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Life of One's Own

Negotiating Homosexuality with the Family and Party-state in China

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ABSTRACT
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The current study explores the process of how tongzhi, namely the homosexual men in China, who works for the party-state negotiates homosexuality with the family and the party-state in China. Under the background of the individualization of Chinese society, tongzhi has been pursuing to liberate homosexuality while encountering oppression from the family and the party-state. By analyzing the interviews with tongzhi working for the party-state, this study analyzes their narratives about the negotiation process. Regarding family, tongzhi mobilizes economic autonomy and social mobility in exchange for self-autonomy, where they develop zone for homosexuality. However, familial intimacy is usually involved in the decision of identifying homosexuality to the family. The negotiation in the realm of family is hence characterized by both first and second modernity. Regarding the party-state, tongzhi problematizes party membership and reconstructs it in terms of individualism. The construct can be identified as utilitarianism and populism. Such a strategy, together with relatively low level of flexibility, jointly depoliticalizes homosexuality in the public sphere and. This study also contributes to the discussion of the shift from traditional familism and communist collectivism to neo-familism and individualism.

Keywords: tongzhi, family, party-state, individualization of Chinese society

Popular Science Summary

The current study explores the process of how tongzhi who works for the party-state negotiates homosexuality with the family and the party-state in China. Since Chinese society has individualized in a way that people increasingly desire to live their own life, which means they want to choose their own lifestyle without instructions from the authority such as the family and the party-state. Tongzhi, the male homosexuals in China, has such a desire as well. Under the background of the individualization of Chinese society, tongzhi has been pursuing to liberate homosexuality while encountering oppression from the family and the party-state. By analyzing the interviews with tongzhi working for the party-state, this study analyzes their narratives about the negotiation process. That is, how they tell the stories about them dealing with the pressures from the family and the party-states. Following this question, this study then presents the negotiation process. Regarding family, the tongzhi invokes various strategies to balance the two goals of familial intimacy and the freedom of a homosexual lifestyle. The fulfillment of the two goals results in different inclinations of familial values and practices. Regarding the party-state, the tongzhi constructs their party membership with utilitarianism and populism narratives while depoliticalizing homosexuality to lower the risks in the public sphere. This study also contributes to the discussion of the shift from traditional familism and communist collectivism to neo-familism and individualism.

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Chapter One - Introduction

Fortunately, Wu Wei survived after he committed suicide by swallowing dozen hypnotic pills. He had been through a rather depressing time before suicide that he was ruffled by his supervisors, colleagues, and amount of gossip in the workplace, that is, a government sector in a small county in Zhejiang Province, China. In his family, his parents drastically expressed their sadness about how he had let them down. All these depressions derived from a rare event that his colleagues found him that his bachelor's degree thesis was the study on 'tongzhi[1],' the homosexual men in China. After his colleagues knew his thesis, his tongzhi identity was also exposed and spread in the small county as gossip, dramatically conflicting with his party membership and job in the local government (Zhang 2019). It is obvious that the tongzhi, especially those who work for the party-state, has been experiencing intersectional pressures from both the realm of the family and party-state.

In 1978, the party-state initiated economic reform which led to rapid social changes including the individualization of the Chinese society in which individuality has been gradually prevailing over collectivity. During such a process, the construction of homosexual identity emerged following its western and globalized definition (Wang 2019). The freedom of the homosexual lifestyle has been dared to be desired by tongzhi in China. However, such a self-realization project remains suppressed by the forces of the family and party-state. Regarding the family, the Confucian familism doctrines still require heteronormativity of individuals by reproduction duty of the individuals. Also, the one-child policy has complicated the circumstances through its reduction of the number of descendants who are required to continue the familial bloodline while endowing them more bargaining power for a desired lifestyle since they are the only child. Regarding the party-state, it promotes heteronormative familism values to control the civil society by which the tongzhi is marginalized.

To reveal such an intersectional process in-depth and in detail, this study examines the negotiation

[1] 'Tongzhi' is the Chinese translation of 'comrade' which are always used to call the people with the same thoughts, especially used by Chinese Communist Party members to call each other. Since the direct translations of homosexual men, gay, and other names of this group in Chinese are greatly stigmatized and with very offensive metaphors with other negative items, the homosexual men in China widely use this nickname to call themselves, sometimes call other LGBTQ+ people, but mostly gay men. In this study, under the consideration of refraining from the dichotomy between male and female, or between heterosexual and homosexual, the term 'tongzhi' will be used to refer to the gay men in China, exclusively.

process regarding homosexuality of the tongzhi working for the party-state from the perspective of individualization theses and its re-interpretation in the context of contemporary Chinese society established respectively by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Yan Yunxiang (2009). I, therefore, formulate the following research question and sub-questions:

- How does the tongzhi working for the party-state navigate between the realm of the family and the party-state?

And sub-questions:

- How does the tongzhi working for the party-state negotiate homosexuality with the family?
- How does the tongzhi working for the party-state negotiate homosexuality with the party-state?

To answer these questions, this study will focus on the narratives of the participants to reveal their interactions with their families and the party-state under the background of individualization of Chinese society, upon interview data gathered from 20 tongzhi working for the party-state. Chapter two reviews the relevant studies and situates this study into a broader academic debate. By doing so, chapter two develops a theoretical framework from the perspective of individualization theses and its reinterpretation in the context of Chinese society. Chapter three illustrates the methodology of this study and provides reflections on the research design and the data. By conducting interviews with 20 tongzhi, this study will analyze their narratives of their negotiation with the family and party-state. Chapter four and five are the analyses of the findings which respectively discuss the negotiation processes with the family and the party-state. Chapter six summarizes the findings and opens the discussion about the contributions and limitations of this project.

Chapter Two - Literature Review and Theoretical Framwork

2.1 Homosexuality in Contemporary China

China reveals the hybridity of widely and institutionally discrimination over the LGBTQ groups (Wei 2010b; Chen 2016; Zhang 2019). The flexible discrimination indicates the two-fold presentation of the signal of tongzhi in the public discourse that, for one, coming-out is yet rather risky in China which can result in the loss of job and exile from the family (Li 2009), while the fantasy of the 'bl (boys' love)' is rather prominent in the popular culture among daily life and on the Internet (Wei and Shi 2017).

It can be partially attributed to that the Confucian doctrines, and the cultural practices in the ancient era did not explicitly prohibit homosexual activities (ibid.; Wei and Fu 2013; Sedgwick 1985). Being a homosexual man is not a dreadful crime in the ancient era, as long as the reproduction is promised; in some of the ancient Chinese literature, the male homosexual practices were even categorized as the greatly intimate brotherhood and prevailed during several periods in the ancient dynasties (Vitiello 2012). In this sense, the male coalition in ancient China co-opted male homosexuality without exposing and constructing the intimate and sexual activities between men as homosexuality (Wei and Shi 2017). On the other hand, the presentation of homosexuals in contemporary China has been through the pathway towards visibility. Homosexual activities were illegal, resulting in imprisonment during the pre-reform era, but ended up with de-criminalization and de-medicalization in 1997 and 2001, respectively (Chen 2016). Paradoxically, though the identity of homosexuals is stigmatized, the visibility of the homosexual as a symbol has drastically increased and become entertainment-oriented especially in the popular discourse. The expressions invoked to stigmatize tongzhi, for instance, 'gao ji ('do gay' in Cantonese)' which was to attack the exposed male homosexuals, are now widely appropriated by the heterosexual men to draw the new boundaries for the same-sex intimate activities without being doubted on their heterosexuality (Wei and Shi 2017). Besides, among several major cities in China, some public spaces like the teashop in Chengdu are observed being 'queered' by LGBTQ groups to a special place for them to meet and contact (Wei and Fu 2013). However, this symbolic visibility is not equivalent to the public admission on the homosexual identity but only invoked for the purpose of cultural consumption (Zheng 2016). In the private sphere, homosexuality yet has been constructed as dangerous.

Some scholars interpret that since the homosexual men in the ancient era ended up complying with their obligations of reproduction, the homosexual activities between men were not rigorously prohibited and punished (Louie 2002; Wei and Cai 2012; Wei and Shi 2017), which suggests that at least in cultural practices the reproduction, that is, the continuity of family and bloodline, is set as first and foremost priority of Chinese family. Current findings have shown a large proportion of tongzhi facing the pressure of establishing the heterosexuality-based family, whereas this pressure is not presented as the failure to fulfill the inevitable obligation, but the failure perceived by tongzhi themselves to achieve their own expectation to establish a family (Li 2009; Wei and Cai 2012). Chou (2001) insightfully distinguishes the personhood in the western and conventional Chinese context that in Chinese traditions the individuals obtain the personhood not by isolating oneself transcendentally from the societal relations, but by being categorized in one of the heterosexuality-based family or kinship systems. Tongzhi, under this dynamic, shows intensive desires to establish the equivalence of the heterosexuality-based family in terms of compensating their loss on failing to form the intact personhood due to their perceived homosexuality (Wei and Yan 2021).

Variations among tongzhi's familial practices are evidenced in terms of obedience or disobedience to heterosexual norms. During the last decades of the 20th century, when the tongzhi were experiencing the 'symbolic extinction' (Wei 2010b), tongzhi were trying to force themselves into heterosexual marriage so that 'tongqi' as the societal conflict emerged (Zhang and Wang 2013). Tongqi means 'the wife of tongzhi,' who got married to homosexual men, regardless of their intention. Some of them were heterosexual women and not aware of the fact that their husbands' sexual orientation, which might be intentionally hidden when they got married, while some others are homosexual women colluding with tongzhi for the symbolic-only marriage – registered in the Chinese Bureau of Civil Affairs and holding weddings, but no marital practices in essence – to fulfill their family's expectation. Such a type of family usually experiences drastic conflict once the husband's sexual orientation is discovered by his wife (ibid.).

If the family is not an available option, a long-term stable relationship is to be highly desired by tongzhi, by which the paradox between individualism and familism is frequently presented. Some evidence shows that the tongzhi construct their views on the family through the lens of heterosexual intimate relationships, for instance, viewing the marriage as the precondition of a

stable life and successful career (Wei 2010a). In such a view of family, the two parties play different roles in terms of heterosexual marriage that one majors in making a living while the other primarily undertake housework. On the other hand, some tongzhi in urban China are actively practicing new formats of the family with more egalitarian division of labor, which promises both parties are equal in both private and public spheres (ibid.).

Current studies on tongzhi's family practices, as reviewed above, show the complex interrelated dependency among different societal relations. No matter how the family is established, it needs to be approved both by the original family and other social relations, in which the arrangement and negotiation play rather significant roles. The following questions are to be asked: *Why are there variations among tongzhi's family practices and values? Why do some admit the dominance of heterosexuality-based family while others do not? What variations on the definition of family exist and how do they become possible? What tactics and strategies are applied during the arrangements and negotiations?* All of these questions can be answered by exploring tongzhi's views about the position of the family in their world and the process of such positioning. By doing these, the dynamic by which the homosexuality-based family is produced and reproduced can be uncovered.

Regrettably, because of most tongzhi's worries on risks of stigmatization and attacks by telling the stories, current studies have always been researching those who are more outgoing and willing to speak out, mostly those living in the big cities with the tolerance of LGBTQ groups or working for the foreign corporations and social work agencies where the homosexuality might not be problematic. That said, those who are facing more difficulties in telling the stories have not been included in the study. Besides, almost all of these studies are discussing the heterosexual hegemony only in the category of sexuality without paying enough attention to the process that different disadvantageous positions are mutually confirmed.

2.2 Family Structure and Values in Post-reform China

An overall review of basic characters and transformation regarding the family in China will help contextualize the analysis of this study, especially the analysis in chapter five in terms of how the transformation in the family prepares for disembedment and re-embedment of tongzhi. Overall, the East Asian countries, including China, have experienced drastic demographic transitions characterized by a rather low rate of fertility and marriage (Raymo et al. 2015; Ji 2015). China's

total fertility rate had significantly dropped from 1970 to 2003 (5.73 to 1.69), which happened even before the one-child policy was strictly implemented since 1980. However, China's total fertility rate has been slowly but constantly increased since 2003, from 1.60 to 1.70 in 2019 (OECD, 2021). Nonetheless, both the structure and value of the Chinese family are permanently modified by the combination of *executive forces* and the *process of marketization*. The data from the 6th National Census in 2010 shows that the majority of family structure is the two-generation and three-people living arrangement: the three-people household is the majority with the share of 26.86% among other household sizes, and the two-generation family has the largest share of 47.83 among other types (Chinese National Bureau of Statistics 2010). The household of parents living with their single child, which is formed under the one-child policy, is the most prevalent family structure in contemporary China.

As mentioned above, the other dynamic of the drastic changes in family structure is the *process of marketization*. The income has grown associated with the increasing living cost, which deprives citizens' sense of economic security (Raymo et al. 2015; Ji 2017; Wei and Yan 2021). The family is therefore seen as the security pool, having the youngsters' backs. That said, the intergenerational living arrangement serves as the basic sponsor of the children (i.e., parents' investment in children's education), in exchange for their dependency on the family (i.e., the intergenerational support from the children to parents after they grow up). A similar trend is also observed in Taiwan (Lee et al. 1994). As a result, the 'mosaic' type of family is prevalent in contemporary China, characterized by the hybridity of multiple generations and familial values (Ji 2017). This mosaic family, however, without the supports from the extended family and the kinship system as in the traditional Confucian family structure, would be rather fragile if one party (parents or kids) fails to comply with the obligations (ibid.).

