

**DOMESTIC PRIVACY IN CULTURAL REVOLUTION
SHANGHAI**

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SUMMARY

In this thesis, I examine domestic privacy and its possibilities in Shanghai during the Cultural period. The Cultural Revolution is depicted differently in contemporary observation, and post contemporaneous studies and memoirs. While contemporary observations depicted domestic and neighborhood life to be communal and friendly, works and memoirs produced after depicted the same phenomenon negatively. In both cases, domestic privacy was deemed absent for different reasons. Contemporary works assumed that no notion of privacy existed because of the communal mindedness of the residents, while the latter genre depicted neighborhood surveillance to drastically curtail privacy.

In chapters one and two, I argue that contrary to post contemporaneous depictions, neighborhood surveillance from residents' committees, militia and police personnel were not as intrusive as depicted. The surveillance of neighbors was not intrusive, but benign. While this depiction may mirror contemporary observations, I argue that this picture does not indicate that residents had no desire for domestic privacy. Rather, domestic privacy was protected by neighborly vigilance that kept out non neighborhood elements, while ensuring that neighbors did not intrude upon fellow domestic spaces.

In chapter three, I examine the principles behind how households allocated living space. Households tried to satisfy various claims on private space arising from how much non disclosure they felt that family members of different age, gender and status needed. Married couples made the heaviest claim on private space, while the need to separate a grown sister from her brothers was important too. At times, the claims on private space in

a household conflicted with a need to set aside space for the execution of public functions involving non familial people.

In chapters three and four, I examine illicit possessions and acts at home against what memoirs and studies depicted. I conclude that most people did not have illicit possessions nor commit the illicit acts most commonly depicted in memoirs and studies. Families of bad class backgrounds committed selected illicit acts only if such acts improved their future prospects, while eschewing illicit possessions beyond that needed in committing said illicit acts. Families of good background, however, kept politically dangerous forms of wealth while eschewing illicit acts and illicit possessions that were not valuable. A strategic mindset dictated the illicit acts people committed and the illicit possessions kept. The issue of illicit acts and possessions reflect also the strength of domestic privacy that could be secured even with a highly visible domestic life by relying on the trust between neighbors.

In my conclusion, I examine 'privacy' was applicable in describing how people then conceived of their experiences in withholding things from others. I argue that people had a sense of things to be withheld from others. However, the contents to be withheld covered a broad spectrum. 'Privacy' as understood by the West suggests the intimate and personal, as opposed to 'secrecy'. Such a distinction, however, did not apply to people during the Cultural Revolution, despite the prevalence of the term 'privacy' in memoirs and observations about the Cultural Revolution.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Cultural Revolution decade from 1966 to 1976 was an important turning point in modern Chinese history. During that period, fear and paranoia dominated as everyday life was thoroughly politicized from the perception of hidden ubiquitous class enemies and the anxiety that anyone was susceptible to backsliding. Shanghai was exceptional during the Cultural Revolution. Whereas the army was in command elsewhere after 1968 when the Red Guards were dispatched to the countryside, the workers' militia became the dominant coercive power in Shanghai due to its patrons. Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Wang Hongwen and Jiang Qing held national power by 1970, transforming the workers' militia into a vertical organization receiving directives from party central. The workers' militia in Shanghai extended its surveillance to the neighborhoods to ferret out 'hidden class enemies'. By the end of the Cultural Revolution decade, the workers' militia numbered above three million people, accounting for over 77% of the Shanghai labor force. The number of people detained by the militia reached over one hundred and four thousand, with thousands arrested each day at its peak.¹

The above portrayal of the Cultural Revolution draws on the work of Elizabeth Perry, a leading scholar of the Cultural Revolution in recent times. With such a portrayal, the sanctity of domestic privacy would logically be under threat as neighbors, militia and the residents' committee etc intruded thereupon in their search for class enemies or any other form of political deviance. As will be seen later, observations contemporary with

¹ Elizabeth J. Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution : Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State*, State and society in East Asia (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), pp. 222, 230.

the Cultural Revolution, post contemporaneous secondary literature and memoirs support the notion that domestic privacy was either besieged or was otherwise absent during the Cultural Revolution though the reasons for such differ between the various groups of literature. My thesis examines domestic privacy during the Cultural Revolution, comparing what extant literature depicted with what interviewees recalled.

Literature review on studies of conceptual privacy

There are many ways in which ‘privacy’ is defined in the West by various scholars. As such, there is no ‘Western notion of privacy’. There are, however, many such notions. I shall list a few examples of how scholars in the West have defined privacy below to show the above point.

Alan Westin’s *Privacy and Freedom* was the first systematic study of privacy as a concept.² To Westin, privacy was ‘the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others’. Privacy was also the ‘voluntary and temporary withdrawal of a person from general society or any collective through physical or psychological means, either in solitude or in small groups intimacy’. Privacy could not be absolute, however, due to the need for social interaction. Privacy for the individual allowed him personal autonomy, emotional release, self-evaluation and the right to protected communication.³

² Alan F. Westin, *Privacy and Freedom*, [1st ed. (New York: The Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 1967), pp. xi, xii.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33, 35, 37.

Barrington Moore's *Privacy: Studies in Social and Cultural History* defined privacy in two senses: the refusing of access to other persons in specific situations and private rights against holders of authority or society. Social norms protect what is private from intrusion by others.⁴ Necessary dependence upon others ensures that the desire for privacy is never absolute. The desire for privacy is a yearning for socially approved protection against social obligations. The needs and opportunities for privacy are thus social constructs, determined by the physical environment, state of technology and division of labor and authority. Moore located two havens of privacy; the home and 'neutral areas' like the café in French social life. Both areas allow release from social obligations, i.e., publicly expected deportment. Furthermore, there are social structures that provide intimate retreat from social pressures like the family or networks of friends.⁵

Whereas Moore deemed the social necessary for individual survival, Ferdinand Schoeman made it necessary for the formation of selfhood. The individual's cognitive, emotional, cultural and material dependence on others accounts for individual subjectivity. Privacy does not separate us from the social, but is a means to achieve 'social freedom', allowing an individual multiple choices among associative ties. Privacy ensures the integrity of each associative tie by enshrouding a group of people within an association. Privacy guarantees social freedom to the individual by ensuring that the

⁴ Barrington Moore, *Privacy : Studies in Social and Cultural History* (New York: M.E. Sharpe ; Distributed by Pantheon Books, 1984), p. ix.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp, 5-6, 12, 41, 44-46, 76, 79.

social pressure he faces from any one association is limited by alternative sources of support for individuals. Privacy is similarly protected by social norms.⁶

Julie C. Inness's *Privacy, intimacy, and isolation* is drawn upon by some historians and scholars of modern Chinese privacy. Inness defined privacy as 'the state of possessing control over decisions controlling matters that draw their meaning and value from an agent's love, liking and care'. The decisions include when to enable someone else access to pertinent information and decision making regarding the agent, insofar as they concern the intimate, with the access so granted reflecting the agent's love for the other party. Privacy is not just withholding something from someone, but the right to either withhold or to allow access. Granting an individual the right to privacy shows respect for his emotional autonomy.⁷ Nothing is inherently intimate, however. While allowing sexual access to a lover may be an intimate act, but sex workers who grant sexual access for money cause the latter act to lose its intimacy. Sex workers thus are not exercising their privacy in this instance.⁸ In short, privacy has three components; its function being to grant the agent the right to decide what aspects of her life to be made available to someone else, its content being the intimate, and its value arising from the respect we accord the emotional autonomy of others.

⁶ Ferdinand David Schoeman, *Privacy and Social Freedom*, Cambridge studies in philosophy and public policy (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 6-7, 14-15, 98.

⁷ Julie C. Inness, *Privacy, Intimacy, and Isolation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. vii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. vii, 42, 81-82.

Literature review on studies of privacy in modern China

The proliferation of meanings for ‘privacy’ in the Western context has led scholars studying the China context to the same conclusion, that rather than expecting a single definition or sense of ‘privacy’, there are many such meanings. Furthermore, though the term ‘*yinsi*’ (which only appeared after the Cultural Revolution seemed linguistically closest to the notion of privacy as a theoretical concept, scholars do note that there are in fact a range of terms covering a range of phenomena that may be central or peripheral to different understandings of what constitutes ‘privacy’ in the Chinese context. The above mentioned sense that ‘privacy’ in the Chinese context, as in the Western one is to be understood in many different ways is reflected in the works produced by scholars interested in the phenomena of modern Chinese privacy as outlined below.

Paul Hollander’s “Privacy: A Bastion Stormed” and Tooshar Pandit’s “Totalitarianism and Traditionalism” appeared in the same volume of *Problems in Communism* in 1963. The two authors presented China as totalitarian in its determination to eradicate the public/private distinction. Hollander noted the Chinese state’s effort to politicize all personal relationships. All aspects of personal life were subjected to ideological control.⁹ In a similar vein, Pandit noted that all aspects of private life like filial piety, marriage and concepts of happiness, influenced previously by Chinese traditions, were deemed suspicious as they drew popular loyalty from the regime.

⁹ Paul Hollander, "Privacy: A Bastion Stormed," *Problems of Communism* xii, no. 60 (Nov-Dec, 1963): pp. 1, 3-8.

Consequently, attempts were made to eradicate them.¹⁰ These early writings, however, did not examine the conceptual problems of studying privacy in China. Substantial studies of modern Chinese privacy, moreover, only started after 2000.

Yan Yunxiang's *Private life under socialism: Love, Intimacy and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999* is a pioneering work in modern Chinese privacy.¹¹ Yan studied private life in Xiajia village, Heilongjiang province, especially as regards the family. In one chapter, Yan examined changing notions regarding privacy as reflected in changing home interiors since the house remodeling wave of the 80s. Whereas houses previously had little personal space for individuals, house remodeling created more personal space for family members relative to the family and for the family relative to outsiders. New rooms were created through partitioning, living rooms were constructed to receive guests in place of the bedroom and walls were built to shield houses from public view. The terms that the villagers used to describe their experiences with remodeling like *ziyou* (freedom) and *xiang gansha jiu gangsha* (being able to do whatever desired) led Yan to conclude that the villagers, without using the Chinese urban concept of *yinsi*, had begun to pursue their individual and domestic privacy. Yan thus demonstrated the understanding that rather than a single Chinese equivalent term for 'privacy', there are a range of terms covering a range of phenomena that are central or peripheral to how privacy was understood by the villagers. Yan attributed this ability to

¹⁰ Tooshar Pandit, "Totalitarianism and Traditionalism," *Problems of Communism* xii, no. 60 (Nov-Dec, 1963): pp. 11-14.

¹¹ Bonnie S McDougall, "Particulars and Universals: Studies on Chinese Privacy," in *Chinese Concepts of Privacy*, ed. Bonnie S. McDougall and Anders Hansson, *Sinica Leidensia* v. 55 (Leiden Netherlands ; Boston: Brill, 2002), p. 1.

indigenous notions of privacy whereby historically, elites had always secured domestic privacy through home design.¹²

In *Love Letters and Privacy in Modern China: The Intimate Lives of Lu Xun and Xu Guangping*, Bonnie McDougall studied the omissions across the unpublished correspondence of Lu Xun and Xu Guangping and the published version *Letters Between Two*. McDougall used Inness's theory of privacy to analyze the omissions. The omissions indicated that the two parties felt the right to alter the published texts. Their refusal to explain the omissions was an exercise of privacy in that they claimed the indisputable right to deny a third party access to decision making and information concerning the intimate. McDougall concluded that there wasn't a distinctive Chinese concept of privacy as the two parties did not articulate any explicit definition for it. Furthermore, the two parties differed from each other regarding what they felt comfortable expressing in letters showing that even between two lovers, the understanding of what phenomena falls under the realm of 'privacy' differs. The contents of privacy identified included details of their personal finances and Lu's criticism of family members and their private lives.¹³

The edited volume *Chinese Concepts of Privacy* established the field of Chinese privacy as a substantial arena of study. It also demonstrated the commitment towards finding broad similarities in how privacy was understood between specific groups of people so as to make the concept intelligible, the fact that there is no single definition of

¹² Yunxiang Yan, *Private Life Under Socialism : Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 1, 112, 118-120, 122, 124, 135-137.

¹³ Bonnie S. McDougall, *Love-Letters and Privacy in Modern China : The Intimate Lives of Lu Xun and Xu Guangping*, Studies on contemporary China. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 138-140, 164, 195, 200-201.

'privacy' both in the Western and Chinese context notwithstanding. According to McDougall, the editor, the volume further established that 'future deliberations on privacy, in whatever language or country, may no longer deny... the realm of Chinese experience and discourse'.¹⁴ The essays in the volume examined conduct and texts demonstrating common perspectives and ways of understanding privacy among groups of Chinese people. In the introduction, McDougall stated that the Chinese *gong/si* (public/private) debate of the 90s is largely irrelevant to privacy as the term *si* used in the debate referred to private interest, which McDougall considered distinct from issues of intimacy and seclusion. McDougall also reiterated her rejection of any uniquely 'Chinese' concept of privacy.¹⁵

The articles in the volume studied privacy from ancient to modern times. Among the articles, Cathy Silber's "Privacy in *Dream of the Red Chamber*" is interesting regarding the method she used to overcome the conceptual problems of studying Chinese privacy. Silber used Inness's conception of privacy as a matter of control over when to make something public, but she rejected Inness's definition of intimacy, stating that people do regard instances where they are concerned over their own well being as appropriate situations to exercise what they understand to be privacy. A person who wants to be left alone by salesmen when he is at home identifies that desire as a yearning for privacy. Privacy is thus not exercised solely in situations where the individual acts out of love for another party. In identifying privacy in "Dream of the Red Chamber", Silber looked for instances of 'breach' where control over a certain action was threatened. An

¹⁴ McDougall, "Studies on Chinese Privacy," p. 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 7-8, 10, 21.

act is identified as a breach when the agent or the other party evinced some reaction to indicate that whatever they were doing had been breached. Silber identified the content of privacy, which included crying, sexual activities and even the act of breaching.¹⁶ Due to her rejection of Inness's definition of intimacy, Silber considered certain behavior like the act of breaching itself as a possible instance of the private to be protected by privacy though it was not done out of love for others.

The works on modern Chinese privacy cited above shows a few things. Firstly, there is no single Chinese notion of privacy. There are rather, a range of phenomena and terms that are related to how privacy is understood in the Chinese context by differing groups of people. The situation with the analysis of 'privacy' in the Chinese context thus resembles that of the West in terms of the diversity of meanings and senses attached to the concept. Other issues concerning the field of modern Chinese privacy include the reliance on textual sources rather than fieldwork. Most scholars have also, to a certain extent, relied on Western notions and theories of privacy in order to understand the said concept in the Chinese context.

