there is "love" among a family (Yamada 1994). Here, what family members emphasized refers to the second type. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that parents were more likely than siblings to emphasize their responsibility due to parenthood. This was somewhat presumable because the centrality of children is a common feature of family and child-parent relationships are highly valued and prioritized among Japanese families.

As family members went through "understanding" processes, they gained information

about non-heterosexuality and realized heteronormativity and homophobia were shared within their family. The more they were "understanding" and "accepting" of the presence of non-heterosexual members, the more the presence of a non-heterosexual member has become *futsuu* for family members. By the time family members "understood" and "accepted" non-heterosexual members, their *futsuu* values were modified in several ways. First, especially mothers, began questioning their *futsuu* value in which their roles and gender division of labor were naturalized within their family. Second, how they perceive what "family" is also changed.

6.1.1. Relativizing unequal relationships with husbands and mothers' empowerment

For the first point, mothers began to notice gender norms and gender inequality hidden within the family they "strived to create." Suzuki mom explained same-sex couples could be an "ideal" relationship. Suzuki mom and other family members have met her daughter's partner and non-heterosexual friends; thus asked how she felt when she first met non-heterosexuals other than her daughter. She explained that she realized how her relationship with her husband was patriarchal as she put it, "I've been feeling that women are inferior to men. I've subconsciously thought I have to take care of a man because he earns money. Like to my *shujin* [literally means a master, but refers to a husband], I've tried to take good care of my *shujin* and prioritized him above myself… I realized the reality [that I have been putting him at the center] when I looked at my daughter and her girlfriend. I envy their relationship in which there are no particular roles, like woman has to cook, because they are both women. I can't ask my *shujin* [to cook or do housework] even if I have fever." As she added, even though she has never been forced to do housework by her husband, her daughter and girlfriend's relationship made her realize that she somehow believed in gender division of labor and which was "stressful."

Suzuki mom's narrative suggests that Suzuki mom and her husband have created the

relationship in which husband "does his best at work" while she "committed to support him" as a wife. However, after her daughter's disclosure and looking at her daughter and her partner's relationship, she relativized the relationship with her husband and realized it was not as fair as her daughter's same-sex relationship. This is a part of reason why Suzuki mom expressed that same-sex couples as an "ideal" because it questioned and challenged the relationship with her husband. Her thought is understandable because non-heterosexual relationships do not assume fixed roles and are not based on gender division of labor like heterosexual relationships (Muta 2006). Within same-sex relationships, they do not necessarily play typical gender roles, such as men work and women stay at home (Jamieson 2002). Thus, same-sex couples, especially lesbian couples, have more equal divisions of labor as well as equal relationships (Giddens 1992, Kurdek 1993, Weston 1991). In this sense, same-sex relationships are closer to what Giddens (1992) calls as a "pure relationship" or "disclosing intimacy" as Jamieson (2002) calls. According to Giddens (1992: 58), a "pure relationship" is centered on commitment and it refers to "a situation where a social relation is entered into far its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it." He argues that this form of relationship involves greater equality between men and women and it can be achievable among same-sex relationships. While his argument can be an optimistic view on same-sex relationships as Jamieson (2002) criticizes, Suzuki mom perceived their children's same-sex relationship as more equal than hers.

While she realized the unequal parts of her relationships with her husband, in which she questioned traditional gender roles, she also emphasized mother' role for empowerment. She expressed strong pride in her ability to overcome issues that occurred after her daughter's disclosure by actively taking an "adjustment role" to maintain her family. When asked if she

has discussed her daughter being a non-heterosexual, she said she only talks with her own sister, Itou, and Itou's husband, but not with her husband, even though everyone in her family including her husband knows about her daughter's sexuality. Asked why, she answered, "All my husband's thinking about is his job and he gives me full authority over the household, children and relatives… I have wanted him to do his best at work and I have committed to support him… We haven't really talked about children and even my inner feelings, so I don't talk about my daughter's non-heterosexuality with my husband… But when I was with Itou and my [non-heterosexual] daughter, I talk about it all the time. We stop talking when my husband comes… I feel sorry for my *shujin* because he wouldn't be able to catch up what we are talking about so he would be left out." Her narrative implies that she can prove to herself and her husband that what she has been doing as a wife and a mother are as important as what her husband has contributed. Even though her pride in an adjustment role could reinforce gender division of labor, it also empowers her to stand equally to her husband. This was why she used "*otto* [husband]," more neutral term, instead of *shujin* when she had self-empowerment where she has pride in and she stands equally to her husband. Yet, it is worth pointing out that she still cannot stop what she has been doing as a mother and wife.