The familial values are therefore reshaped as neo-familism, differing from the traditional version of Confucian familism. Social anthropologist Yan Yunxiang introduces the concept of 'neo-familism' in deviation from the traditional format of familism to capture the contemporary Chinese family in a rapid transformation. Generally, familism is the conceptualization of the values and social practices relating to the family. Traditional familism, organized under the Confucian doctrines in China, generally centers the family members and resources around the ancestors and the older generations and presses the submission and obeyance of the descendants. In such a value system and the associated social practices, the discourses of obligations and self-

sacrifice are used to justify the submission of the individuals to the family. In short, in traditional familism, as seen in China and elsewhere that imposes it, family interest dominantly prevails over individual interests, and the resources flow upwards from the youngers to the elders (Yan 2018: 185).

Neo-familism, on the other hand, emerged from the rapid social changes of contemporary China as a demonstration of the individualization of Chinese society. As Yan put it, neo-familism shares similarities with traditional familism in terms that family interests are still deemed prior to the individual interests. Yet, the tension between the fulfillment of familial obligations and the of individual freedom occurs. Specifically, Yan concludes on four main features of neo-familism in China (ibid., 191-203), including: A) *Descending familism.* While traditional familism ensures the resources flow upward the generations, neo-familism imposes the centrality of descendants. B) *Intimate turn*. As evidence has shown, the importance of '亲情' (qinqing, familial emotions) is always emphasized in the narratives of the family. C) *Materialism.* During the pursuit of family happiness, success is defined largely and measured routinely by the prosperity of the family, which imposes pressure on the individuals and forces them to overwork. D) *The tension between individual and family interests.* The individual interest is elevated only because it is integrated into the family interest. As pursuit of children's happiness is set as prior agenda of contemporary Chinese families, the fulfillment of individual wills is partially legitimate, which is different from the traditional familism which completely demies individualism (ibid., 185; Sun 2015).

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Individualization Theses

This section introduces and elaborates on the individualization theses and the re-conceptualization in China's context, which will guide the analysis of this study. Focusing on the formation of modern self, identity, culture, and sociality, individualization theses demonstrate the relevancy and usefulness to current study on homosexuality in China. Homosexuality has been a developing and ongoing cultural and social construction in contemporary China, in the form of life of one's own which individuals are encouraged and compelled to establish. The tension between this institutional urgency of constructing self-identity and systematic oppression over homosexuality that hinders hence allow sociological scrutiny. This section departures from a brief introduction of individualization theses by summarizing the arguments characterizing multiple versions. The major debating theories within the field is then presented and contrasted, including the ones championed by Antony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim. This study

primarily adapts the latter's points of view. Finally, the theory of individualization of Chinese society, established by Yan Yunxiang, is elaborated primarily on the differences between China's case and its Western European counterpart.

2.3.1 Introducing Individualization Theses

Individualization theory aims to depict the transition of sociality in which individualism was, forcefully promoted by the state, dominantly permeated into everyday life of ordinary individuals. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, 1) defined the individualization process as 'institutionalized individualism,' referring to the ideology of individualism being systematically reinforced by various social institutions. Being individualized, individuals are to disembed from the social bonds in the traditional society, such as family, a process termed as detraditionalization by Giddens (1991). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim raised an example of post-Mao's era when the party-state reduced the size of life-long employed workers and broke the 'iron rice bowl,' pushing the workers into a precarious state of life with rapidly shifting values (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 2; See also Sun 199,: 5), which similarly occurred after the collapse of German Democratic Republic.

In his excellent review of individualization thesis, Howard (2007, 4) argues to characterize individualization as a 'discursive field' filled by modes of discourse that enable interpretation and transformation of experiences. Neo-liberalism is one of the dominant discourses in the field, championing the notion that individuals are capable of self-realizing and self-regulating, thereby imposing the responsibility of life decisions, including the consequences resulted from failure, entirely on the individuals themselves (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 25). This tradition of neo-liberal political philosophy presses individual over society, establishing the ontological precedence of the individual (Yeatman 2007, 46). Consequently, neo-liberalism has been championing social policies centering around the principles of leaving the individuals the freedom as absolute as possible such that government interventions over the decisions are seen as ill-natured and always resulting in inefficiency (Howard 2007, 34).

However, modern sociologists argue against the auspicious neo-liberal pictures of the individual and uncover its ominous implications to the modern society. As individuals are considered self-determined, self-regulated, and self-realized, narratives of the life world are to lose their social dimensions. Cutting off the bonds to previous social forms, individuals must be reflexive to design

their own life passage, a process by which various decisions are invoked to adapt the capriciously switching social surroundings. In this way, predetermination, safety, and certainty are replaced by opportunities, danger, and uncertainty (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 4). Individuals are thus not only permitted to act on their own, but also required to do so. Whereas individuals are seemingly assigned a volume of freedom over their life choice, structural crisis such as systematic unemployment is attributed to individuals who were regarded as fully reasonable and capable of calculating and optimizing every decision they made. The crisis, in turn, is no longer considered upon its social dimension; rather, it is transformed to the narratives such as 'objective conditions' or 'blow of fate' which are highly individualized and biographical, seeming unique to single victim (ibid., 26). Such a state of independence is termed as 'precarious freedom' to stress the individualized society lacking certainties that modern individuals are encountering (ibid., 8).

2.3.2 Current Debates on Individualized Biography

There are debates over how the modern individuals construct identity and biography despite individualization theorists' consensus over the consequence of the process. Among others, three theorists, including Antony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, and Ulrich Beck and Beck-Gernsheim are the major scholars constructing comprehensive but conspicuously different theses over individualization regarding identity and biography of the individual. The major disagreement centers around the extent to which individuals capable of maintaining continuity through their biographies. Giddens argues that reflexive individuals deliberately attempt to construct their life trajectories towards specific direction, namely their life plans (Giddens 1991, 81). Facilitated by abstract systems, such as psychotherapy, which is one of the most consequential among other institutions, individuals harness various techniques to consider alternative life plans and sequester themselves from existential and moral problems as to maintain the sense of ontological security (ibid., 85; See also Howard 2007, 32). Nonetheless, the tension between the discursive freedom attributed to the individuals and the actual social inequalities might trigger the dysfunction of reflexive life planning, such as the disorder of anorexia nervosa, commonly found among some women, indicating the excessive self-control for containing the tension between life planning and perceived gender inequality (Giddens 1991, 106).

Despite of Giddens's efforts on underlining the self's ability to maintain linear consistence through planning life trajectory, Bauman aims to picture how modern individuals are compelled to adapt discontinuity of life. Since globalization and the accelerating social transformation that

ensue, individuals are penalized for inflexibility. In terms of self-identity, previous fixed self-identity follows the logics of accumulation which must be raised through achievement of generally accepted goals, in the field of production. In contrast, self-identity in second, fluid, reflexive modernity consists of individual's disposal of existing identity goods to adapt changing social and cultural settings, following the logics of updating (Bauman 2000, 56-72). Similarly, power that one possesses can be indicated by one's ability to escape from previous commitments and thereby keep the alternatives available (ibid., 190; See also, Howard 2007, 35-39).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's individualization thesis, unlike Giddens and Bauman's arguments to the extremes either of continuity or discontinuity, stress on how individuals are able to make use of biographical prototypes to lead an experimental 'life of one's own.' Such precarious freedom is initiated by the expansion of welfare state and the cultural democratization process in the west. By offering basic care, such as universal minimum wage, the welfare state allows more career options for individuals, hence the development of various self-identities rather than forming identity depending on work, family, or religion. On the other hand, democracy expands beyond the realm of politics and has become the basic component of western culture, enabling and deifying leading a 'life of one's own.' The reflexive individuals are not only encouraged but also compelled by social institutions to construct their own biography in a way of experiment, a logic by which the individuals creatively utilize the biographical goods or resources to optimize and make harmony the invented biography (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 23-27).

The departure from previous or traditional social bonds by no means, nonetheless, indicates that the connection between social institutions and individuals in late modernity is cut off. Quite the opposite, to develop the life of one's own, individuals entirely depend on institutions since the latter offers guidelines of 'self-organization and self-thematization of people's biographies (ibid., 25).' For example, education system shaped the values of running a life of one's own, while the labor market disposes the human resources by providing skill trainings, advertising positions, etc. It indicates a two-fold process: disembedding from the traditional institutions and re-embedding into the new ones. Those who refuse or fail to re-embed might be penalized, mostly financially (ibid., 27). On the other hand, disembedding from the traditions does not lead to the complete disappear of them as traditions are to be harnessed and reinvented to facilitate the construction of modern individuality. In the course of globalization, increasing social mobility presents to individuals regional cultures cross the border, such that individuals have the opportunity and are

forced to combine different traditions to form new identity. The conflicts of identities are thus the basic character of second modernity (ibid., 27).

2.3.3 Individualization of Chinese Society

The economic reform since 1980 has initiated not only rapid economic growth but also the individualization of Chinese society. Yan Yunxiang argues, despite of similarities the individualization in China shared with its Western Europe counterpart including the 'do-it-yourself' biography and individuals who are compelled to be independent, there are significant discrepancies of the Chinese model of individualization in terms of the following four aspects (Yan 2009: 287-292):

A) Self-identity has never become the consequential result of individualization of China, unlike Western Europe where identity serves as the core of political life. In the west, the formation of identity was motivated by individualization in a way that self-recognition is championed by social institutions and with the need that individuals demand, though some doubt the possibility of success, the secure and consistent narratives of the self. The position of self-identity in China is replaced by social mobility, one of the most important permissions that the party-state endowed to the citizens. Self-identity, in this context, is shaped largely in terms of mobility and locality, which can be demonstrated by the discourse of dividing residence in urban regions into local residence and outsiders. The outsider, usually the rural workers from villages in the most underdeveloped areas, sometimes weaponize their identity in the protests for equal shares of social care to the urban citizens. In other words, identity in post-reform China has less to do with self-recognition as it provides few about the cultural nature of specific social groups and the interpretation of the relevant experiences, but with elevation of life standard. The evocation of identity in China has to be understood from the pragmatic, realistic, and materialistic perspectives.

B) The China version is developed without the two foundations of the western version: the welfare state backing up individuals economically and the cultural democratization offering ideological resources for shaping self-realized individuals. China's institutions since 1980 have shown opposite tendency that the party-state retreated from most realms of social welfare such as the privatization of medical system. Citizens had been relying on themselves more for pension and medical insurance, which contrast the west where citizens worry less about these issues as the welfare state covers them to the different extent. Besides, the culture of democracy rarely came

into being through the entire line of Chinese history. The CPC did initiate political reform in the 1980s, but suddenly terminated it as they evaluated the 1989 protests. The party-state demonstrates great caution regarding individualistic political claim of civil rights, preventing the claims from catalyzing large-scale uprisings. Only claims on materialistic issues like labor conflicts are allowed with limitations, including the restriction of collective actions and the propagandas directly opposing the government. To overcome the economic insecurity, individuals are forced to resort to family for support, hence the acceleration of social stratification and re-embedment.

C) The individualization occurs in Chinese society where is characterized by both the first and second modernity; the former, associated with industrialization, usually constitutes the foundation of the latter in Western Europe. The notion of individualism in China is rather underdeveloped in terms that it is always interpreted as selfishness and self-centeredness, negatively deconstructing the order and morality of the society. As traditional social categories like family does not collapse, the individualization of Chinese society may not necessarily lead to the isolated self as it did in the west.

D) The individualization in China is state-managed instead of growing spontaneously. Regarding individuals' assertions of rights, the Chinese party-state regulate on three levels. The party-state primarily protect individuals economic over political life as the challenge directly against the socialist regime is harshly forbidden. Then, the responses to right assertions are by no means equal, usually favoring specific social groups such as college students, intellectuals, and civil servants, while workers and peasants have been less protected. Finally, as demonstrated above, the management of state opens the window of protests larger for individualistic actions than collective actions. As the results of the party-state's control over individualizing civil society, individuals might simultaneously re-embed into traditional institutions like family and maintain autonomous identity to some extents.

Chapter Three - Methodology

By examining the formation of the familial views of the tongzhi working for the Chinese party-state, the current study aims to explore the process of how the Chinese society has been individualized through the interactions among sexuality, family, and state. As individualization theses maintain that individualization is a discursive field where individual construct biography (Howard 2007), semi-structured in-depth interviews are applied to gather the narratives. In general, the interviews have two focuses. First, it will explore the *categorization and classification process* regarding the family of the tongzhi working for the party-state; specifically, it involves the intellectually intersubjective processes and dynamics that how the individuals locate family in their complex conceptual horizon. Then, it will explore the *social process* which influences the tongzhi working for the party-state to construct their views on family; specifically, it involves other individuals from the interaction with whom the tongzhi working for the party-state import or export their ideas on family, and how this 'secondary' familial relations (the relations involving the discussions or communications regarding family) are established. In particular, the interview questions are primarily on 'what do you think of X' and 'what makes you think so.'

3.1 Research Design

The interview consists of three modules. Firstly, the personal information and identity are recorded, including demographic information (age, location, type of household registration), work (type of the job, hierarchy of the position, party membership, content of the job), family (type of the family, number of households, living arrangement, parents' marital status, brothers and sisters, grandparents living status), homosexual identity (self-identification, public identification).