Conclusion: Methodology and outline of study

My study does not focus on whether any Western notions of privacy were applicable to the Cultural Revolution. Through my study, I do not define what I understand as privacy. The definition of privacy is furthermore, a debated area. Whatever

¹⁶ Cathy Silber, "Privacy in Dream of the Red Chamber," in *Chinese Concepts of Privacy*, ed. Bonnie S. McDougall and Anders Hansson, *Sinica Leidensia* v. 55 (Leiden Netherlands ; Boston: Brill, 2002), pp. 55-58, 68-71.

the definition of privacy, however, a location of withdrawal for a person or group relative to others is always needed in order for the former to have privacy. Such a haven may be the home, individual rooms, drawers or a person's mind. I focus thus, on domestic possibilities of privacy, meaning the spaces of withdrawal present at home for a family member or the family collectively to deny access to their persons or possessions from each other or outsiders respectively. I then examine what people did using those possibilities of privacy. For operational purposes, I use the term privacy in situations where a family or individual withheld things from others or was allowed a separate existence. Theorizing on privacy and the applicability of the term to describe domestic life during the Cultural Revolution is done only in the concluding chapter.

Studying domestic possibilities of privacy during the Cultural Revolution is interesting in light of how extant literature depicted those possibilities. Similar to Moore, Georges Duby noted in *A History of Private Life* that the realm of domesticity constituted a part of existence that every language and era had a linguistic equivalent to 'private' for. It is in the realm of domesticity where a person may '...fall back or retreat...set aside arms and armor needed in the public place, relax, take our ease, and lie about unshielded by the ostentatious carapace worn for protection in the outside world.'¹⁷ Home was a place where privacy abounded and where the family withdrew from society. Contemporary observations, post contemporaneous studies and memoirs indicated, however, that home was no longer the realm of privacy. Contemporary observations denied the Chinese desire for domestic and individual privacy. While post

¹⁷ Georges Duby, "Foreword," in *A History of Private Life, volume one*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), p. viii.

contemporaneous studies and memoirs admit the Chinese desire for privacy, they suggested that possibilities of domestic privacy were drastically curtailed during the Cultural Revolution due to the intense scrutiny that affected even the home and the material difficulties inhibiting domestic privacy in the form of living and storage space scarcity.

I have used 4 different types of sources in this thesis including contemporary observations, post contemporaneous observations and studies, memoirs (mainly English language) and interviews with eyewitnesses who have lived past the Cultural Revolution. The sources clearly carry their own ideological biases and affect the depiction of that period differently as regards living conditions and the possibilities for domestic and individual privacy. I shall describe in greater detail how each type of source depicted domestic and individual privacy and how the context of source production affected their depiction in the main text. Broadly speaking, however there are three variables that are portrayed differently in the various sources which determine the depiction of the situation with regards domestic privacy. The three variables include the mindset of the people (whether they were collectively orientated or weary of the rampant politicization and the Cultural Revolution in general), the nature of the surveillance (whether it was benign and educational or intrusive and punitive) and the popularity of the organs and personnel of institutionalized surveillance. The three broad variables reflect the different ideological biases of the various sources under discussion.

Contemporary observations were made by authors who were invited there by the Chinese government for various reasons, resulting in a positive interpretation of the three broad variables. Such authors were friendly towards China and restricted as to where they were allowed to visit and who they were allowed to interact with. There also seemed to be certain show case areas that such invited people were brought to by the Chinese government to display the best of the Chinese communist system like *Fengsheng* neighborhood in Beijing. In contemporary observations thus, the Chinese were depicted as having no conception of privacy due to their devotion to the collective. The Chinese were also deemed to have generally welcomed whatever surveillance carried out by either neighbors or state affiliated organs like the residents' committees due to their desire to belong to the masses and be educated while the surveying parties were merely concerned. The surveying organs like residents' committees in turn were said to be popular among the people. In short, contemporary observations depicted a communist utopia whereby though there was little scope for individual and domestic privacy, the people did not mind as they did not appreciate such concepts.

Observations, studies and memoirs done after the Cultural Revolution reflect a totally different set of ideological biases. The release of travel restrictions and the fall of the gang of four comprising Jiang Qing and his supporters alongside the emergence of new leaders committed to reform resulted in a massive outpouring of grievances. The resentment that was now allowed to be publicly aired was supported by the new leadership in their desire to negate the Cultural Revolution, many whom had suffered under that period as well. The negative depiction of the Cultural Revolution was further

affirmed by memoirs written for a Western audience by migrants. The Western audience received such negative depictions well as it confirmed that Western liberal democracy was a superior way of life to Chinese totalitarianism. The result was that observations, studies and memoirs done after the Cultural Revolution became ideologically slanted in a different manner. The Chinese people who had lived during the Cultural Revolution became depicted as victims who had their domestic and individual privacy seized from them by repressive and nosy neighbors and state affiliated organs, the latter of which were feared and resented by the people. The Cultural Revolution became depicted as a hellish period where though people sought escape from scrutiny, possibilities for such evasions were severely curtailed, i.e., privacy was sought after but denied.

Scholars have noted a sense of nostalgia arising since the 90s with regards to the Cultural Revolution on the part of some people who have lived through that period. The 90s was a disruptive time due to the tumultuous economic and corresponding social changes, which could lead to a sense of nostalgia for the past. Yang Guobin noted that the rusticated youths were sent to labor in the rural areas in the early part of the Cultural Revolution developed a sense of nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution in the 90s. New problems that arose in China during the 90s as a result of economic liberalization include income inequality, unemployment and the emergence of new class divisions based on consumerism. The identity crisis and the disruptions to the lives of the former rusticated youths in the 90s led to a sense of nostalgia as a form of consolation and escape from the

harsh present. The above, according to Yang, explain why certain depictions of the rural experiences of the rusticated youth appeared positive in the 90s.¹⁸

While not all my interviewees had the experience of being sent down to the rural areas, but there is a sense that some of my interviewees felt a sense of nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution as well. Interviewees commonly note that human relations then were better and people would not steal from each other. This sense of nostalgia could affect how interviewees recalled their experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Most interviewees, for instance, dismissed the mutual spying and paranoia that was reportedly going on between people in observations and memoirs done after the Cultural Revolution, noting that these were written by either Westerners or exceptional people who suffered more than most others. One interview, CQ, even blamed such people for their own suffering, saying that these were people who did not know how to handle human relations well.¹⁹ Other interviewees, including HDG, CCR and FJC implied the same thing, noting that whether or not a person was persecuted by neighbors or radicals from the work units depended on how the person conducted himself normally.²⁰

While it is impossible to eradicate ideological distortions from oral history due to the prevailing consciousness of the time, oral history is still uniquely valuable with regards the Cultural Revolution and the issue of domestic privacy. Cultural Revolution scholar Xin Xiaoqun notes that oral history has advantages over written sources with

¹⁸ Yang Guobin, "China's Zhiqing Generation: Nostalgia, Identity, and Cultural Resistance in the 1990s," *Modern China* 29, no. 3 (2003): pp. 269-270,273,276.

¹⁹ CQ, interview with author, 13 December 2008.

²⁰ HDG, interview with author, 24 December 2008.; CCR, interview with author, 12 January 2009.; FJC, interview with author, 17 December 2008.

regards to its ability to provide fine details that will not be included in written sources. Oral history is also able to inform on the feelings of people.²¹ Oral history is thus suitable for my thesis in allowing for recollection of minute details like whether or not doors were closed, whether neighbors reported on each other and how many drawers were assigned to each family member etc. The attention to specific details and questions that oral history is good for is also one reason why ideological distortions may be reduced. I have tried to ask my interviewees very specific and factual questions like those mentioned above so as to overcome the problems with overly vague answers and the danger that certain phenomena may be interpreted in too biased a manner. My family knows my interviewees, thus allowing me to broach certain sensitive subjects which interviewees are willing to discourse upon like the committing of illicit acts and the possession of illicit items.

I have attempted to keep away from issues that may cause interviewees to lie in order to portray a good image of themselves. My family's familiarity with the interviewees, while allowing me to broach certain sensitive issues, might also result in interviewees not willing to disclose certain shameful or embarrassing things they did. The most morally incriminating question I asked was whether neighbors told on each other and accused each other to the residents' committees or any other authority there may be. While neighbors whose families were not persecuted by radicals during the Cultural Revolution may want to lie about such a phenomena to cover up their own wrong doings, if any, it is notable that even interviewees whose households were

²¹ Xin Xiaoqun, "wenge yanjiu yu koushu lishi [Cultural Revolution Research and Oral History]," in *wenhua dageming: lishi zhenxiang he jiti jiyi [The Cultural Revolution: Historical Truth and Collective Memories]*, ed. Song Yongyi (xianggang: tianyuan shuwu 2007), pp. 34, 38.

persecuted by radicals from work units like that of LL, YZG and CLT defended their neighbors from suggestions that their neighbors told on them or disturbed them after their persecution. Most of the time, however, I confined myself to asking specific questions concerning mundane everyday life like whether the household closed its doors often and whether drawers were assigned to family members.

My usage of specific questions concerning living conditions also mean that broad and vague questions like whether there was a sense of domestic and individual privacy could be tackled in a manner that could reduce ideological distortion. As such, the issue of whether households cherished any sense of domestic privacy is tackled by asking specific questions like whether neighbors just entered into each other's domestic space without informing each other, and what are the means of pre entry signaling and the reasons behind them. Questions like whether there was any sense of individual privacy at home are answered by questions like whether or not siblings went through each other's cabinet and whether they were allowed to trespass into the space of parents and what procedures were there, if any, for entering each other's space at home. The above precautions and methodology, however, cannot totally eradicate all ideological or mnemonic distortions. As such, I do not use data in cases where the interviewees seemed unsure or overly deliberate. Through the above, I have tried to improve the reliability of my interview data.

I interviewed fifteen Shanghainese for this study. The gender, ages, material, social and political status of these interviewees varied during the Cultural Revolution. I

followed a questionnaire that targeted the agendas in individual chapters. Often, I allowed interviewees to talk at length, using my questionnaire as a checklist to bring the focus back to uncovered issues. The interviews ranged from two to more than twelve hours. For the latter cases, I arranged another time, or continued the interview by phone. I did not use a recorder as it would make interviewees uneasy, so I took notes.

My purpose in this thesis with regards how I intend to use my interview data is to show that a different picture of domestic and individual privacy during the Cultural Revolution can appear apart from that depicted in written sources, especially memoirs. Memoirs are significant to my topic due to the fact overwhelmingly, most people get their understanding of domestic life during the Cultural Revolution from memoirs, especially those available in English. This is also why I will devote a lot of space later to what scholars have said about the reliability of memoirs. Scholars, however, only largely criticize the reliability of memoirs without offering an alternative picture. A glimpse of what an alternative picture would look like is what I hope to do in this thesis.

In light of the aims of my thesis and my methodology as stated above, fifteen interviewees are sufficient. The fifteen people I have interviewed are chosen randomly, drawn from people close to my family. I am not a social scientist and cannot claim to offer statistical justification for why only fifteen interviewees are used. Resource and time constraints are the primary limiting factor. The intimate nature of the interviews deem it necessary that numbers of interviewees are compromised in return for in depth and repeated sessions with each interviewee. The fifteen interviewees will subsequently

be divided into groups for analysis purposes based on various criteria. The conclusions drawn from the interviews are thus not exhaustive and cannot be regarded representative of the situation in Shanghai then due simply to the small number of interviewees. The interviewees cannot even be regarded as representative of whatever typology they represent. There is no guarantee, for instance, with reference to my conclusions in later chapters that all people of working class background would hide illicit forms of wealth and everyone from an intellectual and capitalist background would commit illicit deeds like listening to foreign broadcasts and secretly learn English in order to better their future. It has to be mentioned that though the backgrounds and experiences of the interviewees and their households are widely diverse, they agree on broad fundamental issues like whether neighbors were spying on each other and whether households and individuals cherished their own space and time apart from the neighborhood and each other. While my conclusions would appear thus to depict a blanket picture, they are not intended to do so. They aim only to suggest what an alternative picture apart from contemporary observations, post contemporaneous studies and memoirs would look like. An alternative picture on the subject matter in this thesis has not appeared in the form of a substantial study elsewhere. Another related aim of the thesis would be to open up alternative lines of investigation based upon different assumptions.

In chapter one, I compared the absence of domestic privacy during the Cultural Revolution as depicted in extant literature with what interviewees recalled, producing a different picture regarding domestic privacy. In chapter two, I examined ways in which the family obtained privacy from the neighborhood. In chapter three, I analyzed the

principles of private living space allocation at home and how family members without exclusive living space managed to make living spaces private anyway in separating somewhat the individual from the family. In chapter four, I examined the illicit acts people conducted in domestic privacy, investigating whether most people were doing the illicit acts commonly depicted in extant sources, which sort of people committed such acts and why. In chapter five, I examined how people without private living spaces could still have private storage spaces to safeguard individual privacy from the family and what principles guided the allocation of private storage spaces. I also looked at the illicit possessions people were keeping. The last two chapters on illicit acts and possessions are meant to suggest an alternative perspective to these aspects of domestic life prominently depicted in extant literature. The two chapters also show the extent of non-disclosure that possibilities of domestic privacy allowed. In my concluding chapter, I examined what interviewees said about the issue of privacy during the Cultural Revolution and whether the Western notion of privacy was applicable to domestic lives during that period.

**CHAPTER 1: NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEILLANCE AND
DOMESTIC PRIVACY**

Part 1: Memoirs, contemporary observations and studies done after the Cultural Revolution

Introduction

In this chapter, I compare the portrayal of neighborhood surveillance and domestic privacy depicted in contemporary observations, post contemporaneous studies and English language memoirs. I divide neighborhood surveillance into two aspects; the institutionalized and the informal. Institutionalized neighborhood surveillance includes all the surveillance activities of the neighborhood residential system (comprising of the district office, street/ward office, residents' committee, and residents' small group, all joined in a vertical structure)²² and other officially sanctioned bodies like the police and workers' militia. Institutionalized neighborhood surveillance ranges from scrutiny of individuals in small residential political study groups,²³ to raids on a family's home for reasons like to enquire on the identity of visitors.²⁴ Informal neighborhood surveillance covers the surveillance activities conducted by neighbors on their own accord ranging from benign observation of neighbors arising out of a friendly communal life,²⁵ to

²² Martin King Whyte and William L. Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 23.

²³ Ruth Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng : Uban Life in China* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 65, 72.; Andrew J. Watson, *Living in China* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), p. 115.; Victor H Li, "Law and Penology: Systems of Reform and Correction," in *Deviance and Social Control in Chinese Society*, ed. Amy Auerbacher Wilson, Sidney L. Greenblatt, and Richard W. Wilson, *Praeger special studies in international politics and government*. (New York: Praeger, 1977), pp. 146-147, 149.