Yoshida mom confirmed what she had wondered when she read the statement saying "sexuality is diverse." When her son disclosed his sexuality, he handed out rolled up papers about the information, such as how non-heterosexuals are discriminated against all over the world. When she saw these papers, she recalled she was raised with statements like, "Hey, man up!" or "Behave more like a woman." She said, "I was often told by my mom to behave like a woman, but I didn't like that. That's why I was satisfied with the statement 'sexuality is diverse' and even felt it was what I've believed in." Her experience was quite different from Suzuki mom's, however, both narratives imply that they started questioning what they had to believe as women within patriarchal society and family, and this experience somewhat empowered

these mothers.

6.2. Becoming the "Families with Non-heterosexual Members"

As introduced in Chapter 4, not only mothers but also many family members have changed their perceptions on non-heterosexual members. This was somewhat influential on them to perceive what "family" is. Many respondents including family members who are having difficulties "accepting" non-heterosexuality said that they are proud of their non-heterosexual members for being involved with activities and social movements while they also have fear for courtesy stigma (Aragaki bro, Aragaki dad, Aragaki mom, Higa mom, Katou mom, Nakamura mom, Suzuki mom, Suzuki grandparents, Yamamoto mom). It means that they are proud of their non-heterosexual members in spite of a possibility of being found out by others. It seems their behavior are contradicted. However, their logic is that contributing to society is a respectable behavior regardless of sexuality; thus, this behavior shows others a *futsuu* [normal or ordinary] part of their non-heterosexual members. This suggests that proving non-heterosexual members are *futsuu* is more important for family members than being perceived as there is not a *futsuu* member in a family; thus, not a *futsuu* family.

Mothers of lesbian daughters especially strived to prove that their non-heterosexual children are *futsuu* and there are reasons for this. They had to do it. To answer why these mothers needed to prove their non-heterosexual children are *futsuu*, let us go back to how those who thought daughter's coming out causes "family collapse" maintained their family. Both Nakamura mom and Suzuki mom felt having non-heterosexual daughters would cause "family collapse." As analyzed in Chapter 4, they thought their identity as mothers as well as their reason for existence would be threatened if they needed to admit raising non-heterosexual children who are considered as not *futsuu*. This was why Suzuki mom stopped her daughter

from disclosing at a high-school reunion because Suzuki mom believed it "would trouble" her. She was afraid of rumors, in which her neighbors or *seken* would know her daughter's non-heterosexuality before other family members. Nakamura mom was also afraid of people in *seken* knowing about her daughter's non-heterosexuality because she believed it would cause her and her family members to be "isolated from *seken*." Nakamura mom explained that isolation from *seken* means to be excluded from the workplace, neighbors and her friends. In order for them to avoid family collapse, which means to regain their identity and the purpose of existence as mothers, they actively took "adjustment roles" as mothers' responsibility to confront and "understand" their children. The more they emphasized their roles as mothers, the more they were able to rid of their fear of "family collapse." With all the helps, such as encouragement from friends or support groups, gaining information about non-heterosexuality and meeting with the partners of their children, they changed their negative perceptions on non-heterosexuality. It also helped them know that they were not to be blamed for raising a non-heterosexual child. Moreover, they gained the idea that their non-heterosexual daughters could also make a family and become "happy," which gave them new hopes and dreams for their children. All these processes helped them be satisfied with their child-raising and regain their identity as mothers.

When these mothers acknowledged that they could avoid "family collapse" by emphasizing their roles as mothers, the next thing they tried to do was to maintain their family by regaining the social implication of their children, who could be stigmatized as "deviant" or not *futsuu*. Suzuki mom told me a story about being asked by several teenagers at a pride parade if she ever felt sad that her daughter would not bear children. She answered to these teenagers, "My daughter will be a teacher. I hope for my daughter to treat her kids like her real kids. She can give her love to these kids instead. I don't obsess over my daughter having children." Nakamura mom also told me about how she changed her dream for her daughter. "I've given

up a dream in which my daughter gets married and lives with my grandchildren. I now believe that my daughter was born as a non-heterosexual to disseminate the equality and justice for sexual minorities to the world. If so, I believe in my daughter to do whatever she can do."

