

# Explore the Mutual Benefits of Studying the Rights of Sexual Minority People in Hong Kong Confucianism

Sam Wai-Kam Yu\*  and Jack Wai Chik Yue\*\*

\*Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Hong Kong

\*\*UOW College Hong Kong, Kowloon City, Hong Kong

**Corresponding author:** Sam Wai-Kam Yu; Email: [scsamyu@friends.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:scsamyu@friends.cityu.edu.hk)

---

*This paper intends to investigate the mutual benefits of examining sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong and Confucianism. It has four objectives. Firstly, it aims to discuss the components of Confucianism. Secondly, it seeks to explore three strategies for promoting Confucianism: 'Ren', 'Li', and 'Ideal Society'. Thirdly, it aims to demonstrate how analysing these strategies can enhance our understanding of the relationship between sexual minority rights in Hong Kong and Confucianism. To achieve this objective, it undertakes two analytical tasks: first, to evaluate criticisms of efforts aimed at strengthening sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong through the lens of these three strategies; and second, to assess the potential usefulness of these strategies in exploring the compatibility between the sexual minority people's ways of life and Confucianism. Finally, the paper aims to examine how studying sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong can contribute to the discussion of the Confucian welfare model.*

**Keywords:** Confucianism, sexual minority people, Ren, Li, great harmony.

## Introduction

In recent decades, there have been advancements in the acceptance and legal protection of sexual minority people in Hong Kong. Homosexuality was decriminalised in 1991 (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2014; Kwok & Wu, 2015). A trans woman was allowed to legally marry her boyfriend in 2013 (The Guardian, 2013). The same-sex couples who meet the eligibility criteria can now rent public housing flats under the Tenancy Control scheme (The Standard, 2020). However, despite these progressions, sexual minority people's rights advocates face opposition from pressure groups and political parties who view the movement as a threat to traditional Chinese values (Gender Research Centre, 2016). Interestingly, some proponents of sexual minority rights also appeal to Chinese traditions citing evidence from Chinese literature of non-heterosexual relationships being accepted in some periods of traditional Chinese society (Hinsch, 1992; Kwok & Wu, 2015). Therefore, the debate on whether the lifestyles of sexual minority people were accepted in traditional Chinese societies makes traditional Chinese ideas an important criterion for assessing the actions for promoting sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong. This paper intends to explore the potential mutual benefits of studying the rights of sexual minority people in Hong Kong and Confucianism. While Confucianism may not encompass all traditional

Chinese ideas, it has been a dominant philosophy throughout various dynasties, including the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), Tang dynasty (618–907 AD), Song dynasty (960–1279 AD), and Ming dynasty (1368–1644 AD), influencing the way of life for Chinese people during these periods. This paper has four main objectives. Firstly, it intends to discuss the fundamental elements of Confucianism. Secondly, it aims to investigate three strategies for promoting Confucianism: ‘Ren,’ ‘Li,’ and ‘Ideal Society’. Thirdly, it seeks to demonstrate how examining these strategies can contribute to understanding the relationship between sexual minority rights in Hong Kong and Confucianism. To achieve this objective, this paper carries out two analytical tasks: first, to scrutinise criticisms of actions aimed at strengthening the rights of sexual minority people in Hong Kong based on the discussion of these three strategies, and second, to discuss the usefulness of these strategies in exploring the idea that the ways of life of sexual minority people can be compatible with Confucianism. Finally, the paper aims to examine how the study of the rights of sexual minority individuals can contribute to the discussion of the Confucian welfare model.

Before going into the details of these analytical tasks, it is important to address two key points. Firstly, Confucianism encompasses a multitude of moral concepts, making it challenging to cover them all within a single paper. Therefore, this paper focuses primarily on exploring the notions of Ren, Li, and Great Harmony, which have garnered significant attention in the fields of welfare studies (Chau & Yu, 2022). Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that not all individuals genuinely embrace Confucianism. Some may adopt it merely as a means to justify their own beliefs and actions. However, even used instrumentally, their engagement can inadvertently reinforce the significance of Confucian principles.

### *Fundamental elements of confucianism*

Although Confucius (551–479 BC) did not create Confucianism, he played a crucial role in interpreting its ideas and demonstrating how they could be applied (Yu *et al.*, 2015). During his time, ancient China faced various political and social challenges, and Confucius spent much of his life traveling throughout China to teach his ideas. His sayings and actions were recorded in the *Analects* and other literature, such as the *Book of Rites* (Lau, 1979; Shi, 2018). This section discusses Confucius’ views on the concepts of ‘Ren’, ‘Li’, and ‘Great Harmony’.