²⁴ Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, p. 19.; Fox Butterfield, *China : Alive in the Bitter Sea* (New York: Times Books, 1982), p. 325.; Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution* pp. 231, 235.

²⁵ Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, pp. 147-150.; Watson, *Living in China*, p. 111.

intrusive surveillance by vengeful neighbors with the purpose of reporting someone to any authoritative organ.²⁶

The different groups of literature emphasized different aspects of neighborhood surveillance. However, the writings concur on the strength of neighborhood surveillance. I identify three broad variables in the literature that determined whether surveillance was regarded intrusive: the mindset of the residents (whether they were communal minded, or whether they were weary of the political tension), the nature of the surveillance activity (whether it was benign or intrusive) and whether the surveillance entity (usually institutionalized ones like the residents' committees) was popular.

Contemporary studies and observations

Contemporary observations and studies stated or implied that people did not feel neighborhood surveillance onerous. Informal surveillance was not regarded onerous as residents were communal minded and lacked any notion of individual privacy, hence allowing warm neighborly relations. Informal surveillance was also benign, undertaken for mutual aid out of neighborly concern.²⁷ An instance of benign informal surveillance is when families saw each other when they opened their doors in an open communal atmosphere.²⁸ Intrusive informal surveillance like neighbors eavesdropping on each other were not mentioned. Institutionalized surveillance was not onerous because residents

²⁶ Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution* p. 236.; Cheng Nien, *Life and Death in Shanghai*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1987), p. 487.; John Friedmann, *China's Urban Transition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 78.

²⁷ Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, pp. 147-150.; Watson, *Living in China*, pp. 17, 111.

²⁸ Watson, *Living in China*, p. 111.

devoted to the revolution desired such surveillance to rid themselves of selfish, individualistic tendencies. Institutionalized surveillance was also benign as its purpose was to bring the delinquent back to the masses by eradicating deviant thoughts.²⁹ An instance of benign institutionalized surveillance was when residents monitored each other's thoughts in intimate residential political study groups to correct deviant thinking.³⁰ Intrusive aspects of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance like nighttime raids to check on household registries were not noted in contemporary works. Institutionalized surveillance bodies like the residents' committees were also popular with residents.³¹

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, foreigners that visited China during the Cultural Revolution were mostly invited there on guided tours by the Chinese government.³² Foreigners living in China since before the Cultural Revolution had their whereabouts controlled.³³ The portrayals of China produced, including depictions of neighborhood surveillance, were therefore generally positive. Ruth Sidel visited China as an invited guest to the Chinese medical association from 1971 to 1972 and portrayed institutionalized neighborhood surveillance positively. Sidel visited *Fengsheng* neighborhood in Beijing.³⁴ *Fengsheng* neighborhood comprised 14,136 families divided

²⁹ Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, pp. 65, 72.; Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, *Daily Life in Revolutionary China*, Modern reader PB-282 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), pp. 109, 336.; Watson, *Living in China*, p. 115.

³⁰ Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, p. 65.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 47-48, 60.; Kuang Huan Fan and K. T. Fan, *From the Other Side of the River : A Self-Portrait of China Today*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1975), pp. v, vi, 182.

³² Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, p. 9.; Macciocchi, *Daily Life in Revolutionary China*, p. 12.; Fan and Fan, *The Other Side of the River*, pp. v, vii.

³³ Colin Mackerras and Neale Hunter, *China Observed, 1964/67* (Melbourne Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited, 1968), pp. 2, 3, 5.

³⁴ Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, pp. 9, 11.

into twenty-five residents' committees each responsible for supervising four to eight hundred families.³⁵ The Cultural Revolution democratized neighborhood leadership by overthrowing the old system under which leaders of residents' committees and small groups were appointed by district level authorities or party members.³⁶ Under the new voting system, residents enthusiastically voted for local leaders.³⁷ Sidel regarded residential small groups as intimate associations where residents shared personal thoughts to eradicate individualism.³⁸

Sidel also portrayed informal neighborhood surveillance as benign. The Chinese neighborhood was a 'total community support system'³⁹ in which people interacted and helped each other.⁴⁰ Interaction between residents was intimate and familiar.⁴¹ There was no personal privacy as a person's personal life was the concern of all. An individual thus must be monitored, with anti social tendencies corrected quickly.⁴² However, the Chinese did not mind, as the individual's right to self determination was never revered in China.⁴³ Sidel contrasted this public orientated lifestyle of the Chinese with the alienating Western pursuit of privacy.⁴⁴

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 47, 48.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

³⁷ Ibid.p. 60

³⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., p. 148.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 149.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 157, 158.

Antonietta Macciocchi implied that domestic privacy was no longer desired as the Chinese collective orientation had displaced the family. Macciocchi went as a 'guest of China' during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁵ From her visit, Macciocchi concluded that the family was willingly subordinated to the revolution with reference to the *Peng Pu* neighborhood in Shanghai.⁴⁶ Neighborhood surveillance thus no longer intruded upon domestic privacy as the family was no longer regarded a private haven. Instead, women preferred to labor, leaving their babies in daycare centers and escaping the previous 'walls of domesticity'.⁴⁷ Macciocchi attributed the Chinese orientation towards the collective to their new socialist morality that drew all Chinese willingly into a web of benign mutual surveillance across society. The Chinese became consequently 'men without sin'⁴⁸ as socialist morality replaced individualism with a desire to belong to the masses. Even criticized intellectuals were said to regard criticism liberating as it meant 'becoming a part of the masses again'.⁴⁹ The criticizing public loved the intellectual, rebuking him only to enable him to rejoin the masses.⁵⁰

Andrew Watson concluded that though neighborhood surveillance was pervasive, residents did not find it onerous. Watson was in China during the Cultural Revolution though the exact year is unclear. In *Fengsheng* neighborhood, Watson noted that residents monitored each other in small group discussions organized by the neighborhood revolutionary committee to correct potential deviations. However, people welcomed this

⁴⁵ Macciocchi, *Daily Life in Revolutionary China*, p. 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 367, 369.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

surveillance as it was ‘good natured’ normally,⁵¹ only becoming ‘more insistent’ during campaigns.⁵² Families were not bothered by informal surveillance. Residents opened their doors and windows to the sight of passer-bys. Communal socializing in alleys was constant and friendly.⁵³ Watson also noted the Chinese commitment to the collective, implying that it explained the positive Chinese reception to neighborhood surveillance. Youths put the collective over self, studying hard to aid China’s development.⁵⁴ Managers were not dispirited by radical attacks, but worked hard to aid national development.⁵⁵

K.H. Fan and K.T. Fan stated that people welcomed the neighborhood revolutionary committee due to its responsiveness. The authors visited China between 1972 and 1974.⁵⁶ The *Fengsheng* neighborhood revolutionary committee that the authors visited had the full support of the people⁵⁷ as the people had an active part in electing the committee that handled things of interest to the people.⁵⁸

Neale Hunter noted that the neighborhood surveillance system was strong, but the Chinese did not mind. Hunter and his co-author Colin Mackerras were teaching English in China before the Cultural Revolution at the invitation of the Chinese government, with Hunter staying on for a brief period during the Cultural Revolution. Hunter noted that it was impossible for a man to even borrow a library book without verifying his work unit

⁵¹ Watson, *Living in China*, p. 115.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 111.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 17, 146.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁶ Fan and Fan, *The Other Side of the River*, p. v, vi.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 182.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

or street committee.⁵⁹ The Chinese, however, did not mind such supervision, as they were used to living under such surveillance during the nationalist era. They were also aware that a large population needed a lot of organization.⁶⁰

Even authors who did not base their work on personal observations depicted neighborhood surveillance as strong, but not onerous. Victor Li pointed out that every Chinese belonged to either a residential or a workplace small group.⁶¹ The Chinese did not mind the surveillance of the groups due to a felt duty to correct each other. The neighborhood small group penetrated deeply into the private lives of individuals to discover the root causes of misbehavior that could include issues like a bad marriage.⁶² Though Li pointed out that the Chinese small group system entailed too much loss of privacy,⁶³ he granted that the Chinese accepted the basis for the small group system.

Observations and studies after the Cultural Revolution

More critical findings regarding neighborhood surveillance and popular responses emerged after the Cultural Revolution for several reasons. The lessening of travel restrictions enabled more Chinese to travel overseas and relate their experiences. The lifting of travel restrictions also allowed foreigners to access China in less restrictive conditions. New leaders committed to reform emerged. This, according to Zhong Xueping, Wang Zheng, and Bai Di, led to a thorough negation of the Cultural Revolution,

⁵⁹ Mackerras and Hunter, *China Observed*, p. 29.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶¹ Li, "Law and Penology," p. 145.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

allowing the expression of negative memories within China and reinforcing a longtime impression in the West of Maoist China as a period of 'dark ages'.⁶⁴

The negative depiction of the Cultural Revolution was especially prominent in memoirs according to Zhong et al. The negative impression of Maoist China in memoirs rendered works like *Life and Death in Shanghai* popular in the United States of the mid 1980s as the negativity depicted corresponded to what Americans expected.⁶⁵ Zhong et al further noted that the 'dark ages narrative' led to the exclusion of other memories apart from that coming from a victim/victimizer perspective.⁶⁶ The primary authors of memoirs were intellectuals who were incidentally the main victims during the Cultural Revolution. Their experiences of the Cultural Revolution have been simplistically taken as representative of most Chinese.⁶⁷ The 'dark ages narrative' popularized by memoirs has also influenced academics who have been unable to develop other lines of enquiry beyond that affirming Chinese during the Cultural Revolution as being either victims or victimizers.⁶⁸

The accounts produced after the Cultural Revolution reversed contemporary observations' portrayals of neighborhood surveillance in the three variables determining whether neighborhood surveillance was regarded intrusive. Neighborhood system offices

⁶⁴ Xueping Zhong, Zheng Wang, and Di Bai, "Introduction," in *Some of us: Chinese Women Growing up in the Mao era*, ed. Xueping Zhong, Zheng Wang, and Di Bai (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. xx.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. xviii.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. xix.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. xxi.

and personnel were no longer popular, but terrifying and resented.⁶⁹ Institutionalized surveillance was no longer mild and welcomed, but punitive and terrifying.⁷⁰ Informal surveillance was no longer benign, but neutral at best. Mostly, it was punitive, driven by paranoia and vengeance.⁷¹ The ability of institutionalized surveillance to monitor and intrude into domestic lives was emphasized. The Chinese during the Cultural Revolution were no longer regarded as being driven by an altruistic commitment to either revolution or collective. As such, they resented neighborhood surveillance.

Between 1977 to 1978, Martin King Whyte interviewed people formerly living in coastal China. He also studied supplementary material like the Chinese mass media and secondary literature.⁷² Whyte outlined the neighborhood system in Canton. There, the city was divided into six urban districts, with several hundred thousand people residing in each district. The districts are subdivided into wards or streets, with two to ten thousand residents each. The districts are then further subdivided into four to twelve residents' committee units, each with one to eight hundred families under its purview. The residents' committee unit is finally subdivided into small groups comprising five to twenty residents' small group units, each comprising fifteen to forty families living in a single building or in several adjacent houses along a street.⁷³ The residents' committee unit and the residents' small group unit were led mainly by housewives and retired

⁶⁹ Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, pp. 285, 286.; Butterfield, *Alive in the Bitter Sea*, p. 325. Friedmann, *China's Urban Transition*, p. 105.

⁷⁰ Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution* pp. 231, 236.; Butterfield, *Alive in the Bitter Sea*, p. 325.; Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, pp. 19, 23, 244.

⁷¹ Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, p. 289.; Friedmann, *China's Urban Transition*, p. 78.; Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution* p. 236.

⁷² Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, p. 4, 5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

personnel appointed by ward leaders.⁷⁴ It was these two lowest levels of the neighborhood system that most residents had regular contact with.⁷⁵

Whyte emphasized the ability of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance to monitor individuals and intrude into households with punitive intent. The ward office carried out surveillance duties like verifying that household registries were updated, untrustworthy neighbors kept under surveillance and suspicious activities reported.⁷⁶ Each residents' committee and its small groups cultivated neighborhood 'activists' responsible for reporting suspicious people or activity to the police. Through this, the residents' committee knew when someone visited a household and proceeded to visit the household to demand that the latter register the visitor with the police station.⁷⁷ The residents' committee also kept track of politically suspect individuals and families, ensuring that they reported regularly on their activities, attitudes, and perform menial labor.⁷⁸ The police carried out nighttime inspections of homes to verify the information in household registries and to detect people without proper registration.⁷⁹ Neighborhood system personnel were not popular, but feared and resistant to resident interests. Ward and small group leaders were appointed, and only residents' committee representatives could be elected in irregular elections.⁸⁰ The Cultural Revolution did little to alter this

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 244.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 285.

situation.⁸¹ Residents' committee leaders were thus entrenched and residents were afraid to criticize them for fear of retaliation.⁸²

Informal surveillance, however, was strong and could lead potentially to warm relations and benign informal surveillance. Mutual visibility among neighbors was high as there were always people in the neighborhood keeping an eye on things due to the staggered hours and days off in work units. There were a lot of three generation households, so older residents could stay around to monitor things.⁸³ Further, prevalence of shared spaces and facilities like toilets and kitchens brought neighbors into frequent contact.⁸⁴ Some warm relations did arise from such proximity resulting in mutual aid and comradely concern in some neighborhoods.⁸⁵

The potential for solidarity and benign neighborly informal surveillance, however, was more often turned to punitive ends. Neighborhoods with high solidarity often had more bureaucratic supervision of households in the form of nighttime household registration checks, cleanliness inspections and political study sessions. Political pressures thus might be higher in these potentially high solidarity neighborhoods.⁸⁶ Neighborhoods consequently did not buffer the individual from the larger political system generally.⁸⁷ Further, neighborhoods with high levels of informal surveillance could be dangerous to an individual if his household registry was checked for past

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 286.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 239.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 336.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 288 289.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 289.

political problems and negative class labels or if neighborhood system personnel turned against him.⁸⁸ The resulting higher danger to the individual was presumably due to the strength of communal surveillance and pressure that would be laid upon the individual consequently.