Both mothers assumed that their children would not bear children, however, they showed their support as long as their children could serve society. Their behavior might be seen manipulative because they still have high expectations for their children. It was especially true of making sure their children would be *futsuu*, useful people for society, because this helps mothers reassure their achievement of raising "normal [*futsuu*]" children as well as regain their identity as mothers. These mothers strived for maintaining their family because they wanted to prove that their families are as "happy" as ones without non-heterosexuals. In most *seken*, *futsuu* family is looked up to as the "happiest" family people can possibly achieve which consists of married heterosexual couples with few kids and there are no problems within it, therefore the "ideal family style." Hence, having a child with "problems" would give an impression that they are not "normal" family; thus, an "unhappy" family. This is why these mothers showed their "understanding" to their non-heterosexual children. It is a way to reconstruct harmony among their family and prove to others that they are still a "happy" family. This fear of being perceived as an "unhappy" family by *seken* is one of the courtesy stigmas they have to confront.

Besides these two mothers, other family members began to treat non-heterosexual members as *futsuu* and included in their family and this new family also became *futsuu* for many of them as mentioned in the previous chapters. New family refers to when they began to reconstruct their family including non-heterosexual members and redefining their family as *futsuu*. Importantly, it does not necessarily mean that family members identify themselves in ways that previous researchers pointed out: family members establish their identity as "parents

of LGB child" (Griffin et al. 1996, Sanbe 2014) and identify "the benefits of having a lesbian or gay child" (LaSala 2010) by "accepting" non-heterosexual members. While they consider themselves to be *futsuu* with the inclusion of non-heterosexual members, they do not necessarily have to identify as such even though many of them recognize one of their members is a non-heterosexual. However, what family members are doing is considered regenerating their families making "families with non-heterosexual members."

"The families with non-heterosexual members" do not only refer to a family in which one of a members is non-heterosexual but also the family which has a potential to work beneficially for non-heterosexuals through "accepting" them. Some parents began to consider their children's partners as their child as well. In this sense, parents count their "family" including members of their family of procreation and even child's same-sex partners. It is beneficial for non-heterosexuals since parents' supports are one important resource for them in Japan, where no protections for non-heterosexuals are secured (Kamano and Khor 2008, Sanbe 2014). Moreover, they have changed their values and perceptions both inside and outside of a family. This helped them regenerate their families to become "families with non-heterosexual members." Through their behavior, they represent the family in fighting against courtesy stigma. As seen in Chapter 5, many of family members remained closeted. They just "disclosed" the presence of non-heterosexuals to few select others. However, attending support groups, motivating themselves for enlightenment activities and even portraying non-heterosexual members as *futsuu* are behaviors, which make it possible to become "the families with non-heterosexual members." Therefore, family members who tried to take any action on behalf of non-heterosexual members have possibilities to create this style of family, which challenges "ideal family style," as well as the heteronormativity and homophobia that are also reproduced in its family. Yet, it is important to note here that not all families can become the "families with non-heterosexual members" and it is still very challenging and difficult to achieve for many

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families in Japan.

6.3. Revolutionary Mothers' Roles and Their Unintended Consequences

Nevertheless, treating "families with non-heterosexual members" as the "happy family" remains problematic when looking at who played a role in creating this style of family. Mothers played a crucial role in regenerating this family. Throughout the paper, mothers were actively taking roles, and their roles can be categorized into two: revolutionary and traditional functions. A revolutionary function refers to mother's roles which functioned to benefit a non-heterosexual child. A traditional function means conservative mother's roles which reinforced the features of *futsuu* family or "ideal family style." The latter refers to dominant or manipulative mothers. The mothers, especially who thought children's disclosure would cause "family collapse," are considered to be dominant because they were afraid of being a threat to their existence and identity as mothers by believing they lost control over their children. Moreover, these mothers who overemphasized their mother roles seem to be helping reproduce gender division of labor, which is expected in a traditional family, as well as maintaining "ideal family style" or traditional families. However, the reason why these mothers strived and even sacrificed themselves to protect their family was the result of how mothers are treated by society and expectations in family life.