Secondly, it inquiries about interviewees' views in relation to family and the experiences that help form such views in the following fields.

a) *Ideal family*. In this section, the interviewees will be asked to describe their imaginations about an ideal family that they desire. By portraying an ideal family, it allows revealing what key features are the most desired by the interviewees and to what extent they desire. The tensions inside the family can be unpacked as well by examining the interviewees' imaginations about an

ideal family and the comparisons they are to make between their actual family and imagined family.

b) *Relationships with the family members.* In this section, the interviewees will be asked to comment on the relationships between them and other family members. Specifically, the family members are divided into two groups: immediate members including parents, brothers/sisters, and grandparents; siblings including cousins, uncles, aunts, etc. It allows the investigation of the interactions between interviewees and their parents, cousins, and other siblings, hence the structure of intimacy of the family.

c) *Filial piety.* In this section, the interviewees will be asked to describe filial piety in their own terms and to share their views on this cultural norm. In general, filial piety is one of the significant components of traditional Confucian doctrines which regulate and normalize the relationship among generations within a family. It puts the younger generation in a subordinate position in relation to the elder generation, though major transformations have occurred in the past decades since the founding of the PRC in 1949 and the economic reform in the 1980s. Hence, the inquiry of people's views on the cultural norm of filial piety allows us to unpack the boundaries set between the younger and elder generation in the family as well as the formation of which. Intergenerational intimacy and communication should be revealed.

d) *Intimate relationship, marriage, and duty of reproduction.* In this section, the interviewees will be asked to comment on marriage as an institution, describe their expectations of intimate relationships or marriage, and explain their views by their experiences. This part allows the inquiry into the process of family formation. Also, the reproduction duty is deemed a major part of norms of filial piety. It is expected to demonstrate the maintenance of, the possible transformation of the institution of marriage, the interactions among various parties about the family continuation, and as well as the strategies adopted by male homosexuals to deal with heterosexual norms.

Thirdly, it explores the interviewees' interactions with the Chinese party-state and the relationship between their homosexuality and their experiences of working for the party-state.

a) *Homosexuality.* In this section, the interviewees will be asked about their experiences of

identifying themselves as homosexual and coming out to their family members. This section allows me to explore the formation of homosexual identity and the process of how individuals cope with various social pressure while establishing self-identification. Also, it enables the investigation of how the family co-produces homosexuality and its impact on the reproduction of family and familial views.

b) *Working for the party-state.* In this section, the interviewees' will be asked about their motivations and experiences in joining the CPC or working at the organizations run by the party-state (including government branches, public institutions, and state-owned enterprises). This section allows me to answer the question of why a homosexual individual embraces an anti-homosexual party-state and to explore the process of how the interviewees negotiate with the tensions among them.

c) The intersection between homosexuality and the party-state. In this section, the interviewees will be asked to address the question that if they have perceived any tension between being homosexual and being a party member/working for the party-state. It allows the examination of how the tongzhi who is a party member or working for the party-state deal with the tension, hence the revealment of how the state interacts with the family and homosexuality.

3.2 Data Collection and Reflections

The current study has conducted 20 interviews by applying snowball sampling as a strategy of data collection. The primary object of this research is the tongzhi working for the party-state. By 'working for the party-state,' it means the institutions owned by the state, in which a party committee takes the supreme power within this institution. In general, the basic criterion of sample selection is that the participants should have sufficient chances to be involved in the ideological activities. It includes but is not limited to the tongzhi a) who is a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), regardless of his formal occupation; b) who is currently working for the state-owned enterprise for more than two years; c) who is currently working for the 'shiye danwei (public institutions owned by the party-state)' owned by the state as the executive staff more than two years, such as the public primary school, public hospital, etc.; d) who is currently working in the central/local government sector, regardless of the duration of his current occupation.

For a), all the members of the CCP are required to take periodic courses to learn the official

ideology and the policies recently released by the central or local government, thereby they can be seen as largely involved in official ideological discourse regardless of the occupation. For b) and c), compared to executive staff in the public institutions owned by the party-state, the professional employers are relatively less required to be actively involved in the ideological issues, although some; therefore, professional staff is excluded from the sample. For d), regardless of the party membership, all the employers of the central and local government sectors are actively and frequently involved in the ideological issues; in fact, the lack of party membership would even be a primary dilemma for the government employers' career, so that even those do not have the party membership always actively participate in the ideological activities.

The topic of this study is sensitive since the non-heteronormative communities have been continuously stigmatized and decriminalized in the PRC. During the recruitment process for this study, my interview invitations were turned down by many invitees due to their worry about the sensitiveness and the sequent damage to their career. I used to ask one of my acquaintances to send the invitation message in a WeChat group which is an exclusive group chat for the tongzhi working in the government. The size of the group was about 60 individuals and none of them decide to participate in the project. According to my acquaintance, most of them thought the topic was too sensitive and that they did not want a stranger to know about their identity, a tongzhi working in the government. They were afraid that the leak of their secret could let them lose their job. I also published the invitation in my WeChat timeline and asked my friends to forward it, which, not surprisingly, received no response even though I made the announcement of my identity as a queer. As a result, more than half of the interviewees were people whom I already knew, and the rest were friends of theirs. The data of this project is thus entirely based on the trust among acquaintances.

There are pros and cons of this kind of data collection approach. Apparently, the interviewees recruited based on familiarity will share a large level of trust with the interviewer, which is especially helpful for the exploration of a sensitive topic such as this one. Besides the familiarity, the trust was also from the sense of safety of being interviewed by another queer. The story of them working for the party-state where the explosion of identity might result in serious stigmatization would be inaccessible to a person out of the queer community in China. These two factors, invitation through familiarity and conducting the interview as a queer, jointly secure access to the data of this study.

On the other hand, the variety of data is subsequently limited due to the nature of snowball sampling. I am a 23-year-old student with a social network mostly based on students. Hence, the age variety of the interviewees who were recruited directly by me was small, mostly from 21 to 28 with an exception of 36. Also, those who were invited by my acquaintances were in a small range also. The consequence of the relative lack of variety is that the majority of my interviewees might not have affluent experiences working for the party-state. Besides, as will be discussed deliberately in the later sections, the youngsters in China are usually under the pressure of having a heterosexual marriage and their own kids through sexual intercourse. For tongzhi, such a task is usually difficult to take. Ideally, one's career and family ought to support each other, though most people might not own a promising career and a happy and supportive family in the meantime. Hence, the youngsters in China usually use their studies or career as an excuse to resist the pressure of getting married in their early 20s. It raises the problem that for most interviewees in this study, who were in their early 20s, marriage might not be as urgent as those older, which might lead to their insensitivity to such pressure and its consequence in their workplace. In other words, the reason that they were feeling fine about not getting married might be they were not old enough to suffer from it. However, since I have limited access to the data from those older, this study might not be able to fix the problem.

Moreover, the topic of this study might be uncomfortable to some of the interviewees since it contained a discussion of heteronormative nationalism in China, of which the tongzhi working for the party-state might be the prior victims. The actual number of interviews conducted is 21, but one of the interviewees did not allow me to use his interview as the data for this study since I annoyed him when asking him to comment on the situation of the tongzhi working for the party-state. During the interview, he insisted firmly that the tongzhi working for the party-state, as far as he was concerned, were not bad. When I raised the evidence of the antithesis of his, he was annoyed. My way of asking made him feel that I was suggesting that the Chinese government was oppressing sexual minorities. Combining with the fact that this thesis will constitute the degree project published on the platform of a western university in English, he then doubted that my motivation for this study was to provide negative information to the West and to defame China. Without his consent, I have to remove his interview from my database. All the participant profiles and analyses in this thesis will not include any information concerning this interviewee.

Overall, 20 interviews have been conducted in Chinese. Specifically, 12 out of 20 interviewees were invited by me as they had been my personal contacts while the rest were recruited by the invitations sent by other interviewees and my friends. 12 of them were party members while the rest worked in organizations run by the party-state without having party membership except for one who was working in a private corporation while being a party member. 5 out of 12 party members were students at the time of the interview, which means they were not employed by any organization. All the interviews were conducted virtually and in Chinese. 17 of them were conducted via Tencent Meeting through video call (a Chinese version of Zoom) and were all recorded under the consent of the interviewees. The rest were conducted via WeChat voice call without a camera opening and 2 of them were recorded under the consent of the interviewees.

As stated above, all the records of the interviews were made with the consent of the interviewees. The interviewees were promised that all their personal information would be used for the purpose of analysis only and all the interviewees presented in this thesis have been anonymized. Any detailed information that might be traced to persons will not be presented in this thesis. Besides, the interviewer did not judge the interviewees' opinions (Creswell and Poth, 2017). For example, the interviewer did not comment on a decision that the interviewee told me as 'wrong.' Yet, the interviewer widely used positive responses to encourage the interviewees to carry on the stories, including showing sympathy for a pathetic story or confirming the usefulness of the stories to the interviewees. Also, I refrained from involving my personal views in the conversations as much as I can do. Occasionally, the interviewees would ask for my comments on their points of view. Under this circumstance, I usually promised them a later response or comment after the interviews and off the record. The ideas stated after the formal interview were not used for the analysis unless the consent of the interviewees. Yet, admittedly, these informal data would influence the way the data would be analyzed.

Chapter Four - Negotiating with the Family: Economic Autonomy, Social Mobility, and Familial Intimacy

This section will analyze tongzhi's negotiation process for life of one's own with the family. By presenting the narratives of four interviewees, Lejun, Chao, Lu, and Ma, it identifies economic autonomy and social mobility as the central conditions in exchange of self-autonomy necessary to achieve the individualization project. Familial intimacy, on the other hand, hinders the visibility of homosexuality and hence indicates the re-embedment of individuals into the family. The process ultimately implicates that individualization project in contemporary Chinese society is jointly marked by both first and second modernity.

4.1 Exchanging Self-autonomy by Economic Autonomy and Social Mobility

Although the specific terminology of 'life of one's own' is usually interpreted as selfishness, as demonstrated in the theory section, the growing notion of pursuing self-determined lifestyle can nonetheless observed in China. Homosexuality has never become a self-recognized identity and gained public visibility until the recent twenty years. In other words, being homosexual goes beyond a merely sexual preference which must be carefully kept to oneself; in fact, there is rising self-consciousness of homosexuality as a distinct system of life involving different principles, practices, cultures, and strategies, compared to their heteronormative counterpart. Nonetheless, it by no means indicates the collapse of the dominance of heteronormative discourse even among tongzhi; rather, it suggests that the awareness of independent homosexuality becomes self-maintained and systematic, meaning tongzhi's acceptance and willingness of conducting alternative practices regarding various aspects in the life world.

On the other hand, the self-identity of homosexuality is developed by the tension between institutionalized individualism and persistent inequality, where grows the more imperative desires of a distinct and self-maintained lifestyle. It can be identified in contemporary public media in China, as described in the literature section, the culture of boy's same sex romantic relationship. The BL (boys' love in short) cultural product helps build the imagination of the pure relationship between youth men, a promising and seducing image that never appeared until two decades ago, thereby construct contemporary homosexuality in terms of pure relationship. Giddens (1991, 186) sees pure relationship as a key to individualization project as it allows the continuous reflection

and self-understanding between the two and isolate the relationship from traditional duties. Intimacy in the relationship is to be constructed solely by the two involved rather than as a byproduct of cultural or social pre-determined life task. BL products, rapidly increasing the visibility of homosexuality, then allow the homosexual relationship to be a collective imagination and to be distinct from its heterosexual counterpart. Interviewees in this study commonly reported how they used to enjoy or have been enjoying the BL products. Lejun, for instance, told me about one of his favorite Bilibili Up (means the online video author, like Youtuber) who deliberately compose vlog on his sweet and romantic life with his boyfriend over 7 years. In interviewees then explicitly or implicitly expressed how these videos shape their imagination of intimate relationship of their own.

What sharply contrasts the attractive image of same sex pure relationship is the persistent and systematic oppression over sexual minorities. The structure of this inequality is similar to what Steven Seidman (2004) described in 'Beyond the Closet' in terms of the paradox between increasing social acceptance of homosexuality and sexual minorities' unwillingness to identify themselves publicly. In this regard, BL products only make same sex relationship imaginable but not viable and culturally legitimate. Structural settings remain relatively inert to the rapidly changing imagination in a way that, for example, reproduction is yet seen more of a duty of descendants rather than a component of life of one's own, evidently that the Confucius doctrines of filial piety is frequently invoked by the parents to urge their adult children to get married and have children. Hence, institutionalized individualism is proved again an ongoing and incomplete process in China as there are fixed restricted zone where individuals are not to improvise on their life choices. Some of interviewees, admittedly, did not report their parents' avidness of grandchildren, but it nonetheless does not suggest that visible homosexuality is not hurtful to the maintenance of the family.