Scott Butterfield emphasized the ability of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance in monitoring its constituents in an invisible manner. Butterfield was posted to China as a correspondent for the *New York Times* in 1980. In China, Butterfield observed and met Chinese covertly. In one instance, Butterfield was followed by a man in plain clothes when a woman approached him to relate her experiences during the Cultural Revolution. The man, along with a police officer, forcefully took away the woman.⁸⁹ An American who had lived in Beijing since 1949 scoffed at foreigners who claimed they could walk around freely. The American said that the work unit, the street committee and the political study group (probably the residents' small group) were able to monitor a person without his knowledge.⁹⁰

Butterfield also emphasized the intrusive aspects of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance and the resultant ire that residents felt. According to a young couple, the street committee did not have formal codified powers, but it could be more intrusive than the police. The street committee could send someone over to search an individual's home whenever it wanted. The street committee had sent representatives over to check on the identities of the couple's dinner guests, threatening police action if

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Butterfield, *Alive in the Bitter Sea*, p. 10.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 322.

the couple did not cooperate.⁹¹ The couple also resented the street committee's surveillance of their mundane life, including the time they went to bed.⁹² The former thus felt like 'caged animals', being unable to be truly alone.⁹³ The street committee also carried out general surveillance functions like monitoring neighborhood cleanliness and hiding in unlighted building entryways to watch for strangers. The couple had been reprimanded once regarding the cleanliness of their home and surroundings.⁹⁴

Recent studies affirmed the prevalence of intrusive neighborhood surveillance. John Friedman stated that the residents' committee controlled the daily behavior of residents.⁹⁵ To that end, the residents' committee, staffed mostly by paid government officials, maintained public order and mobilized people for campaigns.⁹⁶ Neighbors, meanwhile, kept a sharp lookout on the private affairs of each other.⁹⁷ Elizabeth Perry emphasized the intrusive nature of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance by examining the Shanghai workers' militia that assumed surveillance and security functions in neighborhoods during the Cultural Revolution. After the January 1967 radical seizure of power, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyan needed institutional means of consolidating their power and subsequently developed an armed workers' militia.⁹⁸ The militia started extending into society with the 1970 campaign to occupy the neighborhoods.⁹⁹ By 1976, all 1,124 residential committees in Shanghai had been

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 325.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 323.

⁹⁵ Friedmann, *China's Urban Transition*, p. 105.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 105.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 78.

⁹⁸ Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution* p. 214, 215, 215.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 231.

assigned militia squads that took over local police functions besides maintaining household registration records.¹⁰⁰ The squads conducted nighttime raids to seek out hidden class enemies.¹⁰¹ The activities of the militia and the denunciations made by citizens resulted in a handful to dozens of residents seized each day, with about a hundred citizens in prison at any point.¹⁰²

Memoirs

English language memoirs portrayed vividly the ways neighborhood surveillance intruded upon domestic privacy. Scholars, however, are critical of memoirs. Due to the prominence that memoirs play in shaping impressions of domestic life during the Cultural Revolution, I devote more space here towards explaining what scholars have noted with regards to the reliability of memoirs. Memoirs are the main subject of Zhong et al's critique of representations of the Maoist era. Other scholars criticized memoirs on grounds that, together with Zhong et al's criticisms, revealed how they adhered to the 'dark ages narrative'; namely their lack of representative value,¹⁰³ the narrative framework employed that adhered to negative Western and official Chinese views of the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁰³ Shuyu Kong, "Swan and Spider Eaters in Problematic Memoirs of the Cultural Revolution," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 7, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): p. 239.; Mobo C.F. Gao, "Review Essay: Memoirs and Interpretation of the Cultural Revolution " *Bulletin of Concerned Asian scholars* 27, no. 1 (Jan-Mar, 1995): p. 50.; Zhong, Wang, and Bai, "Introduction," pp. xxi, xxii.

Cultural Revolution¹⁰⁴ and the self justificatory portrayal of the authors as innocent victims.¹⁰⁵

Scholars criticized memoirs for their lack of representative value and usage of prejudiced narrative frameworks. Kong Shuyu noted that the authorship of Cultural Revolution memoirs in the 80s and 90s included mainly Chinese women who have ‘escaped’ to the West after the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰⁶ Mobo Gao charged that people like uneducated peasants and workers could not tell their side of the story.¹⁰⁷ Peter Zarrow noted that memoirs were written mainly for an English speaking audience. Such memoirs accorded with assumptions based on residual Cold War ideology that reassured Western readers of their superior way of life.¹⁰⁸ Mao’s China consequently was depicted simplistically as a ten year totalitarian nightmare.¹⁰⁹ Kong charged that memoirs allowed Western readers to identify with the authors who remained rational in the midst of mass hysteria,¹¹⁰ thus enabling the former to feel superior to most Chinese.¹¹¹

Scholars accused authors of depicting themselves as innocent victims amidst mass fanaticism and evil. Kong noted Chang Jung’s self justificatory portrayal of innocence in *Wild Swans*. Chang portrayed her own family as helpless victims attacked during the

¹⁰⁴ Peter Zarrow, "Meaning of China's Cultural Revolution: Memoirs of Exile," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 7, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): pp. 167, 168.; Kong, "Swan and Spider Eaters," pp. 248, 249.; Gao, "Memoirs and Interpretation," p. 53.

¹⁰⁵ Gao, "Memoirs and Interpretation," pp. 53, 55.; Kong, "Swan and Spider Eaters," pp. 241, 242.; Zarrow, "Memoirs of Exile," pp. 175, 176, 178.

¹⁰⁶ Kong, "Swan and Spider Eaters," p. 239.

¹⁰⁷ Gao, "Memoirs and Interpretation," p. 50.

¹⁰⁸ Zarrow, "Memoirs of Exile," p. 167.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*: p. 168.

¹¹⁰ Kong, "Swan and Spider Eaters," p. 249.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Cultural Revolution by evil people.¹¹² The Cultural Revolution, however, was a backlash against a revolutionary regime and its leaders who have nourished it. Chang's father as a government official was thus not innocent regarding the people's actions.¹¹³ Zarrow noted that memoirists acknowledged their violence. But memoirists would claim, however, that it was a result of mass brainwashing, with the same potential for evil existing in everyone.¹¹⁴ Memoirists, furthermore, would claim a uniquely independent consciousness that enabled them to maintain a sense of moral responsibility.¹¹⁵

Memoirs of the Cultural Revolution with the above traits depicted neighborhood surveillance as intrusive and resented,¹¹⁶ similar to works produced after the Cultural Revolution. Memoirs, furthermore, specified the myriad of ways which neighborhood surveillance infringed on personal and domestic privacy. I outline how memoirists recalled their experiences with such infringement in the rest of the section.

Memoirs depicted people persecuted as under constant surveillance at home that continued even after the individual had been rehabilitated. In *Caught in a Tornado, a Chinese American Woman Survives the Cultural Revolution*, Wen Zengde, was indicted as a bourgeoisie academic authority at the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute. She was sent to labor reform and only released after a year in 1970. When she returned to the apartment unit provided by the school, two neighbors watched her every move including

¹¹² Ibid.: p. 241.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Zarrow, "Memoirs of Exile," pp. 176, 178.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.: p. 175.

¹¹⁶ James R. Ross, *Caught in a Tornado: A Chinese American Woman Survives the Cultural Revolution* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), pp. 137, 138.; Heng Liang and Judith Shapiro, *Son of the revolution*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 40, 53, 161-163.; Nien, *Life and Death*, p. 487.; Anchee Min, *Red Azalea*, 1st ed. (London: Indigo, 1996), p. 182.

her buying of crackers from the bakery. The two neighbors reported that to the residents' committee which criticized Wen for reverting to bourgeois Western ways.¹¹⁷

Institutionalized neighborhood surveillance carried out frequent household inspections upon the families of those persecuted. In *Son of the Revolution*, Liang Heng's father was denounced as a reactionary scholar at the Hunan daily newspaper. His entire family was sent to Changling County in Hengyang district. Liang then reflected on the difficulty of returning due to the nightly home checks by neighborhood system personnel and police for unreported guests.¹¹⁸

Families had to feign loyalty to the revolution at home due to neighbors watching each other. In *Fox Spirit, a Woman in Mao's China*, Zhang Zhimei, was denounced as an 'international woman hooligan' in the Harbin Foreign Languages institute. A nosy neighbor subsequently looked into her window nightly to verify that her family did the nightly reporting ritual to Mao. Her household thus deliberately shouted revolutionary slogans loudly at night.¹¹⁹

Institutionalized neighborhood surveillance caused those who were not persecuted to feel uneasy if they were doing something potentially illicit. In *Red Azalea*, Anchee Min allowed her lesbian lover, Yan, to have sex with another man in her home. While Min

¹¹⁷ Ross, *Caught in a Tornado*, pp. 137, 138.

¹¹⁸ Heng Liang and Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A Knopf 1983), pp. 40, 53, 161-163.

¹¹⁹ Zhimei Zhang, *Fox Spirit: A Woman in Mao's China* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1992), p. 167.

was standing guard outside, she got nervous as she saw the old neighborhood tailor looking at her. The tailor was a rumor mongering activist who had reported adulterers.¹²⁰

Vengeful neighbors could also lay malicious informal surveillance upon residents not currently persecuted to find fault. In *Life and Death in Shanghai*, Nien Cheng returned to her Shanghai home after being released from detention on suspicion of being a foreign spy. The Chu family who shared her house disliked her for taking up too much space. Nien speculated that the family had alleged to the residents' committee that her maid had brought back things from the black market and gossiped about Nien's new clothes.¹²¹

Institutionalized surveillance could also utilize people close to the target of surveillance. Nien went out with her friend Mr. Hu a few times after her release from jail. The mother of Nien's adopted daughter visited her subsequently to find out about Mr. Hu for the residents' committee.¹²²

Memoirs affirmed the onerous pervasiveness of neighborhood surveillance depicted in studies done after the Cultural Revolution, emphasizing similarly the ability of neighborhood surveillance in monitoring residents and intruding into their homes. The similarity in portrayals indicates that both genres framed the Cultural Revolution within the 'dark ages narrative'. In the three broad variables that determined whether neighborhood surveillance was regarded onerous, i.e., the mindset of the people, the

¹²⁰ Min, *Red Azalea*, p. 182.

¹²¹ Nien, *Life and Death*, p. 487.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 521, 526-527.

nature of the surveillance and the popularity of the organs and personnel of institutionalized surveillance, memoirs and studies done after the Cultural Revolution reversed that depicted in contemporary studies.

Part 2: The neighborhood surveillance apparatus in interviewee memories

Interviewee memories of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance

Post contemporaneous studies and memoirs depicted institutionalized neighborhood surveillance as intrusive. My interviewees, however, suggested otherwise. These interviewees include those with household members persecuted by radicals. Interviewees did not recall institutionalized neighborhood surveillance bodies like the residents' committee, police and militia carrying out intrusive surveillance. Only one interviewee, YZG (child then), noted mildly intrusive institutionalized neighborhood surveillance. YZG's father was persecuted by Red Guards from the school he was teaching in on account of him being the former owner of the cement factory that he was made manager for after 1949. He was detained in school from 1967 to 1968. Though he was later allowed home, he had to report regularly to the residents' committee for political study lessons.¹²³

My other six interviewees (WYX, CLT, MH, LL, GXQ, HDG) who had persecuted household members noted that it was unit radicals or Red Guards who intruded upon their domestic privacy. On the other hand, their families did not suffer from intrusive institutionalized neighborhood surveillance. WYX's (child then) father was a teacher who had a previous rightist conviction from the anti-rightist movement. Since then, he was known derogatively as a 'rightist who had removed his cap'. Red guards from his school consequently detained him there for a few days. Subsequently, he

¹²³ YZG, interview with author, 10 January 2009.

reported to school for menial labor every day. Periodically, Red Guards and other radicals forced his father while the latter was at home to attend struggle sessions in school. Though the residents' committee had initially accompanied the Red Guards to their home to mediate the violence, it subsequently left the family alone.¹²⁴ CLT (a cadre in a bus company then) noted that though unit radicals struggled against him, institutionalized neighborhood surveillance bodies left his household alone as the residents' committee 'would not come over if there was nothing happening in your house'.¹²⁵ MH's (child during the Cultural Revolution) mother had opposed unit radicals whom she felt obstructed production. The radicals tried to detain her at work, but she managed to escape. They radicals then stood guard outside MH's home waiting to apprehend his mother. Institutionalized neighborhood surveillance personnel, however, left his family alone.¹²⁶

Though institutionalized neighborhood surveillance personnel left his family alone, MH felt nonetheless that the residents' committee was like a spying organ of the state though he did not have direct experiences with its harassment. His local residents' committee kept watch on a former capitalist, enquiring about his behavior periodically from retired personnel.¹²⁷ MH's family, however, were not utilized as they were mainly at work or in school.¹²⁸ Interviewees with direct experience with institutionalized surveillance, however, suggested that such surveillance may be more benign than MH perceived. GGL's wife (GGL was a boat supervisor in a transport company then, his wife

¹²⁴ WYX, interview with author, 7 January 2009.

¹²⁵ CLT, interview with author, 15 December 2008.

¹²⁶ MH, interview with author, 27 December 2008.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

was a factory worker) was told by the local militia to monitor the ‘bad element’ living in their courtyard. This ‘bad element’ was a former factory supervisor. Every month, GGL’s wife updated the residents’ committee on this person as instructed. GGL’s wife, however, denied that the surveillance was intrusive, ‘I would tell the residents’ committee that he was all right. He was only a historical counter revolutionary...further, he was a good person and accepted the correction of the people’.¹²⁹ GGL’s wife never knocked on his door nor purposely surveyed him. Interaction with this ‘bad element’ carried on as per normal.¹³⁰ YZG also noted that though his father labored and attended political study labor sessions upon the residents’ committee’s orders, the committee did not bother him at home.¹³¹

Interviewees with persecuted household members deemed good neighborly relations and daily conduct primary in explaining the lack of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance on their households. YZG noted that his father’s good daily conduct was why the latter was not subjected to neighborhood harassment upon his return from detention.¹³² When told that memoirs portrayed neighborhood surveillance to be intrusive for those persecuted, YZG mentioned that ‘The cases in the books...were special exceptions...the residents’ committee and other official bodies did not come to my place at all.’¹³³ LL’s (a child during the Cultural Revolution) parents were cadres in the Shanghai city government. During the Cultural Revolution, they were persecuted by unit radicals. The residents’ committee and other bodies of neighborhood surveillance,

¹²⁹ GGL, interview with author, 18 December 2008.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ YZG, 10 January 2009.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

however, did not even come into the bungalow they shared with others. LL noted that, 'the occupants in my house treated others well generally...Though there were patrols by the residents' committee...they did not come into our house.'¹³⁴

Interviewees without persecuted household members agreed that good daily conduct and neighborly relations explained why intrusive institutionalized surveillance did not befall them or others. CHN (a child during the Cultural Revolution from a worker background family) said that the residents' committee never bothered his family as committee personnel were longtime neighbors with their family. CQ (a pharmacy supervisor during the Cultural Revolution) could not recall institutionalized surveillance personnel bothering her home. CQ noted two types of people most likely to be disturbed by the residents' committee; those displaying a striking difference in standards of living and those who were quarrelsome.¹³⁵

Interviewee memories of informal neighborhood surveillance

Interviewees generally did not recall institutionalized neighborhood surveillance harassing their households regardless of whether anyone in their household was persecuted by radicals. They attributed this to the good daily conduct and neighborly relations their households maintained. The same picture occurs with what interviewees recalled of informal surveillance. Interviewees without persecuted household members stated there was no intrusive informal surveillance laid upon their households or

¹³⁴ LL, interview with author, 26 December 2008.