### *Ren*

Confucius emphasised the potential for individuals to care for one another. By putting this potential into practice, not only do care providers benefit care receivers, but they also strengthen their own moral capacity (Fung, 1952). This idea is reflected in Confucius’ interpretation of Ren in the *Analects* (Note 1). Confucius stressed that Ren is one of the most critical virtues that a person can cultivate (Shi, 2018). Ren can make a human being morally perfect and turn them into a ‘moral gentleman’ (Chun Tzu) (Ching, 1986). Confucius believed that Ren is a person’s innate quality. In the *Analects* (7–30), Confucius pointed out this: ‘Is Ren far away? If I aspire for Ren, it is right here’. The core element of Ren is to love people. When asked the meaning of Ren, Confucius

replied: 'Love others' (the *Analects*, 12:22). Such a love can be expressed in three different ways:

- Help other people to develop their potential (the *Analects*, 6:30).
- Show respect to others (*Analects*, 12:2).
- Avoid imposing on others what you yourself do not desire (the *Analects*, 12:2).

In order to consistently practise Ren, self-cultivation is necessary, which Confucius acknowledged is a challenging task (Shi, 2018). He praised Yen Hui for keeping Ren in his heart for three months (the *Analects*, 6-7). The *Analects* offers various ways for conducting self-cultivation:

- to be honest to people (the *Analects*, 1:3).
- life-long learning (the *Analects*, 7:22).
- to pay attention to Ren all the time (the *Analects*, 4:5).

### *Li*

Li is another important element of Confucianism (Fung, 1952; Schwartz, 1985). This concept is highly related to Ren. The *Analects* recorded this:

- When Yen Yuan asked the meaning of Ren, Confucius replied: 'To tackle selfishness completely and follow Li (the *Analects*, 12:1).
- May I beg for the main features (of Ren)? asked Yen Yuan. The Master (Confucius) answered: 'If not Li, do not look, if not Li, do not listen, if not Li, do not speak; if not Li: do not move' (the *Analects*, 12:1).

The concept of Li in traditional China refers to the practices, rituals and conventions that govern social behaviours and relationships (Fung, 1952). Schwartz (1985, p. 67) points out this:

... .the word Li on the most concrete level refers to all those objective prescriptions of behavior, whether involving rite, ceremony, manners, or general deportment, that bind human beings and the spirits together in networks of interacting roles within the family, within human society and with the numinous realm beyond.

Li is often associated with another concept – 'the Rectification of Names', which refers to the importance of using proper names for things and making sure that words correspond to reality (Chau & Yu, 1997). *Analects* recorded this point: 'If you don't have the official position, you should not handle public affairs' (*Analects*, 8-14). In relation to this view, Confucius stressed this: 'Let the ruler be a ruler, minister be a minister, father be a father, son be a son' (The *Analects*, 12:11). Moreover, it is assumed that different social systems are closely related to each other. The *Analects* (1.2) stresses that there are few who have developed themselves filially and fraternally would enjoy challenging their superiors. This means that by learning to obey their father in the family, people are at the same time learning to be loyal to their sovereign (Chau & Yu, 1997). This also means that when people follow Li, they are expected to behave according to their role, status, rank, and position within a structured society (Schwartz, 1985).

### *Ideal society*

Confucius is linked to the concept of the ideal society known as the 'Great Harmony', which envisions a society free from conflict, inequality, and injustice (Chau & Yu, 2005). The portrayal of this utopian vision was discovered in a dialogue between Confucius and his disciples in the paper 'Li Yun' within the *Book of Rites*. The following are the key features of this ideal society:

When the Great Way prevails, everything in the world is owned by the public. Office holders are chosen based on their ability and moral integrity. Mutual trust has been fostered. People love not only their own parents and care for their own children, but also those of others. Provision is made for the older people till their death. Adults are given the opportunity to contribute to society. Children are given support to grow up. Widows, widowers, orphans, people without child, the sick and disabled are all well taken care of. Men have the opportunities to perform their roles. Women have their homes to go to. While people hate seeing goods laid idle but they do not necessarily want to use these goods to meet their own ends. While people make efforts to produce but do not necessarily for advancing their own interests. Theft, rebellion and attempts to harm other people do not exist. Doors can always be kept open. This is called the age of Great Harmony (Note 2).