In Japan where the mother-child relationships are naturalized and emphasized, women are given a presence of existence only through "getting positive evaluation in child-rearing while they have to be responsible for negative evaluation in raising a child." (Tama 2001: v) In this sense, mothers "need children with a high valuation for *seken* to prove that they are good mothers; thus, they strongly believe in manipulating their children." (Nobuta 2011: 160) This could be particularly strong in the Japanese context because of the presence of *seken* (Sato

2013). Both non-heterosexuals and their families in this study cared about what other people perceiving and judging them because their identity and presence are highly dependent on human relationships: *seken* in Japan. When the mother-child relationships are naturalized and valued, which mothers also take for granted in Japan, its norms gets stronger with the characteristics of *seken*. Therefore, mothers of non-heterosexual children blamed themselves for raising a not *futsuu* child and were also blamed by *seken* for raising a not *futsuu* child. Thus, this dilemma forces mothers to prove that they are good mothers to both themselves and *seken* by showing their support, "love" and "understanding" for non-heterosexual children, which are "modernistic motherhood norms." In this way, there are not many choices for mothers, but to take traditional function of mother's roles.

On the other hand, the revolutionary function of roles mothers actively took, unintentionally resulted in benefiting non-heterosexuals children and helped regenerate "the families with non-heterosexual members." It should be clarified that all mothers including mothers of gay sons took an "adjustment role" to some extent whether it was active or not. They took "adjustment roles" when they faced their inner conflicts, went through the process of "understanding" and "accepting" a non-heterosexual child and negotiated it with other family members, relatives, neighbors, friends and others. Their roles worked beneficially for non-heterosexual children. Yet, it also helped lesser family members' shocks and struggles, which indirectly benefited non-heterosexual children as well. Many mothers took the role of telling about non-heterosexual children to other family members, and disclosing to grandparents, which was most challenging because older generations are more likely to show negative reactions to non-heterosexuality. Yet, according to mothers who have told their parents about non-heterosexual children and Suzuki grandparents, they showed their support for their grandchildren. It does not mean grandparents fully "understood" what non-heterosexuality means. As Suzuki grandparents put it, "We still hope our granddaughter to become a normal

woman." However, they also emphasized that they "hope for grandchild's happiness the most." (Suzuki grandpa)

This unintentional consequence is as Giddens (1992) points out, that as the characteristics of family are emphasized and reinforced, the formation of family gets fragmented. In this study, the more mothers emphasized their traditional role function within a family, the more family became destabilized. Therefore, by mothers emphasizing their roles, which was to overcome their struggles as well as to avoid inner conflicts among family members, they worked to challenge the traditional family rather than to reproduce it. In this way, emphasizing mother's roles involuntary resulted in recreating "the families with non-heterosexual members" that can challenge "ideal family."

In this study, Nakamura mom and Suzuki mom, who are mothers of lesbian daughters, seemed to be the only mothers who expressed the fear of "family collapse" and actively took an "adjustment role" to maintain their family. This result was related to what mothers expect for their daughters. Mothers tend to expect their daughters more than sons to grow like themselves (Hirakawa 2009), in a way, they would have the "control and controlled" relationship (Kayama 2008). Therefore, as analyzed, daughter's disclosure fragmented their identity and their purpose of existence as a mother because they thought they lost control over their daughters. It can be notable that Aragaki mom, Kiyohara mom, Morita mom and Yamamoto mom were also the mothers of lesbian daughters. They did not express greater initial shock or difficulty "accepting" their children than Nakamura mom and Suzuki mom did. It was not only because daughters of Kiyohara mom and Yamamoto mom came out as a bisexual as well as daughters of Kiyohara mom and Morita mom was having difficulties with their lives. It was partly because how these mothers have constructed their "family" was different from Nakamura mom and Suzuki mom.

Kiyohara mom and Yamamoto mom organized a study group that dealt with sexuality and gender issues. Even though what Yamamoto mom organized did not discuss sexual minorities, they have been interested in gender equality and related issues. Both Kiyohara mom and Yamamoto mom were divorced. Moreover, Yamamoto mom and Aragaki mom have worked; thus, their families were a double-income family. Morita mom has rather different experiences. She is not divorced, is a housewife and has never been to study groups. When her daughter could not go to school, Morita mom and dad decided to send her daughter to Morita mom's cousin's place temporarily. When Morita mom saw the relationship beween her daughter and cousin, she was strongly "jealous" at their "intimacy" because she thought her daughter was expecting her cousin to be a mother. This was why she felt "I was denied as a mother." It took her two years to overcome her jealousy and accept her daughter's "denial." However, through overcoming these feelings, she began to question what "standard happy family is" and also realized she had overemphasized "being a mother." Her daughter's diagnosis of AC reinforced her even more to question family relationships and parent-child relationships. Since then, she has tried to distantance herself from her daughter and untied her daughter, which resulted them having a better relationship. Similar to this, Aragaki mom, Kiyohara mom and Yamamoto mom also expressed the importance of children's autonomy, but in different ways. Yamamoto mom was divorced 10 years ago, however, she had lived with her ex-husband until a year ago when the interview was conducted. They delivered what they promised, to live together until "their children become an independent." Her experiences with ex-husband made her marital view change as she put it, "I don't care if my children marry or not as long as they are happy." When I asked Kiyohara mom whether she has ever shared negative images about non-heterosexuality, she denied it and said, "I don't stick with the family formation. I may be different from others and I guess that was why I was divorced." She said she is different because she does not have "the idea of what family should be or should look