¹³⁵ CQ, 13 December 2008.

neighbors who had been persecuted. Though GGL's wife was instructed to report on the 'negative element' in her vicinity, she carried out the task casually. None of her neighbors paid extra attention to that 'bad element' as well. CQ noted that everyone interacted with the negative element on her floor without laying extra surveillance upon him due to the necessity of getting along on a daily basis in a small area. CQ said, '(If) I am queuing up to use the tap to wash my clothes, and he is behind me, and he tells me to call him when I am done, then in this case, I don't call him?' With regards intrusive informal surveillance on households with no members persecuted, CHN noted that his household did not fear his neighbors reporting or surveying them maliciously them due to their long-term familiarity with each other.¹³⁶

Interviewees without persecuted household members behaved on the assumption there was no intrusive informal surveillance. This was so even if their assumption if proven wrong could endanger them. CQ kept a box under her bed containing Chinese classics and English Language textbooks. CQ was aware that such items could be damning if found. Despite that, CQ did not close the door mostly, even when she went out. CQ was emphatic that neighbors would not know about the books as they did not come into her home uninvited.¹³⁷ CCR (a teacher during the Cultural Revolution) kept contraband items including prohibited Chinese literature, Western musical records and scores. CCR too, was aware of the dangers. However, CCR never worried about neighbors spying on his family.¹³⁸ SWD (a teacher during the Cultural Revolution) lived in an old *shikumen* building with neighbors in close proximity. SWD's mother kept silver

¹³⁶ Chen, interview with author, 29 December 2008.

¹³⁷ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹³⁸ CCR, 12 January 2009.

coins issued by various republican governments and jewelry. His family, however, continued to interact warmly with neighbors, keeping their door opened mostly.¹³⁹

Even interviewees with persecuted household members concurred on the absence of intrusive informal neighborhood surveillance, or behaved like there was none. YZG's family continued interacting with neighbors on a normal basis. He and his siblings continued to play with other children in the courtyard. Neighbors did not avoid his family, or treated them differently as 'that would be too harsh!'¹⁴⁰ GXQ's (a child then), father was persecuted by his unit on charges of being a 'false party member' due to his underground work for the CCP before 1949. GXQ noted, however, that neighbors neither reported on each other nor on his family.¹⁴¹ MH's family was not treated differently from before and neighbors continued to look after them. Neighbors who shared the terraced house he lived in could even be entrusted with MH's family's room key whenever the latter went out to open the door for his sister who might return earlier.¹⁴² CLT's wife was hiding a package of unknown contents entrusted to her by her persecuted sister. CLT was horrified when he discovered the package, but his wife continued to interact with neighbors warmly.¹⁴³

Some interviewees with persecuted household members noted that neighbors not only abstained from intrusive surveillance, but even helped them repel intrusive non neighborhood surveillance. Neighbors did this despite the danger to themselves that

¹³⁹ SWD, interview with author, 1 January 2009.

¹⁴⁰ YZG, 10 January 2009.

¹⁴¹ GXQ, interview with author, 20 December 2008.

¹⁴² MH, 27 December 2008.

¹⁴³ CLT, 15 December 2008.

might result. LL noted that despite the persecution of her parents and some neighbors, all inhabitants of the bungalow continued to interact on intimate terms. Some inhabitants of worker background on the ground floor were radicals in their own units. Instead of harassing LL or the other neighbors of bad backgrounds, the worker radicals fended off other radicals looking to either struggle against inhabitants or squat in the house, threatening the latter with force if they refused to leave.¹⁴⁴

There was only one instance among my interviewees whereby informal surveillance approximated that depicted in memoirs. WYX's family lived in a shared *shikumen* building. The family living in the back of the house on the ground floor was happy that WYX's family was persecuted. That family furthermore volunteered their living space for the use of the intruding Red Guards. After the home raids, WYX's family locked the door leading to the back of the house to prevent that family scrutinizing their actions or conversations. Even so, WYX believed that family was not purposely monitoring them, though his family locked the door as a precaution anyway.

The solidarity and distinctive identity of the neighborhood

Interviewees regardless of whether they had persecuted household members generally did not recall intrusive informal surveillance being laid upon their households. Interviewees also did not recall intrusive informal surveillance carried out by their household and neighbors upon others. Interviewees also behaved on the assumption that there was no intrusive informal surveillance. The lack of intrusive neighborhood

¹⁴⁴ LL, 26 December 2008.

surveillance, both institutionalized and informal, suggests that residents, including neighborhood system personnel, shared a distinctive identity. This distinctive neighborhood identity was separated from political considerations or the events in work units. It was this neighborhood identity that determined neighborly interaction. Residents interacted with neighbors persecuted by radicals, disregarding the political deviations and backgrounds of these neighbors. Interviewees with household members persecuted did not register any difference in how neighbors treated them. Interviewees with no persecuted household members also did not behave differently towards neighbors who had.

On the other hand, residents who abused others in their respective units due to different political affiliations related to neighbors differently. These residents who were radicals in their units did not let that affect how they interacted with neighbors. A radical in GXQ's housing block did not bother other inhabitants, as 'he was only making trouble in the unit.'¹⁴⁵ GGL was a radical who tried to struggle against his unit's security chief. He behaved in a cordial way in the neighborhood, however, interacting with others in the courtyard and putting up with the noise made by his neighbors.¹⁴⁶ In LL's shared bungalow, the radical co-inhabitants did not lord over the other occupants who were mostly of bad backgrounds. Instead, everyone cooperated in repelling radicals from outside the neighborhood who wanted to harass the inhabitants of bad background.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ GXQ, 20 December 2008.

¹⁴⁶ GGL, 18 December 2008.

¹⁴⁷ LL, 26 December 2008.

Neighborhood system personnel seemed an organic and responsive part of the neighborhood community, interacting with residents as fellow neighbors instead of as enforcers of the state coercive system. CQ, FJC, and SWD's mothers worked for the residents' committee. CQ's mother was asked by neighbors to intervene in family quarrels and to help out in various ways. Her mother had been living in the neighborhood for a long time and people trusted her.¹⁴⁸ FJC (grocery purchaser during the Cultural Revolution) noted that his mother intervened in conflicts between families when requested by the disputants.¹⁴⁹ Neighbors discussed problems with SWD's mother and regarded her fair.¹⁵⁰ Interviewees whose family members did not work as neighborhood system personnel also suggested that such personnel were responsive to their needs. CLT stated that normally, the residents' committee intervened only upon invitation from residents, like when families had major conflicts with each.¹⁵¹ CHN noted that the residents' committee did not bother his family as they were long-term neighbors with each other.¹⁵²

The targets of the neighborhood surveillance apparatus

The neighborhood with its own distinctive identity did not harass residents using the criteria that radicals or other unit personnel employed. The neighborhood, however, did carry out intrusive surveillance in accordance with its own logic. Interviewees disagreed over whether family background was an important factor in determining the

¹⁴⁸ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁴⁹ FJC, 17 December 2008.

¹⁵⁰ SWD, 1 January 2009.

¹⁵¹ CLT, 15 December 2008.

¹⁵² Chen, 29 December 2008.

targets of intrusive neighborhood surveillance. FJC noted that people of bad background would be constantly under intrusive informal surveillance and have to report regularly to the residents' committee.¹⁵³ CQ, however, denied that a 'negative element' suffered constant surveillance from her experience interacting with one.¹⁵⁴ YZG's father, while ordered to report for labor and political study organized by the residents' committee, did not detect further intrusive neighborhood surveillance.¹⁵⁵

Whether neighborhood surveillance threatened domestic privacy may not be solely background dependent. The confidence an individual had, however, in the sanctity of domestic privacy from neighborhood surveillance could depend partially on his family background nonetheless. Some interviewees expressed confidence in the sanctity of their domestic space on account of their good background. GGL and CYJ (soldier during the Cultural Revolution) attributed their family's freedom from home inspections or other disturbances to their worker background.¹⁵⁶ Sometimes, families of good background were so sure of their freedom from neighborhood surveillance that they kept dangerous things at home. WYX for instance, had some family valuables and possessions that could be regarded feudal, capitalist, and revisionist hidden in the homes of neighbors with good backgrounds.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ FJC, 17 December 2008.

¹⁵⁴ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁵⁵ YZG, 10 January 2009.

¹⁵⁶ CYJ, interview with author, 10 December 2008.

¹⁵⁷ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

Many interviewees believed that a household with bad neighborly relations could end up being harassed by intrusive neighborhood surveillance. CQ noted that a person with bad relations with neighbors could invite intrusive institutionalized neighborhood surveillance upon his household.¹⁵⁸ CHN noted that only someone who offended others would be reported by neighbors for alleged political deviance.¹⁵⁹ YZG and LL attributed the lack of neighborhood surveillance upon their households to their good daily conduct and the friendly neighborly relations they maintained with others.¹⁶⁰ WYX's family's experience suggests that though grudges with certain neighbors could lead to punitive action, it was not enough to invoke concerted neighborhood intrusive surveillance if the family maintained good relations with other neighbors. WYX's family locked their back door to prevent their conversations and lives being scrutinized by the family living behind. While that family aided radicals in their persecution of WYX's family, other neighbors helped WYX's family hoard dangerous possessions.¹⁶¹

Some interviewees cited a visible difference in standards or style of living as important in determining the targets of intrusive neighborhood surveillance. MH stated that neighborly punitive reporting was more likely in areas where residents used to be of wealthier backgrounds.¹⁶² FJC stated that fashionable people who for instance, gelled or permed their hair got into trouble with neighbors more easily.¹⁶³ CQ concurred with MH

¹⁵⁸ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Chen, 29 December 2008.

¹⁶⁰ YZG, 10 January 2009.; LL, 26 December 2008.

¹⁶¹ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

¹⁶² MH, 27 December 2008.

¹⁶³ FJC, 17 December 2008.

and FJC, stating that wealthier people and those particular about food and dressing were more likely to incur the harassment of the residents' committee.¹⁶⁴

The significance of a different or more luxurious lifestyle in incurring intrusive neighborhood surveillance led even households protected by the state to reduce displays of ostentatious consumption. HDG's father was a prominent doctor attending to top leaders. A chauffeur drove HDG's father to work every morning for most of the Cultural Revolution. HDG's father, however, was persecuted by radicals from the hospital that he was serving in during the early part of the Cultural Revolution. The radicals raided their home and sealed up possessions regarded feudal, capitalist, or revisionist. HDG's father was rehabilitated shortly after however, and invited to review the Red Guards alongside Mao. Despite that, the family did not redisplay the painting and antiques that the radicals returned. HDG said his family did not want to attract too much attention from their fellow occupants of worker background who had early on forcefully occupied the ground floor of their three-storey bungalow.¹⁶⁵

While background itself was not a strong factor, a combination of visible lifestyle difference and bad family background increased the chances of intrusive neighborhood surveillance. People of bad background had to watch their visible consumption more as they might be assumed to be hoarding something beyond what they were displaying, hence inviting domestic intrusion. CQ noted someone working in the gold business before 1949 living in a nearby street formerly occupied by wealthier people. Neighbors

¹⁶⁴ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁶⁵ HDG, 24 December 2008.

commented that there was gold hidden in his household. Consequently, Red Guards raided his home. The man was then living in apparent poverty. Neighbors, however, believed that it was a deception and word got to the Red Guards. The gold was ultimately found hidden within the walls.¹⁶⁶ Here, the man with a bad background was subjected to intrusive informal neighborhood surveillance. Though informal surveillance did not result in intrusive institutionalized neighborhood surveillance, it led to domestic intrusion by non-neighborhood elements instead. People with bad background had to be careful regarding their display of luxurious consumption also because of the assumption that their wealth came from oppressing the people. CLT (CLT knows GGL) noted that GGL would not have a political problem even if others saw the latter's gold ring because members of worker class were assumed to gain their wealth by honest labor. A capitalist family, however, would be assumed to have gained their wealth by oppressing the people.¹⁶⁷

It seems plausible that the neighborhood would bring its intrusive attention upon families of bad background who failed to neither restrain its display of wealth nor maintain good neighborly relations. Disgruntled neighbors might complain about such a family or person to the residents' committee or any other organ of institutionalized neighborhood surveillance. Neighborhood system personnel might hear of a rumor from the neighborhood community. Formal action might result, be it home raids or inspections. At the very least, intrusive informal surveillance consisting of increased monitoring and gossiping regarding households who met the above three criteria took place.

¹⁶⁶ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁶⁷ GGL, 18 December 2008.

Conclusion

In part two of this chapter, I compared the depiction of intrusive neighborhood surveillance found in studies and memoirs done after the Cultural Revolution with what interviewees recalled. Interviewees suggested that intrusion into domestic privacy by neighborhood surveillance was not as strong as depicted even for households with members persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. This was as the neighborhood had its own identity and criteria for selecting its targets of harassment. The neighborhood did not harass everyone with a bad background or other political problems. Residents and neighborhood system personnel related to each other as neighbors. As such, the neighborhood most likely harassed only households with a bad background that failed to neither restrain its luxurious consumption nor maintain good neighborly relations. While my conclusion would seem to suggest that I agree with observations done during the Cultural Revolution, this is not wholly so. My interviewees suggest that relations between neighbors were good and that neighborhood life was indeed relatively transparent and open. The reason why neighborhood life was open and transparent and why neighborly relations were good, however, is different from what contemporary observations claim. Contemporary observations would claim that the open and friendly neighborhood life is a manifestation of a lack of any desire for and notion of separation from the community due to the people's devotion to the collective. Chapter two, however, would contrast the difference between how interview data explained the phenomenon of an open and friendly neighborhood life and how contemporary observations do so.

CHAPTER 2: HABITS OF PRIVACY AND MEANS OF SECURING DOMESTIC PRIVACY

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how households secured domestic privacy from the neighborhood. The main threat to domestic privacy was benign informal surveillance stemming from neighborly proximity. Even if neighbors did not monitor each other maliciously, proximity still inevitably resulted in visibility. Confronted with that, interviewees and their households did not seek a level of privacy common to modern Shanghai homes characterized by direct measures of securing domestic privacy like the shutting of doors and interacting with neighbors only when they saw each other outside. Their households behaved instead in a manner that, compared to their current practices, would suggest a neglect of domestic privacy including not closing the doors during bedtime and much of the day despite neighbors within close proximity.