The concept of the Great Harmony portrays a society characterised by care and sharing of resources, not only within families but also between members of society. It is a society where people contribute according to their abilities and receive care based on their needs, resulting in public goods such as mutual trust, peace, and harmony. However, it is uncertain whether the Great Harmony can be fully realised, leading to proposals for an alternative based on private property (Chau & Yu, 2022). This alternative is known as the Better Off society, which has the following features:

The principles of Great Harmony are no longer being put into practice. The world's focus has shifted toward the family. In the Better Off society, individuals tend to look after their own parents and take care of their own children. The production and efforts are geared towards personal gain. In such a society, power is inherited solely within one's own family, and barriers are set up to safeguard personal property. The principles of Li are still used to govern relationships between rulers and subjects, between father and son, between elderly and younger siblings, and husband and wife. New laws and land distribution methods have emerged, and those who benefit their masters through bravery or cunning are rewarded. However, this system also led to the rise of deceitful behaviour and selfish intentions, and conflicts and wars are often the result (Note 2).

The Better Off society is markedly distinct from the Great Harmony, as it emphasises the primacy of family in organising one's life. In this second-best ideal society, individuals are encouraged to pursue their own interests rather than the common good. Consequently, social inequality is inevitable as a social hierarchy is established.

### *Strategies for promoting confucianism*

Three strategies for promoting Confucianism can be identified based on its fundamental elements – Ren, Li, and Ideal Society. The Ren strategy emphasises the importance of

practising Ren by engaging in self-cultivation and caring for others. This includes helping others develop their potential and upholding the principle of not imposing on others what you do not desire. This strategy recognises that Ren is an innate quality, and people have the potential to choose how to organise their lives based on it.

The Ideal Society strategy is focused on building the Great Harmony in the long run and the Better Off society as a transitional alternative. Building on the social consensus on issues such as finding ways to nurture mutual trust, harmony and peace, providing care based on needs, providing opportunities for adults to participate in production, the Ideal Society strategy assumes that people have the potential to appreciate the importance of implementing some or all elements of the Great Harmony through collective efforts.

The Li strategy aims to promote adherence to normative principles as advocated by moral leaders. As noted earlier, Li encompasses all of the customs, political and social institutions that shape society. It is not uncommon for moral leaders, such as Confucian scholars and rulers in traditional Chinese societies, to prescribe normative principles for the public to follow. The examples of these principles are the 'Three Types of Obedience' and 'Four Virtues' (Yip, 2016). Chu (1995, p. 94) summarised these principles as follows:

The obedience of a girl to her father, a married woman to her husband after marriage, a widow to her son after the death of her husband (Three Types of Obedience)

To perform the appropriate behaviours conforming to the ethical code to be careful in her speech with no-nonsense comments, a pleasant appearance to please her husband, and to be diligent in the management of domestic duties (Four Virtues).

The Li strategy operates under the assumption that individuals have the potential to comprehend and adhere to the normative regulations established by moral leaders.

Examining the Ren strategy, Li strategy, and Ideal Society strategy can shed light on the relationship between actions promoting the rights of sexual minorities and Confucianism. If these actions facilitate the implementation of the three strategies, it can be argued that they align with Confucianism. Conversely, if they hinder the implementation of these strategies, a different conclusion may be drawn. These actions may support some strategies while challenging others, so their implications for Confucianism are mixed.

### *Empirical examples*

Two tasks are undertaken to illustrate how the Ren strategy, Ideal Society strategy and Li strategy can be useful in analysing the relationship between the actions for strengthening sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong and Confucianism. The first task is to investigate the criticisms against the actions for promoting the rights of sexual minority people in Hong Kong using these three strategies as a lens. The second task is to explore the potential usefulness of these three strategies in examining the compatibility between the way of life of sexual minority people and Confucianism.

In the past two decades, the Hong Kong government has taken actions perceived to be in favour of the development of sexual minority people's rights, such as amending the Domestic of Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance in 2009 to extend protection to persons in cohabiting relationships regardless of their sexual orientation (Gender

Research Centre, 2016), and enacting the Electronic Health Record Sharing System Ordinance in 2015, which recognises cohabitating partners (heterosexual or same-sex) to have rights regarding their partner's medical treatment (Electronic Health Record Office, 2021). In 2020, the government proposed a bill to ban discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2014). However, these actions have faced criticisms not only from individuals but also from pressure groups and political parties, such as the Society for Truth and Light and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong. These critics hold views that are opposed to the sexual minority people's ways of life, which are revealed in quotes drawn from research reports and news reports and provide insights into the criticisms against the actions for promoting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) rights (Gender Research Centre, 2016; Ng, 2017a; Ng, 2017b).