Promoted by neo-familism that the descendants' happiness has been the center of modern Chinese families, a zone for negotiation and manipulation is made possible. As individualization is initiated aligning with economic success, self-identity has aroused in a way that the question of 'who am I' has been meditated more than ever. On the one hand, coming out as a life decision is shown as a viable alternative rather than the mission impossible, as the direct effect of globalization and the introduction of transnational culture. On the other hand, the economic reform deeply inserts economic status as the core element in contemporary Chinese society. The

trend is reflected by not only the party-state's social contract with the civil society that the party-state earned legitimacy through rapid economic growth but also the fact that happiness is primarily defined by materialistic success (Yan 2018, 198). Tongzhi has to carve out and establish their self-autonomy primarily through the evidence of their economic capacity to respond to the concerns of the family. The space for their self-autonomy is consequently squeezed if they failed to prove :

Daiyi: *You used to tell me that you had not come out to the family yet. Do you want to do that?*
Lejun: *Sure, but I'm just too scared to do it.*
Daiyi: *Since when did you begin to have this thought?*
Lejun: *Maybe when I was in college. Because they asked me if I had a girlfriend like every day. Ever since I had entered college, my parents and all my elder relatives subtly asked if have any relationship with a girl, saying something repeatedly like it's totally fine for a college student to have a relationship. Even my dad joked with me that I can apply for a 'girlfriend fund' which can be added to the living expenses they would give to me. You see? They thought that I would be seduced to share some of my secrets with them, only I refused to. They put such pressure on me since my first year in college, which became more intense as I was about to graduate and seek a job.*

Economic autonomy here demonstrated itself as the jetton for life of one's own. Lejun was a college student and a party member by the time of our interview. He had just received an offer from a state-owned enterprise far away from his hometown. His economic autonomy is thus embryonic in terms that he had not reached financial independence but on a good standing of achieving one in the future. Lejun's father was attempting to cut a deal with his son by monetizing a romantic relationship as a means for Lejun to gain his economic autonomy, which reveals marriage in China as a project requiring devotion and corporation across the entire family. As discussed elsewhere, Chinese family actively supports sons or brothers in the family financially to enhance their marriageability by, for instance, purchasing 'marriage housing' for the new couples, which is seen as a collective effort to maintain and strengthen the masculinity of the adult male family members (Driessen and Sier, 2021). Lejun had to pretend to be too busy with his starting career to have a relationship immediately. On behalf of Lejun, and other interviewees, a life of one's own in terms of homosexuality is not deserved if they do not have a decent job and be able to support themselves. The more aggressive the pressure, the more he wanted to come out to his parents, yet he was not prepared to afford the results since he had not been financially independent of his parents. In this way, the intimacy between the parents and son dissolved, and

homosexuality was politicalized in the family as the idea that identity politics can be the final solution to the fight for self-autonomy.

In the family, using career as an excuse to avoid marriage is commonly seen both in homosexual and heterosexual youths, indicating a zone left by social institutions for them to develop their individualization project. This interaction between the institution of family and the self is guided by economic individualism in a way that individuals are compelled to make their own career decisions by invoking various resources and opportunities. As long as the goal is set to achieve economic autonomy as abundant as possible, the family will then leave the choice of pathway to the descendants, albeit debates might occur over what kinds of career might be optimal. Also, the fact that such an excuse is usually sufficient serves as the evidence that individuals are required to be active on contributing to their own success – the family gets out of the way so long as individuals appears to be active on designing their career, such as a clear career goal or decent income:

Growing up, my mom has never forced me to do anything I didn't want, never. She always respects my will. All the major decisions have been made all by myself, she never intervenes. I mean, she sometimes would offer some suggestions out of kindness, but she would always add that 'this is just my thought, don't feel like you have to take that, I respect your decision anyway.' I told her that I wouldn't get married and would remain singleton for my lifetime, and she totally understood me. She even said that she would go talk to my dad to accept it. (Chao)

Chao demonstrated how his mother had been respected his self-autonomy, which, at first glance, seemed to be the result of his mother's personality and educational philosophy. What he did not make explicit was how he had been normatively a 'good child' in Chinese culture ever since his childhood. Chao is a scholar in a top university in China, with decent amount of income – he managed to live in a nice apartment in the downtown of the biggest city in China where the rental is unreasonably prohibitive. The job is also an indicator of an exemplar biography in a way that one has to accumulate since the beginning of early education to have a academic position in a top university. To achieve this, he received his bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degree all in national or world-renowned institutions, the process of which has been highly competitive. It means that he must keep his biography accurately normative and avoid any possible deviance. An academic position in China, though not as financially rewarding as a management position in an enterprise

with good profit, is nonetheless decent enough for ordinary people, left alone the fact that intellectuals are considered upper-class in general.

My paternal grandma used to urge me to get in a relationship and get married. She wanted to have a grand grandchild. Well, I showed a not very nice attitude when she made these proposals, I just straightly got her back, and she never mentioned it. Then, she has several sons who have given her many grandchildren. Maybe she's got enough…Compared to my paternal relatives, I have a stronger bond with my maternal relatives. My maternal grandparents never mentioned the marriage to me. (Is it because they don't care, or because they cherish your feelings?) I think my mom and all my maternal relatives are relatively more open-minded. My maternal grandparents were open-minded when they were parents. Now there is one generation between us, they still cherish the principle of 'no intervention.' So, when we gather and talk, they care about my fitness, for example, if the pressure of working in Shanghai is too heavy. Nothing more than that. They never ask about anything about your private life. (Chao)

Not surprisingly, other relatives of Chao admitted his self-autonomy. The way how he directly 'got back' to her paternal grandma is persuasive evidence of how economic decency might strengthen one regarding their life decisions. In this case, traditional familial ideology, the duty of marriage and reproduction in particular, has to give way to economic capacity and thus facilitate individualization. Another key factor should be noticed here is social mobility. Chao worked in the city thousand miles away from his hometown, which allows him to ignore the instructions from the elders in the family with ignorable setback. As Yan (2009) argued, social mobility is a key initiator of detraditionalization since it disembeds individuals from the bonds with the family and local community by cutting off the face-to-face daily communication which reinforces the pre-determined social categories. Should individuals failed in meeting one of the two conditions of economic autonomy and social mobility, one another would still be functionable, yet the ultimate result fades.

My paternal relatives live close to us. Two of my father's brothers and their sons live in the same neighborhood as ours. It's quite close. His sisters live a bit further away from us, but not too much. We gather around quite often. The whole family is very harmonious. Although our grandparents have gone, we cousins still have dinner together now and then. Every Chinese New Year is a complete one that all the family members would attend Eve's dinner. So, if I chose to come out at this stage, my family would go through a period of chaos. As an indigenous Tianjiner, I think I

have a very strong belonging to the family. So I used to have this idea of coming out to the family since I want my parents to know who am I, I want them to know the real me. But my mom got cancer two years ago, she was sick for a year. Although she has recovered, I don't think she can take emotional damage. That's why I bring the formal marriage forward the timetable. (Lu)

Social mobility is identified scanty in Lu's case as he never left his hometown for either education or work. The absence of social mobility helps maintain familial bonds in both structural and emotional sense. Living close enough to his parents, Lu has to risk some of his actions regarding intimate relationship being uncovered by his parents who are uncomfortable with homosexuality. Although local urban community in western sense rarely exists in PRC as a result of the atomization project initiated by the party-state since 1949 which destroyed most of local communal bonds, followed by another crisis after economic reform which the massive unemployment from state-owned enterprises resulted in that individuals were to directly connect to labor market, community is yet able to be identified in the regions where family members live relatively closely. It puts Lu in such a position in a local familial network that he must self-discipline his actions, especially those deviant ones such as holding his partners hand in public spaces, to avoid disturbance to the harmony of his family. Lacking social mobility thus hinders his way for self-determined homosexuality and as a fully self-realized individual.

However, even without social mobility, Lu is able to maintain self-autonomy to some extent upon his economic autonomy. Lu is a civil servant in a major city of northern China which allows stable and decent amount of income, like Chao did. Government employment in China may only be terminated if the employee were proved to commit to crimes or other major deviance. The income of civil servants in China consists of modest monthly-paid salaries – modest compared to the positions in profitable private sectors – and impressive amounts of subsidies such as pension, medial insurance, and the gifts endowed at the end of the year. Also, mentioned later by him, his parents had prepared housing for conjugal residence in a neighborhood not too far away from his parents' residence, the property thus made him surpass a number of his contemporaries. It becomes clear that the secure economic standing, albeit some of which were achieved collectively along with family members, carves out a space where the homosexual self-identity grows. Again, nonetheless, the self-autonomy is an incomplete one, such that one needs to invoke other strategies and resources to achieve life of one's own; in Lu's case, he resorts to formal marriage:

Lu: *I am 28 years old now. I want to finish this (marriage) before 30. Last year I was seeing a lesbian, but she couldn't fulfill my expectations. Now I am seeking some professional agencies for formal marriage.*

Daiyi: *Oh, that's new to me. What does such an agency do?*

Lu: *You need to pay fees to get your membership. They would recommend some lesbians from where you live. Then you may want to meet this person physically…Basically, you have two options. One is you join a Wechat group, where you can find it's full of gays and lesbians. You can send a friend request to whomever you are interested in and get to know each other. If you care about your privacy and don't want to expose your identity in public, you need to register your membership and they will match the clients one-on-one. Before that, you need to provide them with your preference and conditions. For instance, appearance, financial capacity, the frequency of visiting each other's home, etc. If you find someone decent, they also provide legal services like helping you notarize premarital properties…*

Daiyi: *What do you expect from your prospective partner?*

Lu: *My expectations…honestly, they are kind of difficult to meet. Firstly, I need her to have her own housing because I might not live with her after getting married. Or, at least, both of us have the capacity of owning two apartments in the same neighborhood…I have my own apartment now, though it is under construction. I hope both apartments can be at a reasonable distance from my parents,' which should be reachable by my car while a bit remote that my parents can't visit too frequently.*

Daiyi: *So, you don't want your parents to visit you?*

Lu: *It's not 'I don't want.' I like talking to them, but if I am to be in this marriage, every time they come, I would have to call my partner to finish the show. That's too inconvenient. This leads to the other requirement. we are supposed to negotiate the frequency of visiting each other's parents. Most people are fine with two to three visits per year. That doesn't work for me. I want once a week. It means I take her to my parents, and she takes me to her parents once a week. So, I might want a local girl. But the criteria seem harsh, I don't think there are too many girls okay with them.*

Formal marriage is one of the strategies utilized by homosexuals of both genders in China to respond to the pressure of marriage and reproduction. The general pattern is a gay marrying a lesbian. Some formal marriages are based on fraud in which the homosexual party intentionally hides his/her sexuality from the partner. For some actors, a formal marriage is the only optimal solution to this conjugal dilemma by which both familial intimacy and self-autonomy can be preserved maximally. Generally, formal marriage is a stopgap in terms that homosexuals would not make such a decision if the non-marriage status is allowed by their family or the surrounding social environment. Hence, previous studies on formal marriage prefer to interpret it as the cruel

oppressive tool over sexual minorities (i.e., Li 2009 and Gallo 2017), which is reasonable and justifiable as the decision of formal marriage had not involved large proportion of reflexivity until recent decades. A fair part of individuals who chose to marry formally never cast doubts on it and saw it actively inevitable in terms that they were not even aware of their homosexuality.

However, formal marriage, upon rising self-recognition of homosexuality in contemporary China, has been characterized more by reflexivity as the evidence of tongzhi creatively shaping a secure biography. In Lu's case, he was firmly determined to execute the plan of formal marriage as a strategy for obtaining life of his own. The fake marriage, to his parents, serves to finish the imperative of having their son establish a separate family, for the sake of him, of course. Yet, the most crucial function of this marriage is to complement what was not met due to lack of social mobility. Living in the new housing with his formal spouse, he will be legitimate to have a private space that is relatively free from surveillance. The point here is not an economic one; he had already been living in that residence even before having a conjugal relationship and there was no condition such that he would not be allowed to move in until marriage. Rather, the residence will serve as a weapon that prevent him from the squeeze of the institution of family. Empirically, he will be able to bring his own partner to his place while the family leaves them alone who thinks the conjugal life should be intervened too much. Since Lu has not finished the project, we have not been able to evaluate how it works; yet it does indicate one of the most significant characters of 'life of one's own' – an experimental life, suggesting that one has to carve out the way for individualization by invoking pieces of biographies in the history instead of a prepared, well-established, and complete biography to borrow directly.

I find it as necessary to address another issue regarding detraditionalization here: given that Lu eventually chose to 'stay in the family,' that he ultimately maintained the bonds to his family geographically and socially, does it prove his decision of formal marriage the evidence that detraditionalization did not occur? The answer is no. Even solely looking at Lu's case, one should not be confused about the relationship between maintaining bonds with certain social categories and the signs of detraditionalization or disembedment. The crux here is the way how Lu deliberately decided to get married and how he creatively designed the entire project, which clearly signifies the second modernity. In the design, Lu shrewdly evaluated the alternatives in hand – his parents' avidness for his marriage, the housing his parents purchased for him, etc. The designing process also counteracted to his self-identity as homosexual, by which family

maintenance developed as an essential component of homosexuality. Adapting Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's terminology, the choice of maintaining familial bonds instead indicates re-embedment where individuals subjectively resort to certain social institutions for self-realization.

The fulfillment of economic autonomy and social mobility can function in another form than in exchange for less intervention from the family – the family is forced to leave the realm of life of one's own instead of permitting the individuals to make decisions independently. This appears to be more of a battle than negotiation on behalf of both parties involved, indicating that individuality, once established by economic autonomy and social mobility, tends to maintain itself, hence reinforcing social inequalities in a distinct way compared to its traditional counterparts by which social categories are the primary principles of maintenance. Ma's explanation is thus an example.