It was not, however, that my interviewees' households did not desire domestic privacy during the Cultural Revolution. Rather, the inferior housing conditions manifested in cramped spaces, lack of circulation, the presence of unpleasant odors, bad sound insulation and the location of essential amenities outside the home rendered a modern, more enclosed form of domestic life uncomfortable and inconvenient. As such, households opted for more comfortable arrangements, using less direct measures of securing domestic privacy involving mainly the division of domestic space or the space around the immediate vicinity of the home into public and private zones. Household members also generally spent more time outdoors. As such, the open and friendly neighborhood life of the Chinese reported in contemporary observations did not mean

that households did not desire domestic privacy. Rather, the open communal life was an adaptation to housing conditions whereby residents adopted less obvious means of securing domestic privacy. Means of securing domestic privacy became more explicit when housing conditions improved, or when neighborly relations can no longer be trusted to remain benign.

	CCR	CQ	YZG	SWD	CHN	GGL	CLT	MH	LL	CYJ (old home)	HDG	SYZ	CYJ (new home)	FJC	WYX
Doors opened mainly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Frequent neighborly Interaction	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					
Option of Withdrawal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes											
Infrequent neighborly interaction											Yes	Yes			
Doors closed mainly													Yes	Yes	Yes

Table-distribution of habits of privacy across households

I refer to only fourteen of my fifteen Shanghai interviewees as the data from GXQ is too brief. The table above summarizes the division of the fourteen households outlined below. Among the fourteen households, eleven opened while two closed their home doors mainly. The remaining CYJ's household opened their home door mainly at their old residence and closed their home door mainly in their new residence. (CYJ shifted homes once during the Cultural Revolution). Of the twelve who opened their doors mainly thus (including CYJ in his old home), only MH, LL, and CCR had better housing in terms of space and facilities within the family's domestic space. All three lived in either terraced housing or bungalows.

The twelve interviewees who opened their home doors mainly (including CYJ in his old home) are divided according to whether their household interacted often with neighbors. Ten interviewees and their households in this group of thirteen interacted frequently with their neighbors, while two seldom did. Among the ten, four households exercised their option to withdraw. The option of withdrawal was exercised by families who tried to reduce unnecessary neighborly interaction in general or on frequently occurring occasions though maintaining close neighborly relations nonetheless. CQ's household was an example. CQ and her husband attend to the medical needs of neighbors frequently, but refrained from visiting their neighbors otherwise. The four households that exercised their withdrawal option also had incriminating possessions at home. Even with incriminating possessions, these households did not adopt more direct means of securing domestic privacy than what their housing conditions permitted comfortably. Rather, these households deemed exercising their option of withdrawal sufficient for

ensuring that their incriminating possessions would not be accessed by neighborhood surveillance.

Interviewees and households: Home doors mainly opened, frequent neighborly interaction, option of withdrawal exercised

CQ, SWD, YZG, and CCR's households exercised their option of withdrawal for various stated reasons. CQ did not like to interact with neighbors excessively because she felt that excessive interaction was a cause of trouble. Consequently, CQ only attended to neighbors when a medical need arose. She did not engage in the common practice of neighborly mutual visiting called *chuanmen* (entering doors). She stayed apart when neighbors were speaking on the rooftop during hot summer nights.¹⁶⁸ CCR found neighborly relations bothersome in that overly close relations characterized by mutual gift giving or visits entailed too much obligations.¹⁶⁹ YZG's family avoided excessive interaction due to his family's persecution status.¹⁷⁰ SWD's family withdrew from the neighborly community when specific neighbors visited SWD's mother privately for advice. SWD's family also avoided telling neighbors things that would result in mutual obligations like SWD's sister's wedding.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ CQ, 13 December 2008.

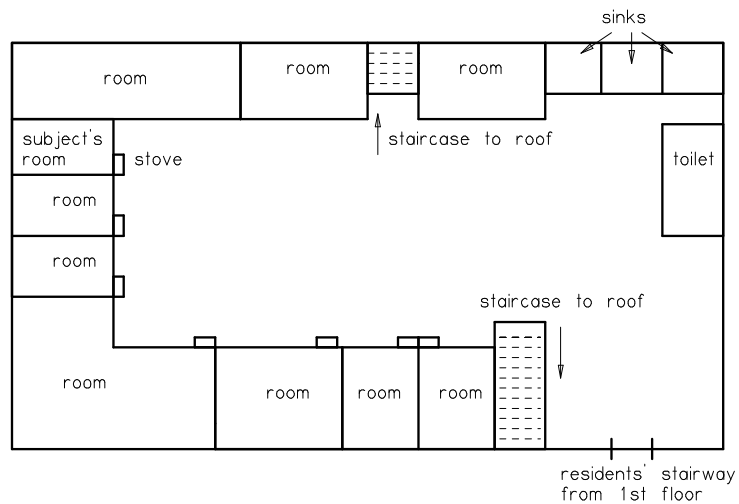
¹⁶⁹ CCR, 12 January 2009.

¹⁷⁰ YZG, 10 January 2009.

¹⁷¹ SWD, 1 January 2009.

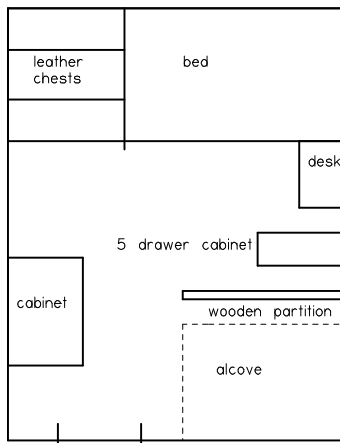
The layout of SWD and CQ's homes relative to their neighbors suggest that neighbors could access their homes in multiple ways easily as they kept their home doors opened mainly.

CQ-plan view living area



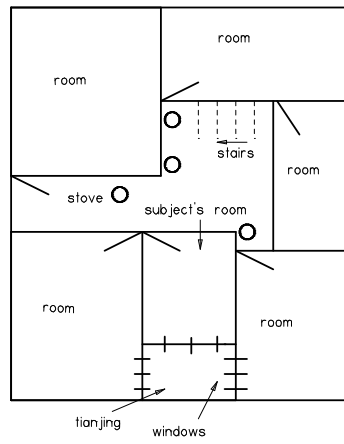
CQ: three-storey building with third storey converted for housing, third storey

CQ-plan view interior



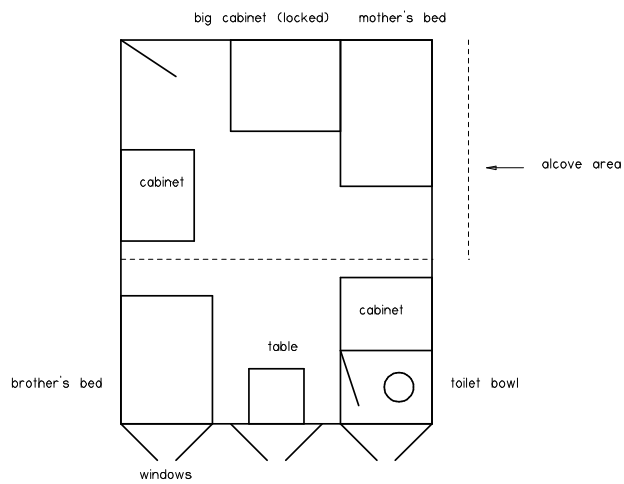
CQ: cubicle unit, three-storey building with third storey converted for housing, third storey

SWD-plan view second floor



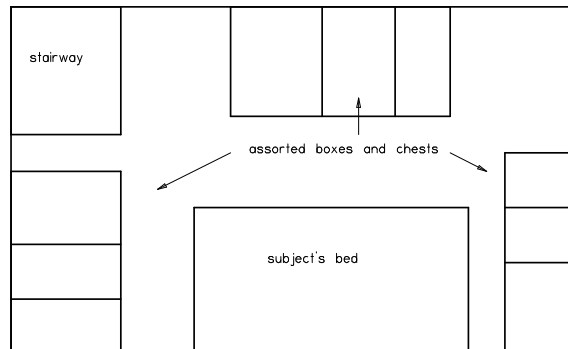
SWD: two-storey *shikumen* building, second storey

SWD-plan view interior



SWD: *shikumen* room with loft, two-storey *shikumen* building, second storey

SWD-plan view loft



SWD: loft, *shikumen* room with loft, two-storey *shikumen* building, second storey

Both households opened their home doors mainly despite the ease of various forms of access to their domestic space. They did so even when privacy was desired at times and despite their potentially incriminating items. CQ had Chinese classics and English language textbooks in a box under her bed. She also had money and coupons in unlocked drawers. Despite that, CQ did not close the door, even when she and her husband were both away. According to CQ, couples could even make love with opened doors.¹⁷² SWD's family did not close their home door often as well despite his family's need to withdraw from neighborly interaction at various times and the possession of potentially incriminating items. SWD's home door was only closed when no one was at home and in winter, but not at times when privacy was most needed like when neighbors were speaking to his mother or when the family discussed something in private.¹⁷³

¹⁷² CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁷³ SWD, 1 January 2009.

The families of CQ and SWD could not secure domestic privacy comfortably by the outright closing of the main door. The two households lived in cramped conditions that impeded air circulation. The usage of facilities located outside domestic space like toilets and stoves also made closing the door inconvenient. To ensure privacy without uncomfortable measures, the two households relied on certain tacit agreements between neighbors. CQ kept her door opened confidently even when absent due to a tacit agreement between neighbors not to intrude even visually into domestic spaces. Neighbors understood that domestic privacy could not be practically secured by closing home doors. Consequently, neighbors developed an unspoken rule not to look into each other's homes unnecessarily.¹⁷⁴ For SWD, usage of common areas for socializing and pre-entry signaling ensured some domestic privacy among neighbors. Communal socializing was done in the stairway area and *tianjing* (a sort of balcony) on the second floor during cooking and washing of clothes. There was thus no need for people to come into each other's homes mostly. When neighbors wanted to come into each other's homes, courtesy mandated pre-entry signaling via calling out.¹⁷⁵

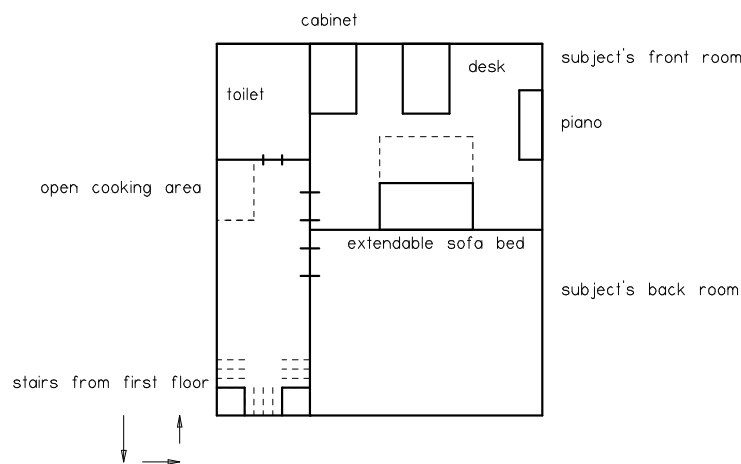
CCR needed to resolve the conflict between his household's privacy needs and benign informal surveillance. CCR lived in better conditions, however, that allowed the fulfillment of more household privacy needs. CCR was living in a three-storey terraced house. He had the second floor to himself, with two rooms. CCR had certain contraband possessions. He also wanted to ensure the privacy of the womenfolk (wife, daughter, and a nanny) in his household. Further, his wife was frail and needed an undisturbed space to

¹⁷⁴ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁷⁵ SWD, 1 January 2009.

rest. CCR also needed a space free from excessive neighborly disturbance to work at home on school related tasks. At the same time, he also needed a public space at home to receive colleagues and guests while keeping the womenfolk away on such occasions. The main threats to his domestic privacy came from neighbors living on the third floor and *tingzijian*, a small room in the middle of the stairway between the first and second floor. These neighbors would use the toilet outside his room occasionally. Passing neighbors thus were a source of irritation that affected his work and could disturb the womenfolk.¹⁷⁶

CCR-plan view second floor



CCR: three-storey semi detached house, second storey

CCR adopted more active measures of securing domestic privacy that relied less on tacit agreement between neighbors due to his superior housing conditions. CCR designated the front room as a space for carrying out his public functions, including the reception of guests. The door to the front room was hence kept open mainly. The back

¹⁷⁶ CCR, 12 January 2009.

room was for the womenfolk, and the door to it was closed mainly. CCR, however, was not living in a modern home with facilities located in his family's exclusive domestic space. Passing neighbors might still bother CCR in the front room, and womenfolk still had to leave the back room to use the toilet and kitchen in the possible presence of neighbors.¹⁷⁷ CCR thus relied on tacit agreement between neighbors in minimizing the use of the second floor toilet. This tacit agreement arose from a sense of fair play among neighbors. The residents of the first and third floor had their own toilets and cooking facilities. The third floor neighbors, however, erected a kitchen on an area used in common by all residents at times to dry their clothes. Occupants, however, agreed tacitly to this appropriation of public space. The third floor family hence respected CCR's living space in turn. It was understood that the second floor including the toilet was mainly for the usage of CCR's family except in emergencies.¹⁷⁸

The three households mentioned so far relied on a mixture of passive and active measures that secured varying amounts of domestic privacy while eschewing more effective but uncomfortable and inconvenient direct measures of privacy prevalent in modern Shanghai. The possession of incriminating items suggested that doors should be closed more often at least for the case of CQ and that incriminating possessions should have been placed in the back room for CCR, instead of in the front room, though this would make accessing them troublesome. Private discussions should also have been conducted behind closed doors for SWD's family. The three households, however, opted

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

for a more comfortable housing arrangement rather than one that would secure the most privacy for their families relative to neighbors.

The different extent to which the three households secured domestic privacy from their home depended on individual housing conditions. CCR's household secured the most privacy for their domestic space because housing conditions allowed it. CCR's household arrangement was dictated by concerns of propriety, which he translated into his housing arrangement.¹⁷⁹ It was not, however, that CQ or SWD's households did not care about proprieties. Their educational levels and backgrounds were comparable to CCR's. All three interviewees had a university education, though CCR received it before 1949.¹⁸⁰ Further, CQ had an intellectual family background, with her father being a university graduate before 1949. Her close relatives were university trained and were assuming important positions in the KMT government during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁸¹ All three interviewees had incriminating items to hide. All three households were also friendly with neighbors and respected and there were no neighbors that any of the households had to be wary about.¹⁸² The only variable was housing conditions, suggesting the dominance of housing conditions in determining the extent of domestic privacy that the three households secured without compromising comfort.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.; CQ, 13 December 2008.; SWD, 1 January 2009.