"Don't you dare to destroy the moral order of our society that has been there for thousands of years . . . Only heterosexual relationship is able to bring about offspring, if you go for test-tube babies that's your personal business whatsoever . . . but you must not upset the order of nature" (Gender Research Centre, 2016, p. 112).

"No, I don't want change, that is, to call a man woman or a woman man. I would be totally confused. It implies a fundamental change to society and morality" (Gender Research Centre, 2016, p. 113).

"I always know marriage to be between a man and a woman. If it is not between a man and a woman, you can all it whatever, a game or whatever, but it is not called marriage" (Gender Research Centre, 2016, p. 113).

'The ruling (concerning granting welfare benefits to a gay civil servant for his husband) effectively recognises same-sex marriage. It seriously affects our marriage system and the traditional family values of marriage between a man and a woman' (Note 3).

'Marriage is a system. Opposite-sex marriage will have to compete with same-sex marriage if you change the system. It will be weakened and marginalised' (Note 4).

"Children are like a piece of blank paper. If there is a legislation (against LGBTI discrimination), they would be affected and their risks (of being LGBTI) would increase . . . . they would be that there would be more lesbians, more gay men . . . and that's it . . ." (Gender Research Centre, 2016, p. 113).

' . . . daughters can learn from their mothers about how to be a woman, and from their fathers on how to interact with the opposite sex. Protecting children is the most important task for humanity' (Note 5).

'We need to stand up for the most powerless, namely babies and children. Ideally, they should be raised by their mothers and fathers' (Note 6).

"Toilet is a special place where, for the sake of privacy, no closed-circuit television (CCTV) could be installed. Just imagine a case where a weak and slim man ran into a gay man with a strong built-in public toilet. In case the moment when this slim man exposed his penis and was ready to pee and unexpectedly got the strong man sexually aroused who could force him into anal sex . . . the gay man could possibly be acquitted due to a lack of evidence (CCTV record) . . . I think legislating against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation would lead to unnecessary tragedy and legal dispute" (Gender Research Centre, 2016, p. 114).

' . . . . the decision (on granting welfare benefits to a gay civil servant for his husband) might lead to collapse of the marriage system as some foreign countries recognise polygamy' (Note 7).

After analysing the quotes, five primary criticisms of the actions for promoting sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong can be identified:

- The sexual minority people's right movement is a threat to the traditional Chinese family structure that is highly regarded in Chinese culture.
- Same-sex families pose a threat to different-sex families.
- Only different-sex families can provide a suitable environment for raising children.
- The promotion of sexual minority people's rights is a Western influence that aims to impose Western values on Chinese societies.
- The promotion of sexual minority people's rights encourages sexual indulgence.

Some of the criticisms against the actions for improving the lives of sexual minority people suggest that they may not align with the Li strategy for strengthening Confucianism. The concept of 'Rectification of Names' emphasises a rigid social order based on traditional heterosexual marriage and different-sex family, which can be in conflict with the actions for promoting the rights of sexual minority people. Critics of the sexual minority people's right movement in Hong Kong stress that marriage should only be between a man and a woman, which supports the idea of Li (Gender Research Centre, 2016). This conflict is also supported by the view that same-sex marriage challenges the idea of Filial Piety, which is an important part of Li (Hu & Wang, 2013). One of the core elements of this idea is that 'there are three forms of unfilially conduct, of which the worst is to have no descendants' (Yu *et al.*, 2011, p. 264). In view of this element, the supporters of same-sex marriage are likely to be accused of committing unfilially conduct.

However, the criticisms against the actions for promoting sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong are not without their weaknesses. Traditional Chinese families may not necessarily be able to prevent people from engaging in sexual indulgence or provide sufficient protection for children. In fact, both concubinage and arranged marriages of children were common practices in traditional China. To promote monogamy, the Hong Kong government abolished the institution of concubinage during the colonial period, even while emphasising the importance of respecting Chinese tradition (Note 8). Additionally, unlike in traditional Chinese societies, Hong Kong families are not legally allowed to arrange marriages for their children under the age of sixteen. These examples demonstrate that foreign culture does not necessarily attach less importance to protecting children and preventing sexual indulgence than traditional Chinese culture. It is also important to note that the Hong Kong government's actions to promote same-sex marriage, at least in principle, do not conflict with its policies against concubinage and arranged marriages of children. In fact, policies supporting same-sex marriage can be more effective in preventing polygamy and providing protection for children than traditional marriage practices in China.