Ma works in a charity that intimately connects with the Department of Civil Affairs of the local government. He has been in charge of project managing and fundraising of the organization, the mission of which he finds valuable and fulfills his morality. Officially, the charity he works for is not affiliated with the local government but has to function following the 'instruction' of the civil affairs department, which means the government reserves the right to make significant organizational decisions. Also, his organization has been sponsored mainly by the government while raising funds partially independently, which enables the employees to earn more than those who work in charities entirely funded by the government. Ma's family members have always been confused by the complicated relationship between his organization and the municipal government of Chongqing and keep deeming him as working for a typical public institution while being paid much higher than a typical civil servant. In other words, his parents and relatives are satisfied with Ma's job, which benefits from stability and high income. Besides, he lived in a major city in southwestern China, where his hometown was hundreds of miles away, so that social mobility is maintained. He so explained the reason why he disliked family gatherings during Chinese New Year:

Another reason I don't like to go home for the New Year is that I don't have much to talk to them. They can barely understand what I am doing but only that I seem to be fine. I told them that my organization cooperates with government agencies, and they turned pretty quiet. Then they tried to comprehend these relationships with their outdated logic as if we are not civil servants yet spending the money from the state. I sensed the value and merit of my job were downgraded. They

felt like I was working in a grey zone, enjoying the money that was not supposed to belong to us because we do get paid pretty well. Yet, they wanted me to join the party and become a formal employee of the government which they thought was more stable and dignified. (Ma)

The last reason that Ma told me about his unwillingness to return to his hometown for the new year is that his father would still be upset that he would not have a heterosexual family. It has been a decade since Ma had come out and about five years since his financial autonomy. Thus, even his parents, who cherish heteronormative values, have accepted this fact as long as Ma refrained from telling them anything about his homosexuality. However, the new year holidays sabotaged the balance as Ma's cousins brought their children to the dinners:

You can see from my father's face that he is so down when my younger cousin brought his son to my home. I don't have a problem with any relative in my generation having a baby, but my father just won't let it go. It reminds him that he would never be a grandfather, which hurts him a lot. This is another reason I don't like to have the new year holidays with them. (Ma)

His description of his family members as ignorant reveals the way that established individuality self-maintains upon the foundation of increasing reflexivity as the individualization project develops. In addition to the fact that Ma was working for decent salaries and living away from the family, he also received master's degree in sociology from a national renowned university. He was familiar with various theories on dominance, among which Foucault was his favorite such that he wrote a whole master's thesis on social inequalities established upon Foucault's theory of power and dominance. In other words, he is fully aware of the kinds of social inequalities he was in trap of and how these mechanisms function. Although the application of sociological theories to social realities can be in various directions, it is interesting enough that his knowledge on dominance helped construct his image as a victim of a heteronormative and patriarchal society. The point here should not be whether he is truly a victim objectively; rather, we should look at how he utilizes the knowledge. It was revealed that he eventually invoked the knowledge as a symbol to differentiate between him and his family members. His family members were determined as ignorant and deprived of the rights to intervene and even comment on his decisions. The value of his job is perceived advanced, something that those less educated and who live in underdeveloped counties are impossible to understand. To clarify, Ma did not imply that such ignorance is tightly bonded with the lower-class; he would actually say that it is on a case-by-case

basis. Yet, it is also safe to identify how he used these social labels to categorize his family members and reinforced the connection between ignorance and certain social hierarchies.

Reflexivity hence is not only an individual character or personality but also developed as self-consciousness in a way that individuals are conscious of the fact that they are reflecting. This indicates the implication of individualization on the reproduction of social inequalities. There have been scholarships arguing that individuality distribute among society in an unequal way, based on that the economically privileged groups have access to more resources to develop individuality (i.e., Howard 2007, 18). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) decline the notion that individualization is advanced in terms of subjectivity, stating that individuality in second modern society is democratized such that it occurs to the lower social hierarchies. However, I want to step further by drawing the line between how reflexivity is practiced in reality and how individuals perceive their level of reflexivity. Ma's case demonstrates that reflexivity is incorporated in self-identity which establishes individuals' perception of their capacity of processing the information they gather from their social settings. Also, we should not forget that Ma's homosexuality and his perceived suppression was the initiator and motivation of him pursuing answers. Individuality is firmly established upon the perception of reflexivity such that the reflections on social inequalities and their dynamics, especially those concerning the success of life of one' s own, gain individualized legitimacy. In other words, perceived reflexivity is thus a toolkit to maintain social inequalities. The newly established boundaries between hierarchies are individualized, consequently.

This part elaborates on how tongzhi invokes economic autonomy and social mobility to achieve self-realization, namely the life of one's own, by presenting the cases of Lejun, Chao, Lu, and Ma. It can also be demonstrated by other interviewees' cases that those who live in the cities distant to their parents and hometown and who can sustain themselves financially usually enjoy more autonomy of designing their own life. The family is hence either willing to or forced to leave the realm of biography design.

4.2 Familial Intimacy and Re-embedment

Economic autonomy and social mobility, as structural opportunities emerged through rapid social transformation, help tongzhi carve out ways for self-autonomy and secure homosexuality. However, they do not lead to legitimate visibility of homosexuality. In fact, most interviewees

chose not to uncover the identity to the family even if the family cannot invoke structural resources to forbid doing so. It indicates that the guarantee of self-autonomy does not necessarily result in a complete life of one's own which generally requires external recognition. By examining the reasons why tongzhi refuses to identify homosexuality to their family members, another key player in tongzhi's familial politics can be revealed, namely, familial intimacy. We shall stick to the four cases of Lejun, Chao, Lu, and Ma.

As presented in the last subsection, Chao and Lu's families, among others, allowed greater self-autonomy of them. It is thus interesting enough that both of them chose not to identify themselves as homosexual to the family. Chao repeatedly described his family members, especially his parents, as 'open-minded,' a term usually used on the elder generations who are generally willing to accept information that they are not familiar with, something even contradicting to the traditions:

I have not come out yet. Well, I still need to be prepared and see how things will go. It means if my family has no problem with my current life and if they don't force me to do anything, I don't think things are as bad as that I have to come out. But if my parents ever forced me to get married as soon as possible, or they completely couldn't understand and respect my way of living, by which I mean my singleton, I might consider confessing to them that I can't get married. Yet, nothing like that ever happened until now. And in the future that I can foresee, I don't think this will happen. I grew up in quite a tolerant environment in the sense that I have very nice parents who relatively respect my individual will. (So you are saying that your parents don't have any problem with your singleton at all?) I mean, of course, they have their preference, which means they hope me to solve my personal problems. But their wish is that I can have a company instead of reproduction. And they haven't imposed their preference on me. (Chao)

The 'open-mindedness' signals the extent to which individualization occurs in Chao's family – the permission to a self-realizing individual. The disembedment from the family, both structurally and culturally, creates another tension for individual seeking ontological security. Here we can identify the definition of 'open-mindedness' in Chao's case. When using 'open-minded' to describe his family members, Chao primarily referred to a clear and well-respected boundary between him and his family members. Interestingly, the open-mindedness of Chao's family members did not entail his coming out to the family. Rather, Chao chose to continue to stay in the closet and maintain the status quo. He views that the exposure of his homosexuality might sabotage the intimacy and harmony that his family has long been maintaining, though he does not

mark any of his family members as homophobic. Individuality being constructed relatively without intervention, the family hence becomes a central part to it, in the same way as how personhood is re-made. Homosexuality, in turn, is institutionally re-connected to the family and allow the institution of family and the values of familism being the essential components.

Likewise, Lu's reasons why he chose to integrate family tightly into his biography also demonstrates how familial intimacy is central to the shaping of homosexuality. Revisiting the interview cited in the last subsection, Lu's family is characterized by harmony instead of open-mindedness as Chao's family did. The harmony to some extent also indicates that self-autonomy of Lu had not been significantly squeezed, at least not to the extent he can sharply perceive. Lu designed his formal marriage project following his two major demands of individual freedom of his homosexual lifestyle and maintenance of intimacy with his family, which, quite evidently, demonstrate how tongzhi improvises or experiments on the way of promoting life of one's own.

In principle, the two ultimate goals are intertwined in a way that the realization of each one is the precondition of one another. To secure the homosexual lifestyle, which means having a boyfriend without intervention from the family, Lu had to respond to the family's expectations of heteronormative marriage and hence the maintenance of familial intimacy. It should argue here that Lu's getting married to please the family was not entirely due to his obligation as a son as his parents' push for his marriage had become less frequent and intense since his sister's marriage. It also consisted of his wish to protect the intimacy already established between him and his family. Thus, to protect familial intimacy, Lu needed to make sure of his control over his own lifestyle. As presented above, the intimacy between Lu and his parents was primarily based on the support that his parents offered and the success of maintaining smooth intergenerational communications. In other words, the fact that his parents care about and understand him is the key to their close relationship.

Since Lu cannot change his homosexuality while his family cannot accept it, the optimal way to secure this intimacy that is based on mutual understanding is to use a formal marriage as a cover to secure his freedom of a homosexual lifestyle. In this way, Lu would not have to bear the disappointment of his parents not seeing their son having his own family on the one hand, and risk intergenerational communications that can be affected by the disagreement with his homosexuality on the other. Although Lu's formal marriage is a trade in terms that he exchanged

his submission to the heteronormative marriage for the reservation of his self-autonomy in his own romantic relationship, it should be noted here that Lu designed and executed his project quite actively unlike those who take this action only when there are no other options left. When telling this story, Lu appeared firmed and confident about his plan rather than being upset about being bullied by the familial norms. In other words, he was happy to sacrifice to his family. Here, Lejun's explanation about how he differentiates his father with his grandfather and the extent to which he is willing to sacrifice self-autonomy sharply exhibits how familial intimacy is central to pursuing a life of one's own:

Daiyi: *Did he push you to perform your reproduction duty?*

Lejun: *Speaking of that…You know what, once during one of our family gatherings, my grandpa kind of joked to other family members, like so proudly, saying that he wanted a grand grandson. Other people went along with him like 'keep fit grandpa, live till your 100 years old' and anything like that. Honestly, I felt very sad hearing these words since I don't think I can ever fulfill this expectation. My grandpa laughed so happily, other relatives echoed so joyfully and naturally. But I know from my inside that I can't do that. You can see from his smiling face that he's got this expectation to this grand grandchild, he wanted a 四世同堂 (sishi tongtang, four generations living under one roof). That could be the last and biggest wish for one who can live that long. But I can't please him. I'm totally willing to marry a lesbian and have a baby for the sake of my grandparents. But I can't accept that you morally kidnap me. My desire of pleasing my grandpa is naturally, from the inside. That's how I'm filial. But my dad made it a kind of obeyance. It's like if I were not to do this, I am unfilial. Only if I were to do so, I went nearly to a filial son and grandson. That's not right. Maybe I'm just flattering myself. Like only if I do this actively, naturally, then I'm high-class and filial.*

The citation above vividly shows that the inclination of familial values and practices varies along with the micro-interaction within the family. For Lejun, the political action of manifesting his homosexuality only emerges as an alternative if he were deprived of all the spaces living as a homosexual. The agenda is established by his parents' efforts on continuing the family. However, Lejun juxtaposed the two contradictory projects of coming out and seeking formal marriage as the final measurement against his family's pressure. In other words, both coming out and seeking formal marriage are denials of one another. It is also worth noticing the way how Lejun reacted differently to his parents and grandparents about the fact that he was incapable of heteronormative marriage. The well-maintained intimacy between him and his grandparents prevails over that

between him and his parents. In this sense, the project of coming out was designed to react to his parents while formal marriage was for the sake of his grandparents.

Rather than proving how hard the familial values squeeze the visibility of homosexuality, I want to stress here the point that it discloses the process in which tongzhi strives to re-embed into the institutions they used to disembed from. To be clear, re-embedment is by no means merely the opposition of disembedment or detraditionalization. The essential discrepancy lies on reflexivity. The traditional institutions and social categories are fixed and pre-determined, meaning that individuals live within them do not typically examine and explore the reason of their existence. The pre-modern social categories are also characterized by integrality and universal legitimacy. As a self-maintained cosmology, one has little access to the resources that can call it into question. Individualization, occurring along with second modernity, is such a process that the social categories collapse into pieces and becoming fragile, allowing individuals to utilize only pieces of them which are useful to build a continuous, persistent, individualized biography. Re-embedment, as presented above, is the process that individuals resort to previous social categories for certainties and continuity of their biographies. By doing so, individuals reflexively attempt to remake a self-maintained self-image. In this case, tongzhi resorts to familial intimacy for reconstructing ontological security which otherwise will destroy the persistence of their homosexuality since the latter is tightly bonded with the family through the intimate turn in neo-familism. Nonetheless, second modernity is not the only force driving individualization of tongzhi. Beck argues that individualization in second modernity is characterized by disembedment without re-embedment; re-embedment is one of the features of first modernity (in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 203; See also Howard 2007, 27), which generally lacks reflexivity. The demand of familial intimacy thus demonstrates the hybridity of first and second modernity in Chinese society, which proves Yan's argument (2009, 291). The re-embedment, looking at contemporary Chinese society, does not only take place in the realm of family; rather, once the attempt to re-embed into the family, tongzhi turns to be integrated into other social entities. As the belonging to the family had been pretty much cut off, Ma turned to the homosexual community, yet it ended up in disappointment:

I'm a person who enjoys community. I like the feeling of belonging to a non-mainstream community. When I was in the third year of high school, I traveled to Chongqing to find the tongzhi community. It was warm and fun, you know, the feeling of people doing something together. The community meant a family to me in

the first place. Then unfortunate things happened, then it collapsed. Because we become mature, and we get along with each other as friends, not family. So, the tongzhi community is more of a symbol of friendship, it doesn't have any political implications to allow you to accomplish some missions such as gender or sexual equality. I used to pursue this political mission, for example, gender equality. This doesn't exist in China. Everyone's been thinking of living their personal lives happily without caring about a societal movement that can bring them legal rights. You know, people are like they only care about if they have a lover. Fewer voices for equality can be recognized in the public space these days. (Ma)

As neither goals of familial intimacy nor space for life of one's own were met in the family, Ma had been through a detachment from the family. Given that the Chinese party-state cautiously manage the individualization of the society by censoring any collective actions on behalf of civil society (Yan 2009, 278), the resort to tongzhi community failed not surprisingly. At the beginning of the interview, he described his ideal family type completely without involving intergenerational relationships. He only termed the life between him and his potential partner merely as a relationship rather than family. In other words, 'family' became both a symbol and an organization that he devoted himself to getting rid of. Yet, the exile did not stop in front of the border of the family. His turn to tongzhi community also failed due to its depoliticalized nature. As Ma continued to tell later, he refused to participate in a collective project aiming at gender equality since he deemed it unsustainable and impossible. Although Ma firmly established self-identity, he did so by insulating the family completely from homosexuality. His individualized biography signals more of the version in second modernity that he has to rely completely on other social institutions such as work and labor market and is compelled to face fragility of biography.