like… I may be just irresponsible because I believe the important thing is what one think is the best." Like Yamamoto mom, Kiyohara mom also used the phrase, "to become independent" when asked about her expectations for her daughter. Aragaki mom also emphasized she "let [her] children do whatever they want."

Their experiences and narratives suggest that their image of "what a family should look like" was different from Suzuki mom and Nakamura mom have imagined. Moreover, they shared less "modernistic motherhood norms" than these two mothers. They might have more equality and respect with their partners than the two mothers. Giddens (1992) might call it a "pure relationship." According to Giddens (1992), unlike the traditional family, in which marriage meant persistent, intimate relationships, today marriage has become easily breakable and [re]makeable; thus, fragile as high divorced rate shows. This might not be appropriate to generalize that mothers except Suzuki mom and Nakamura mom had "pure relationships." Yet, it was clarified that the other mothers have different perspectives on marital, familial and parent-child relationships compared to Nakamura mom and Suzuki mom, which was why they did not express the fear of "family collapse" even though they are also mothers of lesbians.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION: "*FUTSUU* STRATEGY" AND RECALIBRATING

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It has been underlined that families used "*futsuu* strategy" not only when they overcame inner conflicts and tried to "understand" and "accept" non-heterosexual members, in which they eventually modified *futsuu* norms within a family, but also when they disclosed about non-heterosexual members to others. While it worked as a "strategy," this should be critically questioned: Is it relevant to making progress toward creating a less heteronormative and homophobic environment? Do these family members "really" stand up for non-heterosexuals? Is *futsuu* strategy the most helpful way to improve non-heterosexual members' lives?

This paper concludes with the discussion of possibilities for the practice of families of non-heterosexual members for providing a better environment for non-heterosexuals.

7.1. "Futsuu Strategy" and Equality

If we consider equality for non-heterosexuals, the answers for these questions would be "No." Regarding equality for non-heterosexuals, treating non-heterosexuals as *futsuu* or not special is a different argument from what Hilary Clinton stated in her United Nations speech in 2011: "All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights." (Department Of State: The Office of Website Management 2011) This means non-heterosexuals should be equally treated as heterosexuals because "human rights for homosexuals are not special." (Minami 2015: 162) Emphasizing and insisting that non-heterosexuals are *futsuu* and not special does not necessarily mean to insist that non-heterosexuals have equal rights by birth. This argument could convey the message that non-heterosexuals need to be "accepted" to be as *futsuu* as heterosexuals, and which reproduces the hierarchical order between non-heterosexuals and heterosexuals, where non-heterosexuals always ask for "acceptance" from someone "superior"

to them; namely, heterosexuals. Thus, this is completely different story from when non-heterosexuals insist that they are *futsuu* or not special.

Moreover, treating non-heterosexuals as *futsuu* could cause them to be at more risk. Unlike the many other Western countries, Japan does not have any laws to protect non-heterosexuals and their couples. *Futsuu* strategy might help non-heterosexuals to live comfortably in a social level because being "accepted" and supported by family members can bring them less stressful lives. However, their lives are always threatened at the constitutional level and this could affect their lives even more seriously. If one does not have a family of origin or good relationships with their family but only have a partner as well as friends in LGB communities, they would remain vulnerable. Thus, *futsuu* strategy will be a shackle when we consider equality for non-heterosexuals in Japan. Moreover, if family members decided not to come out because they treat non-heterosexuality as *futsuu*, then, this may not be helpful. Not coming out means maintaining invisibility of non-heterosexuals; thus, not necessarily fight against stigma, courtesy stigma and heteronormativity. It does not simply suggest that "coming out" is the best way for both non-heterosexuals and their families to live "happily" or it does not force people to "come out" and fight for oppression regardless of their situations. As it has been seen throughout this paper, "coming out" causes different consequences in different culture, and people have to negotiate with cultural specificities. Yet, being visible by coming out would possibly cause backlash and affect relationships with others which Japanese care more about. However, at the same time, the country and its government can pretend not to realize that they have to deal with what non-heterosexuals face due to lack of protections, as long as non-heterosexuals are acknowledged and become visible.