To examine the correlation between Confucianism and the advancement of sexual minority rights in Hong Kong, attention must also be given to the Ren and Ideal Society strategies. The Ideal Society strategy emphasises nurturing a caring society and providing youth with the chance to participate in production. Confucius placed significant emphasis on the notion that those in the Great Harmony take care of not only their own offspring but also those of others. This idea has two implications. First, some children do not receive care from their biological parents. Second, these children must receive adequate care from society. Legalising same-sex family adoptions can increase the caring capacity of the entire society, while also increasing the chance of those children who lack care from their

biological parents to receive adequate care. In this sense, supporting same-sex family's rights to provide care can bolster the Ideal Society strategy. It is not uncommon for sexual minority individuals in Hong Kong to face obstacles in obtaining a foothold in the workforce due to discrimination (Gender Research Centre, 2016). By advocating for their right to work, we not only enhance their economic position but also reinforce the core ideas of the Great Harmony that adults should have the opportunity to participate in production. Therefore, supporting the rights of sexual minority individuals can strengthen the Ideal Society strategy.

As mentioned previously, the Ren strategy emphasises the implementation of Ren principles through self-cultivation and caring for others. Within families formed by marriage, the expectation is for members to demonstrate care and concern for one another. By granting individuals the freedom to form their families based on different-sex and same-sex marriages, we can broaden their opportunities to express care towards others. Ren, as previously discussed, is an innate quality inherent in individuals. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that people have the capacity to select the most effective ways to demonstrate love and practice Ren. By providing sexual minority individuals with greater autonomy in shaping their lives, we enhance the likelihood of them practicing Ren. Consequently, advocating for the rights of sexual minority individuals can serve as a means to reinforce the Ren strategy.

#### *Evidence-supporting actions for promoting the rights of sexual minority people*

There is a view that the lifestyles of sexual minority people are not totally incompatible with traditional Chinese values. This view is supported by literature, such as poetry and drama, which depict homosexual ideas and behaviours in traditional Chinese culture (Ruan, 1992, Ma, 2003; Xie & Peng, 2018). Examples of such literature include:

- *The Cut Sleeve*: During the reign of Emperor Ai of Han, a male courtier named Dong Xian fell asleep on the Emperor's sleeve, which served as a pillow. Rather than disturb Dong Xian, the Emperor cut off his sleeve, allowing him to continue sleeping peacefully. This story has been described in different poems (Hinsch, 1992).
- *The Romance of the Western Chamber*: This play, written during the Tang dynasty, features a male character named Zhang Junrui who falls in love with another man, Zhang Sheng (Hsiung, 2022).
- *The Dream of the Red Chamber*: This novel, written during the Qing dynasty, features a character named Jia Baoyu who has a close relationship with his male cousin, Jia Lan (Cao, 2020).
- *The Peony Pavilion*: This play, written in the Ming dynasty, features a romantic relationship between two men, Du Liniang and Liu Mengmei, who share a love scene under a peach tree in a garden (Tang, 1980).
- *The Golden Boy*: This novel, written during the Ming dynasty, features a character named Ximen Qing who has relationships with both men and women. The story is often cited as an example of the fluidity of sexuality in Chinese culture (Chang et al., 2015).

These examples offer insight into the relationship between the promotion of Confucianism through the Li, Ren, and Ideal Society strategies and the actions to promote the rights of sexual minority individuals in Hong Kong. Firstly, they suggest that the incompatibility between Li principles and homosexual ideas should not be overstated. Analysts



provide an insightful explanation for this argument, positing that while certain homosexual behaviours may have been deemed inappropriate, they were tolerated as long as the man fulfilled his familial obligations (such as marriage and procreation) and refrained from excessive sexual behaviours (such as masturbation and prostitution) (Kwok & Wu 2015; Cheng, 2018). In other words, masculinity was regarded less as a sexual identity or orientation and more as a societal and familial role, such as being a filial son with the ability to control one's sexuality (Kong, 2012). In traditional Chinese society, intimate relationships between women were often viewed as less threatening to the social order than those between men, as the sexual acts between women did not threaten procreation (Cheng, 2018).