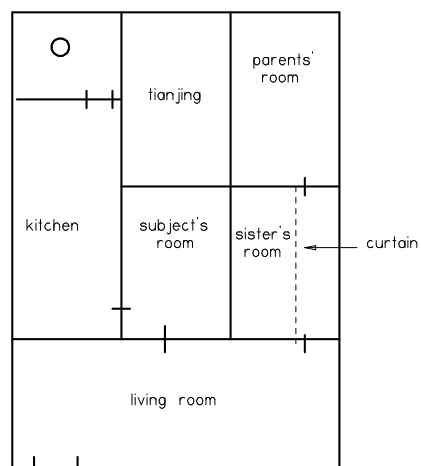
¹⁸¹ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁸² CCR, 12 January 2009.; CQ, 13 December 2008.; SWD, 1 January 2009.

Interviewees and households: Home doors mainly opened, frequent neighborly interaction, no option of withdrawal exercised

Most of the six households in this category (CHN, GGL, CYJ in old home, CLT, MH, LL) did not have incriminating possessions, affirming the relation between the exercise of the option of withdrawal and the possession of incriminating items. The exception is CLT's household with the package CLT received from his sister in law. Four households (CHN, CLT, MH, and LL) in this category separated their home space into private and public areas to fulfill the privacy needs the household. The families here did not close their home doors, and generally did not have incriminating possessions. They also did not exercise their option of withdrawal. However, they did have specific household privacy needs.

CHN-plan view home interior



CHN: single-storey *pingfang* house

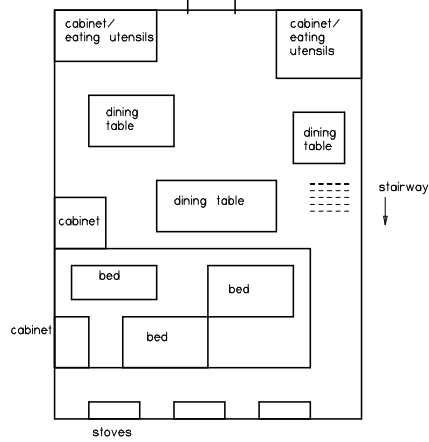
In CHN's case, certain members of the household liked to interact with people outside the family and the family tried to ensure that married couples and females could have some private space to separate them from outsiders when they came to the house. CHN's parents also needed a secure location for valuables. CHN's home was located besides a busy road. They did not close the door most of the time because CHN's grandmother would be in the living room and she liked to interact with passer-bys. Further, CHN had many friends who often gathered in the living room.¹⁸³ The big living room was thus used for socializing. Some family members however, had specific privacy needs. CHN's sister needed a private space, so too his parents. Further, the family had some jewelry that needed a secure storage location.¹⁸⁴ The assigning of space within the house ensured that more private space was allocated to those who needed it. From the diagram, CHN and his grandmother occupied the spaces most subjected to public view. CHN's grandmother conducted all her activities including sleeping in the living room or kitchen.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Chen, 29 December 2008.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

CLT-plan view first floor

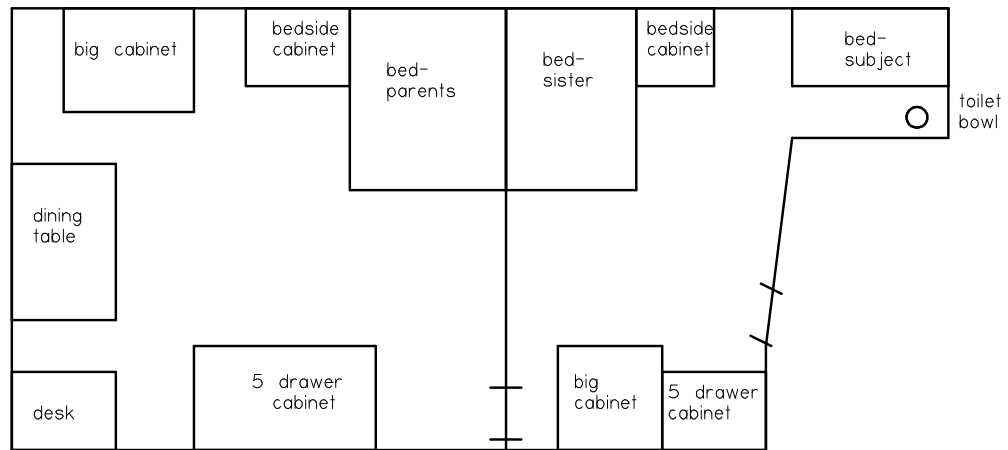


CLT: self constructed two-storey *banfang* wooden house, first storey

For CLT, the need for communal socializing with neighbors while ensuring the privacy of nuclear families was met by designating the ground floor living room as a public space, with individual bedrooms kept private. Neighbors who dropped in frequently for a casual chat were hosted in the living room.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ CLT, 15 December 2008.

MH-plan view room



MH: room, two-storey terraced house, second storey

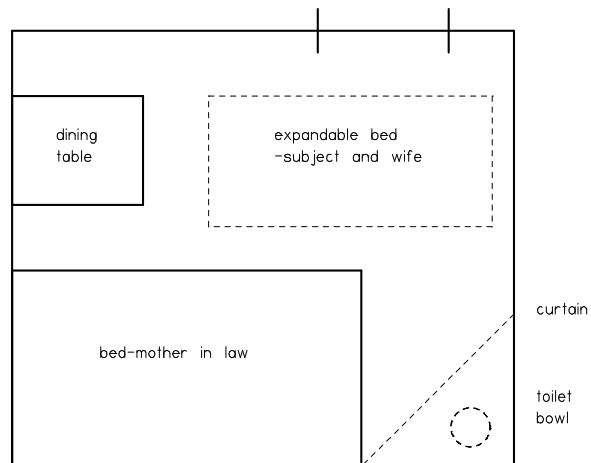
MH's family created a public space in their home to host relatives and friends who wanted to spend the night. MH's parents' part of the room was a more private space. When visitors came, they were hosted there in the day. If visitors stayed the night, however, they would be housed in the children's part of the room. The internal door leading to the parents' room would be locked then.¹⁸⁷ In the three cases (CHN, CLT and MH) mentioned, passer bys and casual visitors could only access that part of domestic space designated as public. LL's case is considered later as there was a division of public/private space both within her home and in the immediate vicinity.

Even when households did not have enough space to create a public/private division in their homes, they could still rely on neighborly agreement to use a public area outside homes for socializing, with domestic space respected as private. The remaining

¹⁸⁷ MH, 27 December 2008.

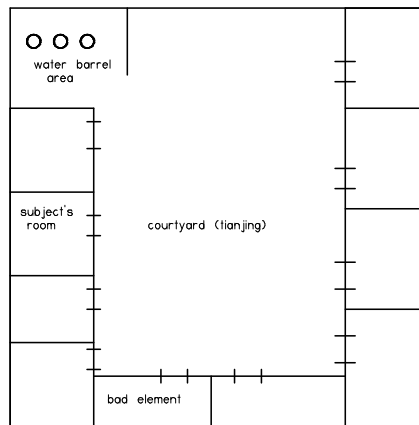
three interviewees (GXQ, CYJ in his old home and GGL) lived in more cramped conditions. The three households had to rely on rules of non-disclosure like pre-entry signaling and the usage of the common area outside the house to protect domestic privacy. Diagrams for the vicinity of CYJ's old home are not available. LL's home, as mentioned, had a public/private space division both in domestic space and its immediate vicinity.

GGL-plan view first floor



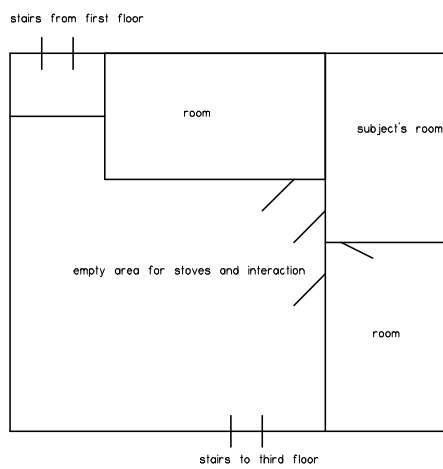
GGL: single storey *pingfang* house with loft

GGL-plan view compound



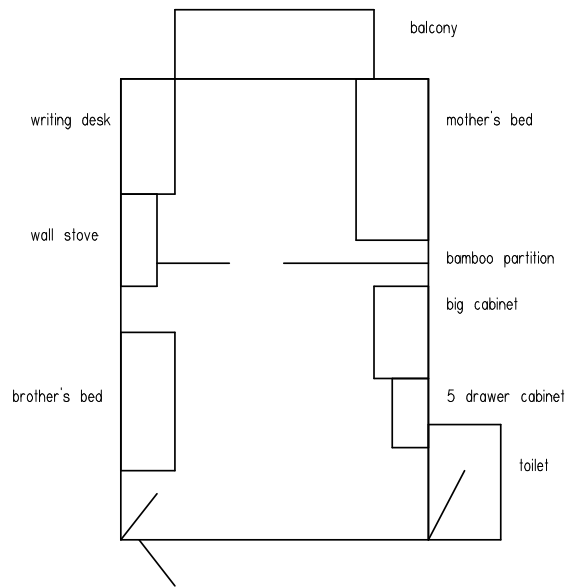
GGL: courtyard, *pingfang* housing compound

LL-plan view second floor



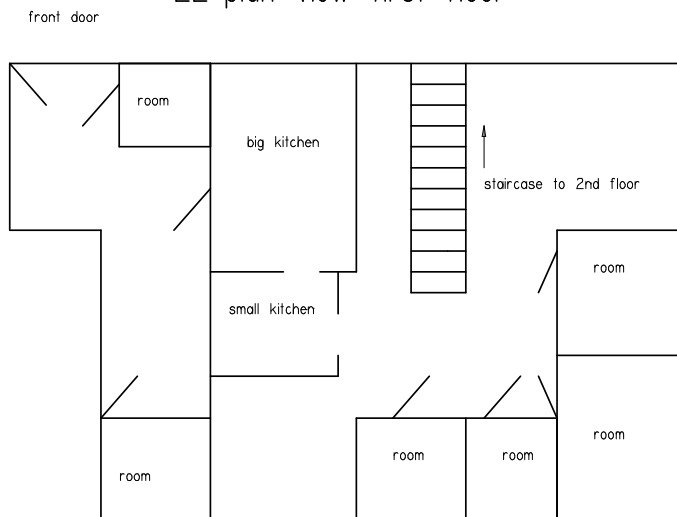
LL: three-storey bungalow, second storey

LL-plan view of room



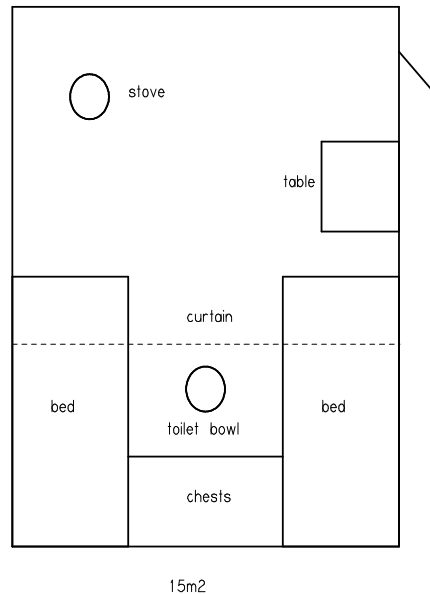
LL: room, three-storey bungalow, second storey

LL-plan view first floor



LL: three-storey bungalow, first storey

CYJ-plan view of old house



CYJ old house: single-storey *pingfang* house

For the three households with cramped homes, the conflict between privacy and comfort meant that household privacy needs were fulfilled to a lesser extent, though domestic space was still used to fulfill the minimal privacy needs of the household. GGL's single-storey *pingfang* house was cramped and hot. The chamber pot within was separated only with a curtain. The smell became odorous at times, especially in hot weather. The lack of sound insulation precluded intimate discussions. GGL and his wife had to discuss important issues in the streets. The same lack caused the family to suffer from noisy and quarrelsome neighbors. GGL's family thus closed the doors only when they went out or during bedtime whenever the weather permitted. Family members also preferred to spend more time in the courtyard socializing with neighbors than at home.

Despite the discomfort of home, GGL's home was private nonetheless. The courtyard was where neighbors interacted with each other. Neighbors refrained from visiting homes because homes were uncomfortable and in the lack of public zones at home (unlike MH and CLT's households), domestic space became wholly private. Friends and relatives were brought in to extend private space to these people who wanted to talk. Further, visitors to the home were people close to the family or with important issues.¹⁸⁸

CYJ's household (old home) only utilized the minimal privacy that domestic space afforded for the womenfolk to sleep and to receive close friends though leaving the door opened in both cases. CYJ's home was more uncomfortable than GGL's. CYJ did not have a loft, and everyone lived on the same floor. The poor circulation and the chamber pot's odor was so oppressive that not even sleeping indoors with the door opened was bearable for CYJ, his brother, and his father, who slept along the road. The womenfolk slept at home with the door opened in sight of neighbors, relying on darkness for concealment.¹⁸⁹

LL's family alone in this group of seven households could satisfy its privacy needs to a fuller extent because of superior housing conditions that permitted a public/private space division inside and outside her home, making it possible for LL's mother to spend a lot of time indoors in seclusion. LL's family was allocated a spacious room inside a bungalow. Circulation and sound insulation were better. LL's family did not use

¹⁸⁸ GGL, 18 December 2008.

¹⁸⁹ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

a chamber pot, but had an attached toilet. LL's home had a bamboo partition to shield off her mother from the disturbances of the children's friends when they came. Furthermore, adult neighbors did not visit each other's homes often. Occupants respected domestic space and did not have to visit domestic spaces as they had the common space on each floor as shown in the diagram. Adults would at most speak to each other at respective doorways.¹⁹⁰

For this group of six households, domestic habits of privacy and the amount of privacy utilized from the home depended again on housing conditions primarily. There was no option of withdrawal exercised, and households did not have excessively valuable or incriminating possessions with the exception of CLT. Neighborly relations were good, with no particular neighbor to be wary of. The educational levels and family backgrounds of the six households varied, but did not have a visible impact on how much domestic privacy was utilized. CLT, MH, and CHN's households were not highly educated but adopted the same method of dividing their homes into public and private spaces while opening the home door like LL's household.

The ten households in both groups did not utilize domestic privacy to the same extent as today. They stopped at a level which would not make living at home overly uncomfortable. Households with better housing conditions like that of CHN, CLT, MH, and LL, who divided their homes into public and private zones spent more time and conducted more activities within domestic privacy. Households living in poorer conditions, like GGL and CYJ in his old home, however, reduced the amount of time

¹⁹⁰ LL, 26 December 2008.

spent and activities conducted in domestic privacy. The primary impact of housing conditions on the utilizing of domestic privacy was present across both groups, regardless of differences in educational levels and the possession of incriminating items.