4.3 Summary of the Chapter

Presenting four cases with different level of structural capacity and emotional intimacy, this section explores how tongzhi negotiate homosexuality within the realm of the family. Economic autonomy and social mobility are usually the jetton in the game of family politics in exchange to the space for self-autonomy; the absence of which has to be complemented by creatively invoking other opportunities and means, the process of which indicates the experimental nature of life of one's own in the individualization project. With no historically prepared biography to follow, tongzhi is compelled to improvise for the sake of self-realization by utilizing various identity, discursive, and material resources. However, even though the guarantee of self-autonomy through economic autonomy and social mobility allows the development of individualized homosexual

self-identity, it does not necessarily lead to the public or familial recognition of homosexuality due to tongzhi's demands of familial intimacy as an effort of re-embeding into the institution of the family. The making of homosexuality in the realm of family reflects the hybridity of both first and second modernity in a way that both re-embedment to pre-determined social categories and the reflexive nature of such an action can be identified.

Chapter Five - Negotiating with the Party-state: Individualizing Party Membership and Atomizing Homosexuality

In this chapter, I will present the process of how party-member tongzhi construct their party membership under the background of the individualization process of Chinese society and how they deal with the tension between their homosexuality and working for the party-state. This chapter analyzes the interviewees' narratives of their motivations for joining the party and of how they justify their party membership under the pressure that party membership has been combined with negative impressions due to long-lasting corruptions and privileges, etc. Finally, it presents the process of how the interviewees negotiate the tension between homosexuality and the party-state's regulations. Ultimately, working for the party-state reflects even more obvious tendency of re-embedment as individuals seek certainties in an individualized society, the process of which is thus strongly characterized by the hybridity of first and second modernity, though the former is demonstrated more than the latter since the party-state especially forbid any visibility of homosexuality within its reach in the workplace.

5.1 Reconstructing Party Membership with Utilitarianism and Populism

Initially, the party membership in the socialist era is an identity that needs to be achieved following the logic of accumulation, which Bauman (2000, 56) argues as the feature of modernity in industrial societies. To join the party, one has to go through a set of strict procedures which include the thorough scrutiny over one's biography. In the socialist era, the figure of the party is quasi-religious in terms that joining the party equals to devote oneself into an endless mission beneficial to the universe, which functions like religion to continue one's life into eternity as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argued (2002, 153). The motivation for joining the party has to be deified in terms of devoting to the common good and purely from deep heart. The bonds to the party-state is hence similar to the bonds to traditional social categories in pre-modern society.

The party's figure has been constructed not only as a quasi-religious idol but also as a good cornerstone of one's worldly success. These two figures are also the major attractions of the applicants who want to join the party, while the desire of the latter represents the interviewees in this study better. All 12 party members in this study confessed their motivations for joining the

party as 'utilitarian,' by which they imply a promising future life that they believe can be assured by the party membership:

The answer is quite simple: others handed in their application, and so did I. The benefits might not be so significant when being a college student, nonetheless, your career will greatly benefit from the party membership. It is very helpful to your profile, regardless of whether you are seeking a job in the private sector or working for the party-state. (So, you think it has nothing to do with your recognition of the ideas of the party?) No, not at all. All the applicants I knew in the college were doing this for their benefit, no exception. It doesn't matter whether you recognize it or not. You join, you become one of them. (Shuo)

If you want to work for the party-state, party membership is usually required. Maybe a faculty member in college does not require it, but it's a mandate for administrative positions. Also, it's absolutely required if you want to be a civil servant. Generally, you get more choices when seeking a job if you are a party member…When I was handing in my application, I didn't know much about these merits. (Zhao)

I mean, there's no obvious disadvantage to joining the party, so why not? I can't tell you what the benefit exactly is, I just have this feeling that it's good being a party member. (Ze)

The demonstration of motivation for joining the party was lined up with different extents to which utilitarianism was practiced. Party membership, in turn, reflects individuals in seek for certainties in an increasingly individualized society. Among others, Shuo has the closest relationship with the party-state. He was a civil servant in the local government, Zhao was a party member working at a private college, and Ze was merely a college student party member. Shuo's experiences have allowed him to clarify what exactly he would gain by joining the party. In general, it would be difficult for a non-party member to get a promotion in the government as the party has been committed to guaranteeing its members control over the critical positions in the government. The importance of party membership for promotion decreases in public institutions and state-owned enterprises due to a more significant number of professional positions that do not require political loyalty as much. Also, such a criterion is conventional rather than stated in official human resources regulations as a mandatory percentage of party members on the decision boards. Nonetheless, a lack of party membership does have an impact on one's career in the party-state.

However, same as Zhao and Ze, Shuo did not realize these advantages when he was applying in the first place, which again demonstrates the irreflexive nature of the action of seeking party membership. All the party member interviewees in this study submitted applications in college, which suggests they are limited to finding any published documentation about this conventional criterion but learning it from others. In fact, the privilege of being a party member has been pictured in a rather vague way that all the interviewees who referred to their utilitarian motivation seldom fully realized the exact components of 'utility.' Even those who claimed their motivation without referring to utilitarianism contain the element of it. As introduced in the last chapter, Chao is a faculty member in a China's top university. He joined the party about 15 years ago when he was still in college. At the time, he kept a record among his cohort that he continuously ranked as the top-one student in terms of academic performance. He explained his motivation for joining the party as 'natural' with few utilitarian considerations:

It [joining the party] was honorable to me. For me, like most of the other applicants, it was a sign of being positive. Why? Cause back in college, it was not so easy to join the party. Usually, only the students deemed as the best by the teachers can have it. For a student who was outstanding since his childhood, he would certainly want to be a party member. Like we all want to be a 'three-merit student.' So, I think it doesn't have so much to do with ideologies or utilitarianism. It is more like a habitus formulated in a rather long term about how we should be outstanding and hardworking. (Chao)

Although Chao refused to label his motivation as 'utilitarianism,' he did refer to it without the part of materialism and that party membership is constructed mainly through the logic of accumulation as a normative and progressive biography is required. The title of party member would, according to him, honor and privilege him over his fellow students. Thus, it remains a utilitarian decision to join the party. On the other hand, comparing these four cases can shed light on how a discourse of utilitarianism has developed in the past decades. In other words, he was submitted to party membership's spiritual purity and exclusiveness. On the contrary, Shuo and Zhao explicitly justified their motivation by the utility of party membership without fearing deconstructing the sanctity of party membership. As the narrative of utilitarianism spread, the party's monopoly on interpreting the social reality shriveled, opening the space for a discourse of individual interest rather than collective interest, where party membership is seen as more of an individual choice

regarding successful career.

The utilitarian turn in party membership allows the increase of reflexivity and hence further accelerate the individualization. Interestingly, all the party members in this study reported that they perceived less utility than expected after becoming party members. As addressed above, the predicted benefit of party membership generally centers around those who work at an organization run by the party-state, where they should be promoted more smoothly than non-party members. Thus, the student party members cannot enjoy most of these:

Most of these pros were that I heard from others, I didn't really sense many. So far I have only sensed lots of assignments from the party, like asking me to serve the people. As a student party member, I need to do lots of volunteer. For example, monitoring how the Covid test went and handing out masks during the pandemic…I find it really bothering me… I'm also a student cadre, which means I need to offer my help in organizing some university-wide events, picking up garbage on the playground, and attending endless meetings, listening to the ideological education of the general secretary of the university communist youth league. Sometimes they inform you at 8.30 pm about a meeting to be held at 9. Generally, the meetings are about how should we behave as a student cadre and party member, something like we need to be aware of our obligations and be prepared to lead fellow students. (Haot)

Haot is a cadre in the student union of his university. Most student party members in this study and beyond have a similar experience helping the university or college manage the students and organize events. For them, party membership usually leads to heavier moral and realistic obligations rather than privileges. Haot also told me that the priority of student party members receiving scholarships would be slightly higher than the non-party-member students, but he heard of this hierarchy of priority from others rather than benefiting from it himself. Overall, the student party members in this study perceived more obligations than privileges endowed by their party membership. Surprisingly, those who were working for the party-state, that is, those who were supposed to perceive the privileges, also reported their disappointment about the imbalance between obligations and privileges:

I don't really perceive a lot of conveniences [brought about by my party membership], rather, it makes me do more work. For example, I need to participate the ideological education quite

frequently, taking notes, and handing in reports. The only payback I have sensed is there might be some positions in the government which are only open to CPC members. Apart from the ideological education, I need to work on some organizational issues of the party, like the party branch conference every week. The non-party members don't have to attend any of these. (Lu)

It didn't bring any benefit, neither realistic nor symbolic. The symbolic one was more prominent when I was in college since college students didn't have much to compete, but it melted as I went for a Ph.D. and started to work since the realistic benefit never came true. Even worse, something becomes inconvenient because of this identity. For example, we need to take regular ideological courses, deal with the examination of superior party committees, etc. These issues are sometimes wasting my time on my research and teaching. (Chao)

For Chao, as a faculty member in a Chinese university, his promotion depends more on his publications rather than party membership. Therefore, it is relatively reasonable that he did not perceive the benefit. On the other hand, Lu was working as a civil servant, which means he was supposed to enjoy the benefit, yet he did not report so. In fact, only 3 out of 12 party members in this study had ever mentioned their affinity to the ideological discourse of the party and how their party membership has facilitated them to be integrated into the nationalism that the party-state has been promoting. The prevailing pattern of describing their experiences of being a party member is the assessment of utility, which results in the conclusion that they had not been leading a better life by taking advantage of their party membership.

Hence, tension is created by the contradictions between the utilitarian goal for joining the party and its actual benefits one perceived. As argued before, utilitarian turn of party membership indicates individuals in seek for certainties, only it rarely succeeds for ordinary party members as the powerful positions are generally scarce. Utilitarian narratives are consequently inadequate to justify this decision; tongzhi has to adapt other discourses to maintain a successful discursive biography. As the most common answer to the question ‘how do you feel being a party member’ suggests, which is ‘nothing special than everyone else,’ that they are trying to eliminate the seeming gap between them and non-party members, hence the development of populist discourse. The populist elements are not rare in the narratives that CPC has been promoting. The famous propaganda *‘from the people, to the people,’* has been a prominent example of how the party tries to label itself as a populist one. Nevertheless, the party was more elite in the communist era than

now. When the PRC was founded in 1949, the party had around 4.5 million members. It grew by 33.5 to 38 million in 1980, right at the beginning of the economic reform, while it increased by 42.3 to 80.3 million in 2010. Also, the party members comprised 0.8% of the national population while skyrocketing to 6% in 2010. The expansion of the party partly explains the reason why the elite nature of the party has weakened over decades and why there is a populist turn in the narratives of party membership. The privileges attached to party membership become more widely shared by ordinary citizens while itself turns out less valuable.

Also, before maketization in 1992, commercial activities were rather limited that most commodities must be purchased with corresponding tickets assigned by the party-state. The number and type of commodities the tickets can purchase were fixed per person or household and rarely fulfilled the demands. Those who wanted to purchase more had to turn to non-institutional means, for instance, bribing the cadres (Cheng, 2020). The party members, who were usually capable of getting the commodities out of their quota by corruption, were quite favored. Since the commodity ticket institution was canceled, the ordinary citizens did not have to be submitted to corruption anymore, hence significantly dropping the privileges of party membership. Perceived by both citizens and party members, party membership lost attraction. On the other hand, the relationship between civil society and the party-state became more intense in terms of institutional corruption, which facilitated the rise of populist discourse. The pressure from the antipathy of privilege hit back at party membership and pushed the party members to justify their identity in a populist way.