In this respect, *futsuu* strategy could also reproduce discrimination against non-heterosexuals. Yoshii (2007) introduces an interviewer's discourse, in which he or she said,

"I've never experienced discrimination and ever discriminated against someone either. In that sense, I am a *futsuu* human and I want to ask you questions from this standpoint…" Yoshii criticizes and points out that what this interviewer's statements imply is that discrimination does not take place among not *futsuu* people; thus, this statement "symbolizes the power of being *futsuu*." (Yoshii 2007: 44-45) He continues to analyze that there is a dichotomic perspective behind this statement, a discriminator and discriminated. Yoshii concludes that "when this dichotomy is used with the power of 'being *futsuu*,' the schema of '*futsuu* presence' and '*futsuu* human' equal to 'a presence who have no relation to discrimination' becomes really a convincing factor" (Yoshii 2007: 45) In other words, once one insists being *futsuu*, they can become an onlooker who are neither discriminators nor discriminated. This behavior does not solve a "problem" or basic mechanism of discrimination but it rather reproduces the mechanism because facing and thinking about discrimination is the only way to dissolve this mechanism (Yoshii 2007). This is why Yoshii states that "'to be *futsuu*' does not compel someone 'not to discriminate' against others. But it rather makes discrimination survive and grow more, because 'to live safely being *futsuu*' become the best 'dung' for discrimination to keep growing." (Yoshii 2007: 180) Referring to his argument to the families of a non-heterosexual, who used *futsuu* strategy, it can be said that emphasizing *futsuu* to prove they and non-heterosexual members are *futsuu* enables family members to become onlookers who can pretend to be a *futsuu* heterosexual and neglect to face courtesy stigma. This behavior also reproduces discrimination and stigmatization against non-heterosexuals, which would result in reproducing courtesy stigma.

7.2. Non-heterosexuals Becoming Futsuu *[Normal] and Undermining the Power of Heteronormativity*

Thus, *futsuu* strategy could reinforce heteronormativity on one hand, which could be

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perceived as "uncivilized" for people with Western values. In the US specifically, individual "freedom" is fundamentally important for their lives (Foner [1998] 2008). Thus, from the American point of view, *futsuu* strategy seems to not respect enough non-heterosexuals' "freedom." However, it cannot be simply said which is good or bad when considering what family members actually experienced and what they had to negotiate in Japanese context.

Through Chapters 3 to 5, it was argued that non-heterosexuals and their family had to deal not only with heteronormativity and homophobia but also Perceived Homophobia and Perceived Courtesy Stigma. This suggested that their negative perceptions were created and reproduced by what Japanese prioritize, human relationships; thus, the power of *seken*. Only few non-heterosexuals and family members prioritized their need over others' feelings and distant from the reputation of *seken* in some extent. However, most people remained to still negotiate with others to acquire safer and more comfortable environment. Hence, they could necessarily escape from *seken* and its constraints. However, what African Americans, women and LGBT have fought for pursuing their "freedom" and expanded the meaning of "freedom" in the US suggest is that there should be a way for Japan to create less-heteronormative environment by dealing with characteristics of *seken*.

As discussed in Chapter 5, family members used the word *futsuu* [normal or ordinary] to describe non-heterosexual members when they talked others in *seken*. For people living in Japan, emphasizing *futsuu* could mean to protect non-heterosexual members and themselves because having a good relationships with others and maintaining harmonies are the most important things to prioritize otherwise they would be excluded, which is the same as losing the purpose of their existence. This behavior can be understood as perpetuating negative feature of *seken*, in which differences or not being *futsuu* causes exclusion. However, on the one hand, this behavior can be acknowledged as a strategy because non-heterosexuals and their family