Secondly, certain works of literature, such as *The Cut Sleeve* and *The Peony Pavilion*, depict homosexual behaviour more as love stories than tales of sexual indulgence (Lau & Ng, 1989; Ma, 2003). This point is supported by the passages of poems concerning the story of *The Cut Sleeve*: 'The emperor cut off his sleeve for his love. Two hearts united, though their lives may not be long' (Note 9); 'The emperor's sleeve was cut that day. A moment of Love that would soon pass away' (Note 10). As these depictions of homosexual behaviours can be seen as a way of showing care and love for others in the literature, it is reasonable to argue that they could, to a certain extent, be viewed as a means of exploring the Ren principle.

Thirdly, the ideals of the Great Harmony, which emphasise harmony, mutual trust, and peace, are reflected to a certain extent in the literature of traditional China, which valued not only moral and ethical considerations but also aesthetic qualities and philosophical depth. Some literature about homosexual behaviours was also valued for its aesthetic and philosophical merits, such as *Romance of the Western Chamber* and *Dream of Red Chamber*, despite containing content related to homosexual ideas. Thus, the coexistence of literature documenting stories about different sexual orientations in the literature world of ancient China can promote the harmony, mutual trust, and peace that are essential elements of the Great Harmony.

In summary, the literature about sexual minority people in traditional China suggests that their way of life is to a certain extent compatible with the Ren, Li, and the Ideal Society strategies for promoting Confucianism. Therefore, it is important not to dismiss the possibility of compatibility between Confucianism and the actions to promote the rights of sexual minority people in Hong Kong.

### *Confucian welfare model*

The aim of this section is to demonstrate how the examination of the relationship between the three strategies for promoting Confucianism and the actions for promoting sexual minority people's rights in Hong Kong can enhance our understanding of the Confucian welfare model. To illustrate the distinctive approach to welfare provision in countries with Confucian heritage, scholars have put forth the concept of the Confucian welfare model. Jones (1993, p. 214) suggests that the welfare systems in these countries typically encompass the following elements:

Conservative corporatism without (Wester style) worker participation; subsidiarity without the Church; solidarity without equality; laissez-faire without libertarianism; an alternative

expression for all this might be household economy; welfare states – run in the style of a would-be traditional, Confucian, extended family.

Other scholars have also supported Jones' ideas, including Rieger and Leibfried (2003) and Leung and Chan (2012). Karim *et al.* (2010) note that Confucian-rooted East Asian countries share traits such as minimal government involvement and the critical role of the family. Rieger and Leibfried (2003) view Confucian principles as a unique justification for the development of welfare in East Asia and emphasise the importance of familial relationships and ties in welfare provision. Adamczyk and Cheng (2015) argue that Confucian societies are more likely to be paternalist and put a heavy emphasis on the family.

However, current views on the Confucian welfare model tend to overemphasise the importance of Li especially those normative principles guiding people to organise their family life, while paying less attention to the Ren strategy and Ideal Society strategy. While it is important to uphold principles such as Filial Piety, Three Types of Obedience, and Four Virtues, these do not represent the full scope of Confucianism. As demonstrated earlier, Confucianism can also be enhanced by putting the ideas of the Great Harmony into practice and supporting individuals in their self-cultivation.

Based on the above discussion, there are two crucial points that need to be emphasised. Firstly, it is important to recognise that the Confucian welfare model is not homogeneous and consists of three distinct types: Li-focused, Ren-focused, and Ideal Society-focused. Each of these types highlights different strategies for promoting welfare. The Li-focused model prioritises the use of the Li strategy, which involves guiding people to organise their lives based on principles such as Filial Piety. For instance, the government can mandate financial support for parents. The Ren-focused model emphasises the Ren strategy by encouraging people to care for one another and perform altruistic acts like donating blood. The Ideal Society-focused model emphasises the use of the Ideal Society strategy to shape the organisation of welfare. This can be achieved by fostering a culture of care and responsibility among the public towards vulnerable individuals and by advocating for the social rights of those who are disadvantaged.

Secondly, we should not overlook the potential of actions that promote the rights of sexual minorities in advancing different Confucian welfare models. While some of these actions, such as reducing discrimination against sexual minorities in the labor market, legalising same-sex marriage, and supporting same-sex families to adopt children, may not align with the Li strategy, they can reinforce the Ren and Ideal Society strategies. Therefore, it is important to explore how these actions can support the Ren-focused and Ideal Society-focused Confucian welfare models. By doing so, we can ensure that the development of Confucian welfare models is sensitive to the needs of sexual minorities while also encouraging people with diverse sexual orientations to support the construction of these models.