Not only have the narratives of party membership but also the interaction between party members and the party-state been through a populist turn. I have presented excessive ideological education as one of the drawbacks of party membership. The high frequency of these courses serves as a strategy to instill the official discourse in the party members, as Lu interpreted:

I figure most of these activities are useless. But it's not to have you study and remember it as people do in college. It's a 'quantitative changes cause qualitative changes' thing. You would very likely grow a pattern of thinking if there were someone reading those doctrines day by day. To put it more leftist, it's a strategy adopted by Xi. Since he came into power, the frequency of the courses has obviously increased. He emphasizes the ideological education of the party members, which is more extreme than his ex. (Lu)

The party membership is further secularized in a way that it becomes merely a fine career choice with most of its ideological divinity isolated from one's biography, that is, tongzhi party members refuse to incorporate the ideological party membership into the design of life of one's own. The ideological education emphasizes quantity over quality. The format, according to Lu, has been *'pretty much the general secretary reading the script that you can find it online anyway.'* Although Lu and other party members in this study acknowledged such a strategy's effect, it facilitated the growing populist narratives by enhancing the imbalance between the pros and cons of party membership. They burden heavier workloads while enjoying somewhat limited, sometimes unperceivable, privileges. In return, they resist these extra workloads through silent incorporation. When I asked them to recall the courses about family, most of them failed to recall the detail. Some of them cannot even recall the outline of the courses:

We just copied notes from each other, no one would really listen to it. (Can you recall how they teach you about the right views on the family?) I can only remember something about how we should view marriage, but nothing specific. (Feng)

The resistance to ideological education has been mutual in terms that both the students and teachers barely take it seriously. The party members in this study, who were the students in the courses, converted the lectures to merely a game of 'check-in and leave.' The teachers who were usually the head of the local party committee or the specialist in charge of ideology management even incorporated with the students by not designing the lectures but 'reading the scripts.' Such a phenomenon has been criticized by the party-state and the society as 'formalism' which suggests the actions that exist only for the maintenance of procedures and formats without attaching to the meaning or the content of the procedures themselves.

Overall, we can see how party membership, as a pre-modern identity, has been through individualization in a way that it falls from an inevitable pathway for religious-like eternity to purely individual choice to benefit career. Individualism, in this case, develops following increasing reflexivity of tongzhi party members, in the specific narratives of utilitarianism and populism. The utilitarian narrative of party membership suggests that increasing focus on individual interest has been justified. Unlike the collectivist discourse prevailing in the communist era where the individual interest was dramatically stigmatized and criminalized. During this

period, private property was neither protected by law nor justified in the discourse. The action of joining the party must be motivated by the spirit of maintaining public interest, in the context of communist China, by the spirit of maintaining the national interest of the PRC. Now, as a part of detraditionalization, utilitarian motivation is justified even in the event of joining the party, where the atmosphere of collectivism reaches its peak. Being a party member no longer entails sacrificing the interest of the party-state. Such narratives indicate that the individual is legitimate enough to exist to maintain their own existence and for addressing their personal well-being while not necessary to exist as attachments to and for the supreme interest of the collectives. As seen in the above analysis, the party members in this study who joined the party as students did not fully comprehend the exact advantages of their actions. Instead, they made their decisions merely based on a rather vague impression of 'it sounds good.' Hence, this irreflexive version of utilitarianism is the non-rational pursuit of individual rights in the context that the obligation had been prevailing over rights.

While the utilitarian narratives suggest that Chinese people have started to turn their focus to individual interest, the populist shift of narratives helps solve the problem of sacrifice and obeyance. The solution offered by utilitarianism is to deconstruct the meaning of collective interest and reconstruct and justify the individual interest, which used to be decomposed and stigmatized. On the other hand, populism's strategy is to solve the inequality entailed by the institutional defect of communist collectivism. Under utilitarianism, tongzhi joined the party because they were attracted by the abstract and vague benefits as addressed previously while failing to perceive as much as they were expecting. The usage of a populist narrative here helped release the pressure and served as an attempt to eliminate the impression that the party members are leading the way better life than the ordinary citizens. By distinguishing from elitism and defining themselves as ordinary citizens, they managed to continue the project of social mobility.

5.2 'Keep It to Yourself:' Atomizing Homosexuality in Public Sphere

Why does tongzhi decided to establish formal connection with the party-state where homosexuality is strictly forbidden? It is interesting that the views of the interviewees in this study on whether or not and to what extent their membership or the fact of working for the party-state have any conflicts with their homosexuality significantly varies despite that they all have frequent interactions with the party-state and the norms and ideologies it has been promoting. The assessment of such conflicts can be divided as such: a) not contradictory at all; b) theoretically

contradictory but not perceived yet, and c) contradictory with manageable risks. This section thus contains concentrated analysis on the implication of individuality in relation to the party-state on tongzhi's homosexuality.

It is evident from the data that being a party member does not necessarily contradict with homosexuality of the interviewees. However, a job in any institution ran by the party-state makes homosexuality risky. The level of such a danger ranks downwards from a job in the army to the government branches, and to the public institutions and state-owned enterprises. For example, Shuo, Lu, and Feng are from the most pressured sections of the party-state. Shuo and Lu are from local government branches while Feng is an administrative staff in the CPLA (Chinese People's Liberation Army). Yang, on the other hand, is a fine art teacher in a local public primary school. In the rest parts of this section, I will present the narratives of the interviewees describing the pressure from the party-state regarding their homosexuality. There will be some internal policies that can be accessed only by those who work for the party-state, which makes the verification very difficult. In this case, I shall present the descriptions of the pressure all in the quotation of the interviewees.

Firstly, the Chinese army, like the military forces of other countries, has been inimical to homosexuality because of the threats of homosexuality to the heteronormative family instead of homophobia. According to Feng, discrimination against homosexuals is rather common in the Chinese army:

Daiyi: *Why do you want to seek formal marriage?*
Feng: *It is because of my job. In the army, coming out simply leads to you losing your job. I used to have a fellow who was in the same cohort as me. He came out to his supervisor straightforwardly, and he was demobilized that very year.*
Daiyi: *Why would he do that?*
Feng: *Sounds like a suicide, huh? I heard from others that he didn't want this job anymore, so he did it. Since he didn't perform his enlistment in fullness, he left with nothing. It's just like being fired. That is to say, in the army, you come out, you're out.*
Daiyi: *I see. But there are still several miles between not being able to come out and being forced to get married. What if you neither come out nor get married?*
Feng: *Then there would be rumors. In my military district, there is a guy of his 35 without getting married.*

I heard his coworkers talking about why he hasn't gotten married at such a late time, or 'is there anything wrong with him.' By problem, they mean andrological ones. Like he might be medically disabled to have a kid. Also, there are plenty of policies made for those who do have their own family. There is one to favor the cadres. Once your climb to the company class, you can bring your family members to the military area. The army would offer a new job to your wife. Or if the army sees someone getting married but of low status in the army, they usually promote this guy. The system might not really punish those who don't get married, but it certainly favors those who do.

Lu also confirmed the existence of internal policies that favored those who had established a heteronormative family.

Lu: *If one wants to get a promotion, if he is in a high ranking, all his familial information will be documented. For example, this guy reaches the division level. He's going to fill all the information including family income, spouse, and offspring's personal information like where they work or study, and things alike in a form, like very detailed. It's because the state wants to monitor, or at least to know about him when he does possess the power to a certain extent. It's necessary. You know, if you are a division-level cadre in Tianjin with all your family members living abroad, it will be super hard for you to get a promotion. It is because the state needs to manage the risk of you committing crimes, especially those relating to corruption or national security. I have seen this policy document many years ago. It said that the cadres without their family members, mainly parents, spouses, and children, living with them needed to be monitored by the party. These cadres, according to the policy, were required to take more ideological education.*
Daiyi: *But it didn't say that one would have problems with the promotion if not getting married, right?*
Lu: *No, it didn't. This can't be explicit. But it's the real consequence that you will have problems with the promotion in the government if you don't have a wife and kids.*

Lu's interpretation of the policies of government in part represents the circumstances in the major cities. On the other hand, Shuo's interpretation represents the pressures in relatively underdeveloped small cities:

Working for the party-state organizations in such a small region means the environment is rather closed and conservative. People here might be very conservative since the age profile is relatively older than in the big cities…Gossip is a scary thing. I hate to deal with these voices. If you really get involved in these

non-mainstream activities and if they know, you will no longer be promoted then…I must keep all these secrets. I've not been using any homosexual social applications for a long time. Also, my social network has been filled with my coworkers and those who work for the party-state just like me. They belong to various divisions, departments, offices, and even colleges and universities. There's no way you let them know about your identity...Because this is so horrible that all the people belong to the same circle. One knows, everyone knows. If one of them were not so open-minded, they'd judge so partially. (Shuo)

From the excerpts of the interviews above, we can see two reasons why the party-state would be concerned with its employees' homosexuality. The first one is the result of an indirect encounter between homosexuality and the party-state. Information provided by Lu indicates that homosexuality is unable to fulfill the party-state's requirement of political loyalty and confidentiality. The logic of such an institutional design lies in a way that the cadres, especially those who are in a higher position and do not establish a family are highly risky to commit defection. It is evident that plenty of dignitaries of the state immigrated their family members to a foreign country beforehand, usually the United States, and escaped abroad themselves after taking huge amounts of brides or embezzling government expenses. There is also the risk that these high-level officers possibly have access to confidential information that sabotages national security. In this case, the more social bonds the civil servants possess, the fewer risks they defect. As Lu explained, the core requirement of this kind of internal policy is the physical presence of a cadre's family member in China. The lack of a heterosexual family is counted as even riskier since the conjugal bond is deemed closer than the intergenerational one. Again, this type of pressure is indirect and has not been experienced by any interviewees in this study since none of them had managed to obtain a high-level position in the party-state at the time of the interview.

On the other hand, as a closed system, the party-state's employment re-establishes locality, a feature dissolved along with individualization of the society. Rumors spreading around the local social network are more threatening to the interviewees, especially those who are not living in the major cities. As confirmed by many interviewees, the society of small cities, counties, and villages is primarily constituted by the nets of families as they maintain a rather infrequent exchange of population and capital to the other districts. It is, of course, true that most small cities, counties, and villages have been suffering from population loss since the economic reform as the labor forces have been attracted to the major cities where they are usually higher paid. Yet, little evidence shows that population loss has significantly changed the local sociality from an

acquaintance society based on family to a stranger society. According to the data, the rumors center around the lack of a heterosexual conjugal family and consequently bridge multiple damages to masculinity, sexual morality, personality, class status, etc. Again, the family becomes the pivot point to transfer the pressure from the party-state to homosexual individuals. Thus, it is visible that the marginalization of homosexuality by the party-state is a byproduct of the party-state's maintenance of the institution of the heteronormative family rather than it is in western societies where the discrimination over homosexuality is revealed in the format of homophobia which is mostly caused its threats to masculinity and religious doctrines.

It is an agreement among all the interviewees that being homosexual is risky in China, especially for those who are party members or have a job within the party-state. However, such risks are usually deemed manageable. In this study, Feng, Yang, and Shuo were the only three who viewed their homosexuality as so risky that they must navigate with it rather carefully, otherwise the unpredictable damages to their career. Apart from them, the rest of the interviewees said that homosexuality might be risky, but not contradictory at all to their party membership or their job in the party-state:

To some point, yes, it is risky. Homosexuality is a non-mainstream thing; you don't want any deviation from the mainstream if you are a party member or if you have a job in any organization run by the state. But personally, I think there are millions of party members, does the party constitution really rules all of them? No. As long as you are not in a higher position, as long as you don't really expose yourself to the open, no one really cares about what you do. (Zhao)

At the moment, I don't think my homosexuality has anything to do with my job. I can't say this applies to everyone working for the state, maybe it depends on where you are working. But even in the most conservative organization, I don't think it's a big deal. It's risky, of course. Yet, if you keep it to yourself from beginning to the end, it's fine. (Qing)

Zhao and Qing respectively represent how the tongzhi who is a party member and who has a job in the party-state would interpret the tension between homosexuality and working for the party-state. The pressure from party membership on homosexuality is rather vague in terms that it often appears in one's expectation of the potential danger rather than being observed in the real life. As Zhao interpreted, it might not be a problem of being homosexual and a party member in the

meantime, but there is no reason why one does not keep it a secret. It seems that the interviewees adopt quite a conservative behavior that they would not flirt with the line under any circumstances, despite that they can perceive some room left by the party-state's oppression. Zhao suggested the risks associated with one's exposure to the public. In this way, the low-ranking individuals within the party-state are safer than the high-ranking ones. On the other hand, Qing, who was working in a state-owned enterprise, also adopted this discourse of 'keep it to yourself.' Although the state-owned enterprises care much less about one's normativity than it does in a government branch, Qing chose not to provoke any trouble. Again, his choice was not determined by realistic and perceived risks. Both Zhao and Qing, like others who reported things alike, shared their homosexual identity with their friends around them without hesitation. Most of them would confess to anyone who came to ask them about their identity. Thus, it seems contradictory that they did not worry about the private information in their circles penetrating the boundary between private and public life. Other interviewees also showed such ambivalence that they recognized the risks of their homosexuality being exposed on the one hand while feeling relatively safe about how they would manage to keep the identity being known within a controllable scope. It is partly because none of the interviewees in this study had achieved a position powerful enough to catch public attention or the supervision of the party-state according to various rules. Nonetheless, the narratives will be fruitful to be analyzed if we treat their interpretation of the relationship between homosexuality and party-state norms as a process of construction of their homosexuality. Ma's interpretation is the best to grasp the circumstances:

Ma: *You have to hide yourself. I won't tell any of my coworkers about my identity. It's totally different from what it was in my previous life. Almost everyone in my high school, college, and the graduate school knew who I am. They called me 'sister Ma' and I don't feel uncomfortable at all. Even in the social work agency, I used to work at, people did so. They did so out of friendship and respect. Once I started to work here, I hid all the way behind. I told people I didn't want to get married for now when they asked, that I wanted to focus on my work. They don't ask if you are gay. If you work for the party-state, you have to take back your personality. You shouldn't talk about these topics. When you get to this place, you found no one's talking about their private matters. Everyone is being normal, which means we get married, we give birth to a child, and everyone finds this normal. That means the abnormal voices are not necessarily to be spoken out. Mind the difference here: it's not these voices are forbidden; it's just people might think it's not necessary to do so. You don't have such a culture in college. But there's such a strong force in the party-state that there exists a standard way of life, a standard life course.*

Daiyi: *If your coworkers ask you about your marriage or relationship, do you think they mean it or they are just joking around?*
Ma: *They are testing if you are gay. On the other hand, they use such a strategy to tell you that you need to lead a normal life. It's a part of the discipline. But they might not do this on purpose. It's just like westerners talking about the weather, or 'what a beautiful house.'*

Ma insightfully pointed out what lies under the dynamics of the party-state's discipline: the diffused atmosphere of oppression, whether realistic and perceived by the homosexuals, pilots them to construct depoliticalized homosexuality. It is important to notice that such a hiding action is not because surveillance is everywhere that one must conduct self-censorship. Even Lu, who was working in the government, did not sense there was dense surveillance as 'everyone is pretty busy working, no one's really having time to care about other's personal life.' In other words, certain spaces are left to reserve for their homosexuality, which is their off-work life.