take advantage of another features of *seken*, contributing and providing safety as far as one belongs to *seken*. In *seken*, as long as something is perceived as *futsuu*, it will be "accepted" by *seken* regardless of its legitimacy. As mentioned in the Introduction, "tolerance" towards homosexuality heightened since 1990 (Ishihara 2012) when the presence of homosexuals were paid great attention by so called gay boom in Japan. While "indifference" and "tolerance" has to be distinguished[23], the more people interact with people with different backgrounds, the more "tolerant" they can become (Kobayashi and Ikeda 2008) and as people know LGBT in their lives, the more "tolerate" they become towards LGBT (Wills and Crawford 1999). The feature of *seken* and how Japan has become more "tolerant" towards non-heterosexuality suggests that talking about non-heterosexual members as *futsuu* is the strategy to involve others to redefine what *futsuu* is. This works as the strategy because *futsuu* strategy helps people to insist their opinions without disharmonizing a group atmosphere and influence on replacing *futsuu* norm in others' mindset. In this way, *futsuu* strategy is not only effective for family members to negotiate and survive in *seken*, but it also has potential to create less homophobic environment. It may be difficult to overcome heteronormativity. However, *futsuu* strategy may make it possible to at least recalibrate norms and eventually affect change.

7.3. Limitation of This Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The aim of this paper was to examine the experiences of non-heterosexual and their families in relation to the effects of cultural norms in Japanese context through in-depth interviews. However, this study could not reach non-heterosexuals who are still struggling with

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[23] Ishihara (2012) incorporates Harihara's study and argues that the high tolerance level towards homosexuality might interconnect with the level of "indifference."

coming out to themselves, and family members, who are suffering from inner conflicts, because of their invisibility. It is never enough to point out that there are still many non-heterosexuals and their family members who are suffering from oppression, discrimination and the judgement of others. It also should be pointed out that family members in this study have moved toward understanding and "accepting" process to become the families with non-heterosexual members, however, there are many family members who are unable to rid of their negative perceptions on non-heterosexual members still today.

Although the experiences of non-heterosexuals and family members differed by gender, my respondents were mainly female. Additionally, while this paper examined the "families" of non-heterosexual members, it was relatively not enough respondents to capture siblings' and grandparents' experiences. In future research, the relationships with non-heterosexual members, gender, age, region, class and the former relationships among parents and children as well as siblings and grandparents should be taken into account. Moreover, because non-heterosexual respondents were relatively young, the experiences of people and couples in older generation are neglected. It also means their families were also younger. It is expected that older generation of people cannot easily change their attitude and values. Finally, this study reviewed the Western literature, however, in future research, how non-heterosexuals' and their family members' experiences in Japan are similar and different from other East Asian countries also need to be taken into account.

APPENDIX 1. BACKGROUND OF NON-HETEROSEXUAL RESPONDENTS

	Name	Sexual identity	Sexual orientation	Interviewed place and date	Age	Notes
1	Araki	Woman	Queer	Kanto (café in LGBT neighborhood) June 26, 2010	34	
2	Kawabata	Woman	Lesbian	Kanto (*izakaya* in LGBT neighborhood) June 26, 2010	30	
3	Endo	Woman	Lesbian	Kanto (*izakaya* in LGBT neighborhood) June 26, 2010	33	}They had a group interview.
4	Ozaki	Woman	Lesbian		25	
5	Koyanagi	Woman	Lesbian	Kanto (*izakaya* in LGBT neighborhood) June 26, 2010	29	
6	Iwatani	Woman	Lesbian	Kanto (*izakaya* in LGBT neighborhood) June 26, 2010	23	}They had a group interview.
7	Ueda	Woman	Lesbian		27	
8	Yokota	Woman	Bisexual	By E-mail June 26, 2010	30	}They were a couple.
9	Wada	Woman	Lesbian	By E-mail June 27, 2010	47	
10	Sawada	Woman	Lesbian	Kanto (*karaoke* room) June 27, 2010	30	
11	Seto	MTX / okama	Bisexual/okama	Kansai (LGBT friendly bar) June 30, 2010	43	Seto prefers to use a word "okama" because this word is "very ambiguous."
12	Shimizu	Woman	Pansexual	Kansai (café) June 30, 2010	21	
13	Taniguchi	Woman	Lesbian	Kansai (café) July 14, 2010	20	
14	Toba	Woman	Pansexual	Kansai (café) July 16, 2010	23	
15	Nakayama	Woman	Pansexual	Kansai (bar) July 17, 2010	22	
16	Noguchi	Man	Gay	Kansai (café) July 18, 2010	23	
17	Sunagawa	Man	Gay	Kanto (his office) July 22, 2010	43	He is a gay activist, who asked me to use his real name.
18	Hayakawa	Woman	Bisexual	Kansai (café) July 24, 2010	24	
19	Higuchi	Man	Bisexual	Kansai (café) July 30, 2010	30s	He had a group interview with two other transgendered people.
20	Matsumoto	Woman	Lesbian	Kansai (LGBT friendly *izakaya*) July 31, 2010	28	}They were a couple and had a group interview.
21	Miyake	Woman	Lesbian		27	
22	Yaguchi	Woman	Lesbian	Kansai (café) Aug. 3, 2010	26	
23	Murase	Woman	Lesbian	Kansai (café) Aug. 8, 2010	28	