### *Conclusion*

This paper has four main tasks: first, to discuss the important components of Confucianism; second, to explore the strategies for promoting Confucianism; third, to show how the discussion of these strategies contributes to the examination of the relationship between the actions for promoting the rights of sexual minority people in Hong Kong and Confucianism; and fourth, to explore how the discussion of the actions for promoting

the rights of sexual minority people enriches Confucian welfare model literature. By implementing these tasks, this paper demonstrates how the study of Confucianism and the study of the rights of sexual minority people in Hong Kong can be mutually beneficial. On the one hand, the discussion of the Ren and Ideal Society strategies provides justifications for actions promoting the rights of sexual minority people. On the other hand, the discussion of how sexual minority people can organise their lives enhances our understanding of possible ways to uphold the Ren-focused and Ideal Society-focused Confucian welfare models.

As stated earlier, this paper solely examines the concepts of Ren, Li, and Great Harmony. To delve deeper into the potential synergies between the rights of sexual minority individuals in Hong Kong and Confucianism, it would be beneficial to explore additional Confucian concepts in future research endeavours.

## Notes

- 1 We rely significantly on the translations by Muller (2021) and Fung (1952) when discussing the ideas from the Analects.
- 2 Both the descriptions of the Great Harmony and Better off society are translated to English by the authors. The original ideas of these two societies can be found in 'Liyun' chapter of the Book of Rites, one of the Confucian Chinese classics.
- 3 This quote came from the paper written by Ng (2017a).
- 4 This quote came from paper written by Ng (2017b).
- 5 This quote came from paper written by Ng (2017b).
- 6 This quote came from paper written by Ng (2017b).
- 7 This quote came from paper written by Ng (2017b).
- 8 In the White Paper on Social Welfare in 1965, the Hong Kong government stresses the importance of supporting and strengthening the Chinese traditional sense of family responsibility (Yu, 1996).
- 9 These passages are from the poem 'The Cut Sleeve' by Li Shangyin (812-858).
- 10 These passages are from the poem 'On Parting from the Cut Sleeve' by Su Shi (1037-1101).

## References

- Adamczyk, A. and Cheng, Y-H. A. (2015) 'Explaining attitudes about homosexuality in Confucian and non-Confucian nations: Is there a 'cultural influence'?', *Social Science Research*, 51, 276–289.
- Cao, X. Q. (2020) *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing.
- Chang, X. C., Wang, J. and Ren, Y. (2015) *Great Chinese Stories: The Golden Boy and the Jade Maiden*, China: China Books.
- Chau, C. M. and Yu, W. K. (2005) 'Is welfare UnAsian.' In A. Walker and C. K. Wong (eds.), *East Asian Welfare Regimes in Transition: From Confucianism to Globalisation*, Bristol: Policy Press, 21–45.
- Chau, C.M. and Yu, W. K. (1997) 'The sexual division of care in mainland China and Hong Kong', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 21, 4, 607–619.
- Chau, R. and Yu, W. K. (2022) *Welfare and Women in the Era of Productivism*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Cheng, F. K. (2018) 'Dilemmas of Chinese lesbian youths in contemporary mainland China', *Sexuality & Culture*, 22, 190–208.
- Ching, J. (1986) 'What is Confucius Spirituality.' In I Eber (ed.), *Confucianism: The Dynamics of Tradition*, London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 63–83.
- Chu, P. Y. (1995) *Women in the Middle: Informal Care and Economic Relationship – An Exploratory Study on the Economic Disadvantages of Family Carers of Chinese Older People in Hong Kong*, Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist University.