However, adapting the discourse of 'life of one's own' does not signify individualization, but atomization. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, 208, 211) especially emphasize on the distinction between individualization and atomization. To achieve individualization, which is also known as institutionalized individualism, social institutions offer a range of resources and toolkits, including welfare state and human rights, to individuals who can creatively combine and utilize them and build unique biography. Atomization, in contrast, is generally characterized by the lack of these resources such that individuals are still seen as the smallest units of the society, only that their bonds to the traditional social categories have been cut off. In the realm of public life, in this case, at work, tongzhi has little access to the abovementioned institutional resources, but only separated in isolation from others who share identity with them. Basically, atomization indicates exclusion.

The effect of the party-state's oppression is to depoliticalize homosexuality in a way that it is merely a personal interest without any rights attached to it, hence the denial of possible political and collective actions to struggle for equal rights for the entire group. Personal interest suggests a distorted version of individualism, which, at first glance, seems to legitimatize homosexuality while castrating the possibility of having any political function. In other words, it appears that it is the individual's choice made with free will that they have the right not to share their homosexuality with their coworkers or any horizon that can be potentially political. Being persuaded by such a distorted individualist discourse, the collective mobilization of the sexual

equality movement seems unlikely.

5.3 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter addresses the tongzhi's negotiation of homosexuality directly with regard to the party-state by presenting two processes of how the interviewees construct their membership, and how they atomize homosexuality to lower the risks of being oppressed. As the analyses have shown, the interviewees' narratives of their motivations for joining the party have been shaped by utilitarianism with vagueness in a way that they applied for the party membership with ambiguous recognition of its utility. In other words, although almost all the tongzhi party members joined the party to benefit their individual interests, they made the decisions based on a vague positive perception of party membership rather than on rational calculation. This connects to the imbalance between the benefits and costs of party membership which reflect the irreflexive nature of joining the party. The assessment of the utility of party membership had been conformably inclined to the costs prevailing over benefits, the narratives of which invoked populism to distinguish them from corrupted elite party members and portrayed themselves as ordinary citizens by pressing on the extra tasks such as regular ideological education that the party members must perform and overlooking the actual payback. Both utilitarian and populist narratives suggest a shift from collectivism to individualism, characterized by increasing reflexivity. On the other hand, they reduced the risks of their homosexuality in the context of the party-state in a way that homosexuality is compelled to be atomized – homosexuality had been entirely defined as a private business without any public figures involved, which, stated as 'keep it to yourself,' serves as an effort to keep away from the party-state's demand for uniformity of party members and its employers. While homosexuality is allowed to spread around the personal social circles, it suggests the withering in the public sphere and results in the political actions of sexual equality in China unlikely.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

This thesis has put effort into elaborating how homosexuality has transformed along with the massive individualization of Chinese society as one of the rapid social changes since the economic reform. The rapid social changes have liberated not only the individuals from the foregone oppressions but also created new ones. By examining how tongzhi working for the party-state navigates in the realm of the family and the party-state, this thesis tries to analyze the complexity of sexual minority individuals' values and practices in the turbulence of the individualization project. Specifically, this study answers the question of how tongzhi negotiates homosexuality in the realm of the family and party-state.

In the realm of family, tongzhi joins the game of family politics where they invoke economic autonomy and social mobility in exchange for self-autonomy from the family. The individualization of Chinese society resulted in rising demands for establishing self-identity while the persistent social inequalities prevent tongzhi from doing so, thereby developing the project fo pursuing life of one's own. The turn to neo-familism in contemporary China centers the happiness of descendants as the first priority of Chinese family, while happiness is largely defined by economic decency. Hence, proving economic autonomy removes most of the concerns of the family. Social mobility, on the other hand, enables separation from the family so that space is allowed for developing individual imperatives for constructing self-maintained and self-realizing homosexuality. Structural opportunities, however, are not necessarily utilized to increase the visibility of homosexuality. Familial intimacy has been identified as the factor preventing visibility as their effort on re-embedment. The family politics is thus characterized by the hybridity of both first and second modernity.

In the realm of the party-state, while homosexuality has been decriminalized and de-medicalized, the oppressions yet exist in a way that the party-state requires the normativity of its members including the party members and the party-state's employers. In other words, the tongzhi working for the party-state is required to behave heteronormatively to lower the risks when facing the heteronormative party-state. The pressures mostly derive from the party-state's emphasis on heteronormative family practices and values and are revealed as the internal human resources policies that favor those with a heterosexual family and the gossip circling around the social network that downgrades and marginalizes those without a heterosexual family, admittedly

various level of pressure in different sections within the party-state. However, the divinity of party membership has been deconstructed. In response, the tongzhi working for the party-state in this study constructed a utilitarian party membership that pressed on the individual over collective interest and a populist one to disengage the anti-homosexual and collectivist party discourse. Also, by completely removing homosexuality from the public sphere, their identity was depoliticalized in a way that the potential political function of homosexual identity was eliminated, hence revealing unlikely the collective mobilization for sexual equality in China. Such a process is characterized by the ongoing turn from communist collectivism to individualism as well in the sense that homosexuality has been limited to an underdeveloped feature of atomized individuals without political rights and equality being revealed necessary.

This thesis opens a promising discussion of homosexuality in China as a significant component of the individualization of Chinese society. Firstly, it initiates the investigation of the sexual minorities that directly and closely confront the party-state. Previous studies have been committed to examining the interaction between the family and party-state in China, whereas the sexual minorities who have been one of the most suppressed groups remain underexplored in the context of the intersection between the two forces. Specifically, the sexual minorities who work for the party-state have never entered the academic horizon as the object of study. This study has demonstrated its research object as a perfect entry point of academic study since it involves two major operators of the individualization process—the family and party-state—in the meantime. This thesis thus argues that the investigation of homosexuality in China should not be detached from the realms of the family and party-state. Second, as the previous studies primarily discussed how the party-states initiated the structural and ideological transformation of the family at the macro-level by analyzing the public policies regarding family, this study contributes to the investigation of the relationship between the family and party-state in China by adding the micro-level interactions with the two operators in daily life. By doing so, the mechanism of how the societal transformations are internalized and modified by the individuals is revealed, hence a more complicated and comprehensive understanding of the meaning of social changes to the individuals. Thirdly, and most importantly, the thesis applies individualization theses to the examination homosexuality. Reflexivity and experiment are, among others, the most important ways to understand homosexuality as an individualization project which is promising to understand the seemingly endless varieties of the biography of homosexuals in China. Besides, the distinction between individualization and atomization should also shed light on the analysis. Regarding

identity, Yan Yunxiang's claim that identity in China is less about self-recognition but has more to do with elevating living standards, that is, in terms of material concerns, seems implausible (Yan 2009). The false lies on mixing up individualization and atomization in a way that those who are not culturally or ideologically included, at least in official narratives, cannot enjoy identity as tools for living a better life, such as sexual minorities. He used the example of migrant workers stressing their identity as both worker and peasant, the claimed foundation of the communist regime. Sexual minorities have no access to such an identity and legitimate resource.

Notwithstanding, the contribution of this study is limited by the shortage of sample variety and the nature of interview data. The most significant limitation is the lack of the voices of female homosexuals due to my constrained access to this group. It is very hard to find female homosexual interviewees working for the party-state, which is partly due to the highly imbalanced gender structure of the party members and the party-state's employers. Thus, the role of gender in the individualization project can hardly be discussed. Future studies on homosexuality in China would benefit from adding voices from other sexual minorities. Besides, although the interview data is the ideal source to grasp values, thoughts, mindsets, etc., it is insufficient to reveal the social process comprehensively. For example, the discussion of the negotiation of homosexuality in the workplace would have benefited from the observation of the actual interactions that occurred in the workplace. The same applies to the interactions in the family. Finally, the data limits my capacity to analyze the encounter between the family and party-state more in-depth. There is fragmented data suggesting that the interaction between the two operators does exist at the micro level. For instance, some interviewees joined the party due to their family's order. Also, the ideological affinity toward the party-state can be produced within the family, which is evident by Lu that all of his family members were party members and that they maintained the ideological affinity by discussing public affairs in favor of the policies made by the central government during the family gatherings. In this way, future studies of the relationship between the family and the party-state would benefit from the analysis of the intersection between these two at micro level.

Appendix: Interview Guide

A. Categorical Information:

1. Profile: Name (Nickname, if the real name is not applicable),

1.1. Location (location that currently living in, location of Hukou, the type of Hukou, changes regarding type of Hukou)

1.2. Relationship (in or out, including marriage)

1.3. Ethnic (major/minor ethnic in China)

2. Work:

2.1. Type of the position within the party-state, including

1) Government branches (central/local government, legal system, agencies that directly supervised by the party central/provincial committee);

2) State-owned enterprises (central-government-owned or not);

3) Public institutions (education system including higher education institutions, high schools, compulsory education institutions, kindergartens; other academic institutions; public health system including hospitals, etc.; cultural system including multiple associations of elites).

2.2. Hierarchy within the party-state: leadership or not

2.3. Party membership or not

2.4. Paid by the Ministry of Finance or not

2.5. The way of obtaining the job: national/provincial civil service examination, through the connections, etc.

2.6. Content of the position: being in charge of within-party works, of administrative stuff, of professional works, etc.

3. Family

3.1. Number of the household

3.2. Type of the household:

Nuclear, stem, extended, skip-generation, single, etc.

3.3. Family members in the household:

who do you usually live with? (specify 3.2); If living alone, since when? And the frequency of contacting other family members

3.4. Parents divorced or not; If having any brothers/sisters (regarding the effect of the one-

child policy)?

3.5. Grandparents alive or not

4. Sexuality

4.1. Coming out or not

4.2. Identifying with being tongzhi or not

B. Semi-structure Interview

1. On family:

1.1. Please define/describe the term 'family' in your own term, and explain why do you suggest such definition/description? What is a family in your ideal, why?

1.2. On the connections with family members:

How well do you think you are getting along with your family members (parents, the third generation, and other siblings)?

Who do you think is the most/least closed to you, why, what happened?

How do you view your siblings/what are your comments on your siblings, why?

How do you view this group of people in general, why?

How well do you think you are getting along with your siblings, why?

** Interviewees are to be asked to illustrate their opinions with concrete examples*

*** Family members are to be defined as the interviewees' parents, grandparents, brothers/sisters, descendants (if applicable), and other people living in the household*

**** Siblings are to be defined as those in the kinship with the interviewees, excluding the family members.*

***** The above two categories might be overlapped.*

1.3. On the filial piety:

Please define/describe 'filial piety' in your own terms, and explain why do you think so?

How do you view 'filial piety' as one of your social responsibility, to what extent, and why, what makes you suggest such opinions?

1.4. On the duty of reproduction:

Do you wish to have kids?

If so, why do you think so and how do you plan to achieve it? If not, why?

Since when did such a notion jump in?

1.5. On (the duty of) marriage:

How do you view marriage (in terms of a personal decision and a social institution)?

In what sense does marriage mean to you?

Do you look forward to it or not, why?

Do you have any plans regarding marriage, why?

2. On the party-state

2.1. On the motivation and experience of joining the party (for the party members):

When did you join the party, why?

What persons, events, or factors do you think promote you to make such a decision?

How do you feel about being a party member, any perceived benefits and costs, any difficulties or troubles caused by this membership, in what sense?

2.2. On the motivation and experience of joining in the government branches (for the civil services, since they have to pass a highly competitive written and oral examination to get the job, with quite a few exceptions):

When did you decide to work for the government, why, any internal/external factors?

How do you feel about working for the government, any perceived benefits/costs?

Any troubles or tough times you've been through?

If you are not a party member, how do you feel about that, any troubles caused by that?

2.3. On the motivation and experience of joining in other parts of the party-state (public institutions and state-owned enterprises):

How do you feel about your position, why?

2.4. On the views on the official discourses regarding family:

What are the values related to the family that have been imposed on you since you joined the party/worked for the party-state?

What are your comments on these values, why?

What are you in charge of?

Are there any compulsory activities for you employers to learn the official discourse, describe?

(Specific topics to be determined…)

3. On sexuality

3.1. How do you feel about being a tongzhi, what makes you feel so? Since when had you identified yourself as a tongzhi?

3.2. How do you feel about the relationship between your sexual identity and the values promoted by the party-state? (e.g., familism)

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