APPENDIX 2. BACKGROUND OF FAMILY MEMBERS RESPONDENTS

#	Name of non-heterosexual members	Gender/Sexual orientation	Age of non-heterosexuals when interviewed	Age of non-heterosexuals when family members knew non-heterosexuality	Relationship (names), age of family members	How known by who	Interviewed place and date	Notes
1	Suzuki	Woman/homosexual	22	21	Mother (Suzuki mom), 56	face-to-face	Chubu (home) Jan. 6, 2013	
				21	Older sister (Suzuki sis), 24	by Suzuki on the phone	Kantou (café) Jan. 19, 2013	
				21 or 22	Grandmother (Suzuki grandma), 85	by Suzuki mom	Chubu (home) Jan. 5, 2013	}Had a group interview.
				21 or 22	Grandfather (Suzuki grandpa), 85	by Suzuki mom	Chubu (home) Jan. 5, 2013	
				21	Cousin (Itou), 30	by Suzuki mom	Chuubu (Suzuki's house) Jan. 5, 2013	
2	Yamamoto	Woman/bisexual	24	20	Mother (Yamamoto mom), 49	face-to-face	Kinki (home) Jan. 12, 2013	
3	Nakamura	Woman/lesbian	38	25 or 26	Mother (Nakamura mom), 68	face-to-face	Kinki (café) Feb. 27, 2013	
4	Yamaguchi	Man/gay	32	25	Father (Yamaguchi dad), 66	on the phone	Kyushu (café) Feb. 17, 2013	
5	Yoshida	Man/gay	24	14	Mother (Yoshida mom), 59	face-to-face	Kinki (café) Mar. 6, 2013	
					Older sister (Yoshida sis), 28	face-to-face	Kinki (café) Mar. 9, 2013	
6	Higa	Man/gay	25	22 or 23	Mother (Higa mom), 58	face-to-face	Okinawa (café) Apr. 6, 2014	
7	Aragaki	Woman/unknown (have a girlfriend)	29	unknown	Mother (Aragaki mom), 58	face-to-face	Okinawa (café) Apr. 8, 2014	She never made sure with her daughter about sexuality, thus, it reminded as "unknow." However, she acknowldges her daughter is living with her female partner.
				26 or 27	Father (Aragaki dad), 58	by text message	Okinawa (Aragaki's house) Apr. 7, 2014	
				21 or 22	Older brother (Aragaki bro), 32	by Aragaki sis	Okinawa (café) Apr. 8, 2014	
				19, 20, 21 or 22	Younger sister (Aragaki sis), 25	face-to-face	Okinawa (home) Apr. 7, 2014	
8	Morita	Woman/homosexual	26	22	Mother (Morita mom),	face-to-face	Kinki (Morita's house) Jul. 12, 2014	No tape recorded.
					Father (Morita dad), 54	face-to-face	Kinki (Morita's house) Jul. 27, 2014	
9	Kiyohara	Woman/bisexual	28	19	Mother (Kiyohara mom), 55	face-to-face	Chuugoku (café) Nov. 2, 2014	
10	Miyazato	Woman/lesbian	28	24 or 25	Older sister (Miyazato o-sis), 30	introduced partner	Tokyo (bar) Nov. 25, 2014	Daubted Miyazato's sexuality and saw pictures to clarified Miyazato's sexuality. Never made sure Miyazato's sexuality, but o-sis thinks as "transgender."
				27	Younger sister (Miyazato y-sis), 23	introduced partner	Kyushu (meeting place) Nov. 29, 2014	
11	Katou	Man/gay	28	19 or 20	Mother (Katou mom), 55	face-to-face	Hokkaido (café and home) Dec. 3, 2014	They divorced when Katou was 7 year old. Katou dad has parental authory.
					Father (Katou dad), 62	face-to-face	Hokkaido (hotel lobby) Dec. 2, 2014	
12	Fujii	Man/bisexual	25	15 or 16	Mother (Fujii mom), 53	face-to-face	Kinki (café) Mar. 9, 2015	}Had a group interview.
					Father (Fujii dad), 56	by Fujii mom	Kinki (café) Mar. 9, 2015	

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