- Electronic Health Record Office (2021) Electronic Health Record Sharing System Ordinance. <https://www.ehealth.gov.hk/en/whats-ehealth/ordinance.html> [accessed 20.05.2023].
- Equal Opportunities Commission (2014) Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status, May 12, 2014. <https://www.eoc.org.hk/en/PressRelease/Detail/12292> [accessed 20.05.2023].
- Fung, Y. L. (1952) *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gender Research Centre (2016) *Report on Study on Legislation Against Discrimination on the Grounds of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status*, Hong Kong: Equal opportunities commission.
- Hinsch, B. (1992) *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China*, US: University of California Press.
- Hsiung, S. I. (2022) *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, New York: Routledge.
- Hu, X. and Wang, Y. (2013) 'LGB identity among young Chinese: the influence of traditional culture', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60, 5, 667–684.
- Jones, C. (1993) *New Perspectives in the Western State in Europe*, London: Routledge.
- Karim, S. A., Eikemo, T. A. and Bambra, C. (2010) 'Welfare state regimes and population health: integrating the East Asian welfare states', *Health Policy*, 94, 1, 45–53.
- Kong, T. (2012) 'A fading Tongzhi heterotopia: Hong Kong older gay men's use of spaces', *Sexualities*, 15, 8, 896–916.
- Kwok, D. K. and Wu, J. (2015) 'Chinese attitudes towards sexual minorities in Hong Kong: Implications for mental health', *International Review of Psychiatry*, 27, 5, 444–454.
- Lau, D. C. (1979) *The Analects*, New York: Penguin.
- Lau, M. P. and Ng, M. L. (1989) 'Homosexuality and Chinese Culture', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 13, 465–488.
- Leung, L. C. and Chan, K. W. (2012) 'A family-friendly policy for Hong Kong: lessons from three international experiences', *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 32, 1/2, 82–85.
- Ma, J. W. (2003) 'From 'Long Yang' and 'Dui Shi' to Tongzhi: Homosexuality in China', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy*, 7, 1–2, 117–143.
- Muller, C. (2021) Analects of Confucius. [www.acmuller.net>cib-di==ai>analects](http://www.acmuller.net/cib-di==ai>analects), updated 2021-12-01 [accessed 20.01.2023].
- Ng, E. (2017a) 'Protect family values: Hong Kong gov't urged to appeal ruling on marriage benefits for gay couple', Hong Kong Free Press, May 24, 2017. <https://hongkongfp.com/2017/05/24/protect-family-values-hong-kong-govt-urged-appeal-ruling-marriage-benefits-gay-couple/> [accessed 20.05.2023].
- Ng, E. (2017b) 'Anti-LGBT groups warn of "reverse discrimination" and threats to free speech if gay people are protected', Hong Kong Free Press, July 12, 2017. <https://hongkongfp.com/2017/07/12/anti-lgbt-groups-warn-reverse-discrimination-threats-free-speech-gay-people-protected/> [accessed 20.05.2023].
- Rieger, E. and Leibfried, S. (2003) *Limits to Globalisation: Welfare States and the World Economy*, Cambridge: Policy Press in association with Oxford; Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ruan, F. F. (1992) 'Lesbianism in China', *Achieves of Sexual Behaviour*, 21, 3, 217–226.
- Schwartz, B. I. (1985) *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press
- Shi, Z. Y. (2018) 'Confucius' concept of Ren and its application in education', *English E-Journal of the Philosophy of Education: International Yearbook of the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan*, 3, 18–27.
- Tang, X. Z. (1980) *The Peony Pavilion*, USA: Indiana University Press.
- The Guardian (2013) 'Hong Kong court allows transgender woman to marry a man', May 13, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/13/hong-kong-court-transgender-marriage> [accessed 20.05.2023].
- The Standard (2020) 'Ruling raises public housing hopes of same-sex couples', March 5, 2020. <https://www.thestandard.com.hk/sections-news-print/216960/Ruling-raises-public-housing-hopes-of-same-sex-couples> [accessed 20.05.2023].
- Xie, Y and Peng, M. G. (2018) 'Attitudes toward homosexuality in China: exploring the effects of religion, modernizing factors and traditional culture', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65, 13, 1758–1787.

- Yip, L. S. (2016) 'Roman Catholicism and Confucianism on homosexuality in Hong Kong before and after 1997: A Postcolonial, Queer, Feminist Perspective and Implications for Chinese Roman Catholic Ethics', *Horizontes Decoloniales*, 2422–6343, 2, 25–58.
- Yu, W. K. (1996) 'The nature of social services in Hong Kong', *International Social Work*, 39, 4, 411–430.
- Yu, W. K. S., Chau, C. M. and Lee, K. M. (2015) 'Using defamilisation typology to study the Confucian welfare regime', *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 31, 1, 74–93.
- Yu, Y, Xiao, S. and Xiang, Y. (2011) 'Application and testing the reliability and validity of a modified version of Herek's attitudes toward lesbians and gay men scale in China', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58, 2, 263–274.