‘Comfortable privacy’ and not ‘maximum’ or ‘modern’ privacy

Intrusive institutionalized surveillance was largely absent from the domestic lives of interviewees, while informal surveillance was mostly benign. While benign informal surveillance was the main obstacle to domestic privacy, it also enabled households to secure whatever privacy that the home could afford comfortably. Interviewees’ households so far did not utilize the maximum privacy possible from housing conditions, but the level that would not make domestic life too uncomfortable. I term the level of household privacy that could be supported in comfort under inferior housing conditions ‘comfortable privacy’, as opposed to ‘maximum’ or ‘modern’ privacy, i.e., the level of domestic privacy utilized by interviewees currently, characterized by a modern, interior-based domestic life involving the frequent shutting of home doors and reduced neighborly interaction.

Strong but benign informal neighborhood surveillance provided the conditions for ‘comfortable privacy’ in enabling a secure environment for people to keep their doors open. Households that opened their doors opened mainly had to be certain there was no threat from strangers outside the neighborhood who could access their homes uninvited. Strong neighborly vigilance was thus needed. Interviewees who opened their doors

mainly generally agreed that informal surveillance allowed them to keep their home doors open while remaining safe from non neighborhood elements. CQ noted that while strangers could access their third floor from the residential staircase on the first, the retired people on the third floor who kept their doors opened would detect strangers immediately. This was why her neighbors could keep their doors opened safely.¹⁹¹ GGL's household only closed the door when no one was at home and during bedtime in cool weather. GGL noted that houses were so close apart that thieves dared not encroach even with doors opened.¹⁹² CLT said that strangers would be identified or would be forced to ask for directions given the messy outlay of the neighborhood, upon which his business would be enquired.¹⁹³ For SWD, strangers would be confronted even if they were just in the neighborhood,¹⁹⁴ before even accessing his specific *shikumen*.

The benign nature of informal surveillance also ensured neighbors would not make use of the ease of accessing domestic spaces to gain various forms of unwanted access. For 'comfortable privacy' to work, households had to be sure that neighbors would not steal. Further, households that exercised their option of withdrawal had incriminating possessions and a general desire to reduce social intercourse. These households had to be sure their possessions would not be accessed by neighbors. Households that opened their doors most of the time were also vulnerable to neighbors in various ways. CYJ in his old home for instance, had to be sure that neighbors would not molest the womenfolk in his

¹⁹¹ CQ, 13 December 2008.

¹⁹² GGL, 18 December 2008.

¹⁹³ CLT, 15 December 2008.

¹⁹⁴ SWD, 1 January 2009.

home when they were sleeping. Neighborly relations thus, had to be vigilant in watching for outsiders, but also free from malice and excessive nosiness.

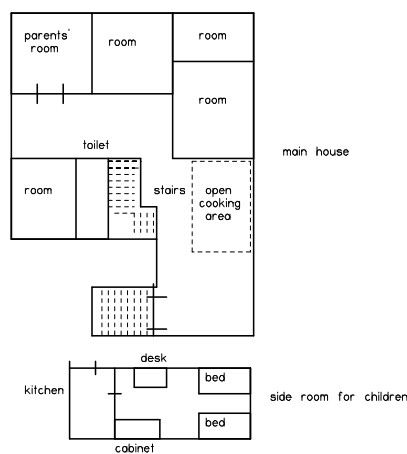
‘Comfortable privacy’ was thus an adaptation by residents towards their inferior housing conditions, made possible by strong yet benign informal surveillance. ‘Comfortable privacy’, however, was not possible or desired once either of the above variables change. When housing conditions approximate modern standards in terms of the facilities and space that each household had, ‘comfortable privacy’ became redundant and displaced by an arrangement that privileged time spent within enclosed domestic space. This is the general outlook of domestic life among my interviewees currently. When informal surveillance could no longer be relied upon to be benign, ‘comfortable privacy’ becomes unsustainable and households are forced to spend more time indoors behind closed doors and reduce interaction with neighbors even if living indoors was still uncomfortable.

Interviewees and households: Home doors mainly closed; the collapse of ‘comfortable privacy’

The three interviewees whose families closed their home doors mainly, WYX, FJC, and CYJ (new home) lacked the conditions for ‘comfortable privacy’. FJC’s household could not rely on neighboring surveillance to be benign. FJC’s parents took a room in a bungalow. They did not trust the other occupants from different units and provinces. FJC and his siblings meanwhile, occupied a small house attached to the main building. The

absence of reliable benign surveillance caused FJC's household to adopt direct measures of securing domestic privacy. FJC's parents closed their doors all the time.¹⁹⁵ While the housing conditions allowed sufficient air circulation that made closing the door bearable,¹⁹⁶ his parents shared the toilet and kitchen in the common area with the other occupants, entailing inconvenience when they wanted to use the shared facilities.

FJC-plan view house



FJC: bungalow with side house

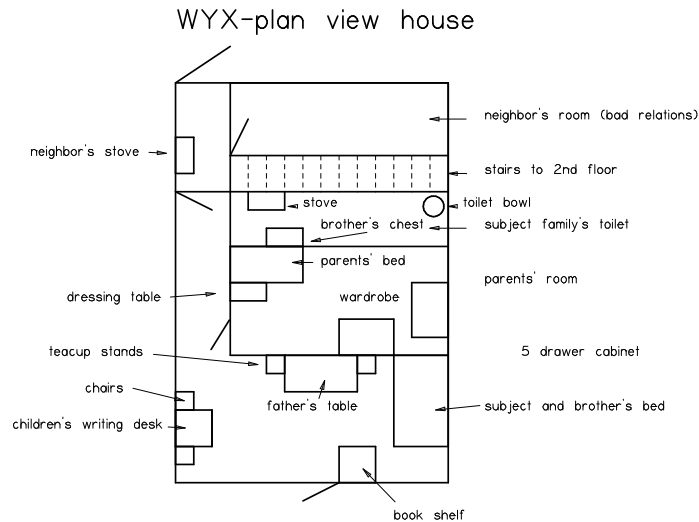
FJC and his siblings suffered greater discomfort relative to his parents. FJC and his siblings closed their main door at night. This was onerous as the side house was warm. FJC and his siblings had to compromise on privacy measures when it got especially hot and closing the door became unbearable. When that occurred, they used a heavy lounging chair to block off the doorway instead.¹⁹⁷ This meant a chore moving the

¹⁹⁵ FJC, 17 December 2008.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

chair and entailed inconvenience should FJC and his siblings need to leave the side house.



WYX: two-storey *shikumen* building, first storey

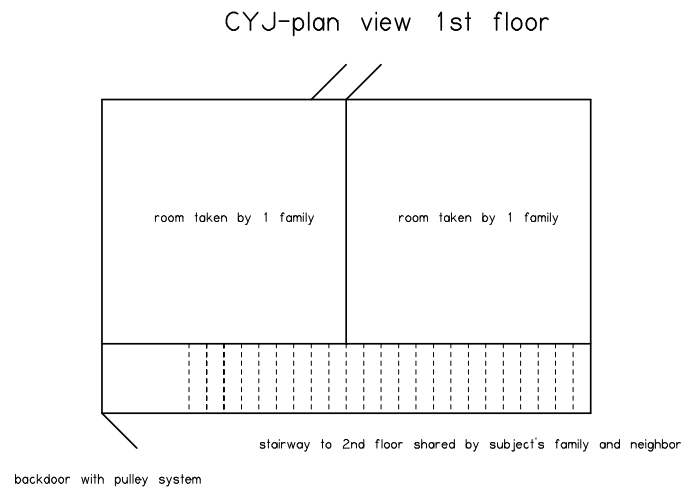
In WYX's case, good housing conditions and bad neighborly relations caused the family to reject 'comfortable privacy' in favor of a more interior-based domestic life. WYX's family closed the back door to restrict access to their domestic life from the vengeful family behind,¹⁹⁸ but they closed the front door as well. It was not a security issue, because WYX's family was on good terms with other occupants and neighbors nearby.¹⁹⁹ While WYX's family was unable to engage in 'comfortable privacy', their housing conditions also made it unnecessary. WYX's housing was more comfortable than average. His family had a large and airy domestic space that contained all the facilities

¹⁹⁸ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

they needed including a stove and toilet. There was thus no reason for his family to keep their home doors opened.

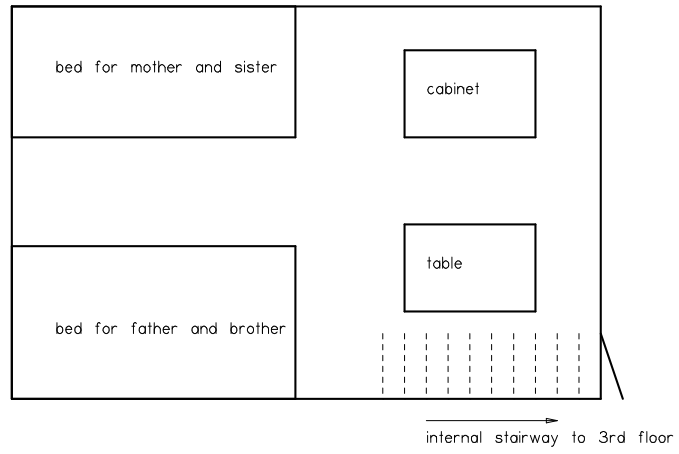
CYJ's family's changing habits of privacy when they shifted homes demonstrated the modernization process regarding measures for securing domestic privacy in a situation where 'comfortable privacy' was no longer needed. CYJ's family had engaged 'comfortable privacy' in the old home further than other households due to their poor housing conditions. They conducted little activities and spent little time indoors. The family spent a lot of time outdoors, socializing with familiar neighbors who were also colleagues in his father's transportation unit. Even when family members were at home, the door was kept open.²⁰⁰ This was a family that epitomized 'comfortable privacy'.



CYJ new house: three-storey modern style apartment block, first storey

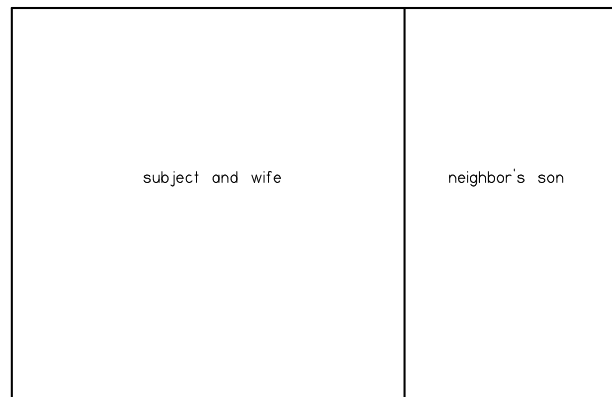
²⁰⁰ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

CYJ new house-plan view second floor



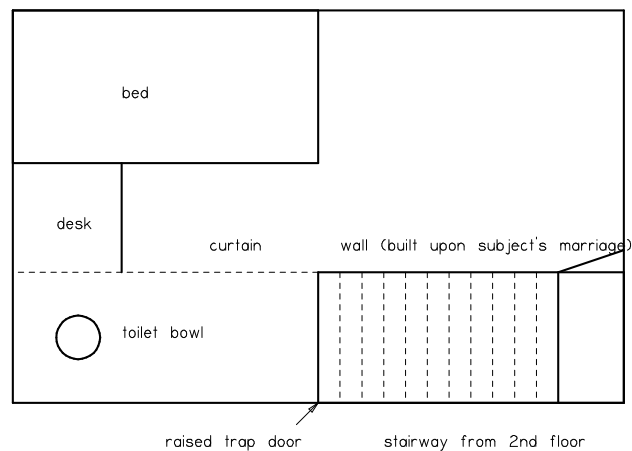
CYJ new house: apartment unit, three-storey modern style apartment block, second storey

CYJ new house-plan view third floor



CYJ new house: three-storey modern style apartment block, third storey

CYJ new house-plan view third floor interior



CYJ new house: apartment unit, three-storey modern style apartment block, third storey

CYJ's new home rendered 'comfortable privacy' obsolete. Time spent indoors increased while neighborly interaction reduced consequently. Interaction was reduced in the new home to the family with whom they shared the second and third floors. The two families also shared the common staircase on the first floor.²⁰¹ CYJ's new home enabled them a 'modern lifestyle'²⁰² with proper lights, water supply, and a stove. With a 'proper home'²⁰³, his family closed the door more and spent more time indoors.²⁰⁴ The new home was pleasant to live in, with more space and better circulation. There was no longer a need for communal socializing. Though the residents sharing their block were other unit colleagues that they did not know, but CYJ believed this did not affect security.²⁰⁵ With a more interior-based domestic life, CYJ's household was no longer forced outdoors to socialize and did not get to know the new neighbors well. Furthermore, there was no

²⁰¹ Ibid.
²⁰² Ibid.
²⁰³ Ibid.
²⁰⁴ Ibid.
²⁰⁵ Ibid.

more easily accessible communal space where neighbors could gather like the road right outside domestic space that was present in their old home.

CYJ's family's habits of privacy as regards closing of their home doors swung to the other extreme. The family not only made use of locks and doors more often, but even enhanced locks and doors at their own expense. CYJ's family closed the doors even when sleeping in summer. CYJ's family, however, did not just use whatever doors and locks were provided. Instead, they enhanced the closing and locking functions of their living area by constructing a pulley system to the entrance of the shared staircase on the ground floor so that the door would close by itself. CYJ remarked, 'we saw that it could be done, and it was within our means, so we did it'.²⁰⁶

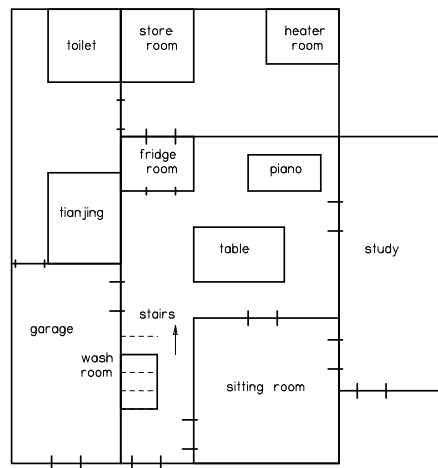
My last group of interviewees (SYZ and HDG) is exceptional regarding adopting 'comfortable privacy' as an adaptation to housing conditions. The two households lived in unique isolation in large spacious homes, with little neighborhood surveillance. They had good housing conditions, opened their home doors mainly and yet still had as much privacy as households who rejected 'comfortable privacy' due to their isolation. Both families kept their doors opened despite having incriminating possessions like paintings, antiques (boxes of them in the case of HDG), commemorative silver coins from England, German made watches and radios etc (SYZ).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ HDG, 24 December 2008.; SYZ, interview with author, 4 Jan 2009.

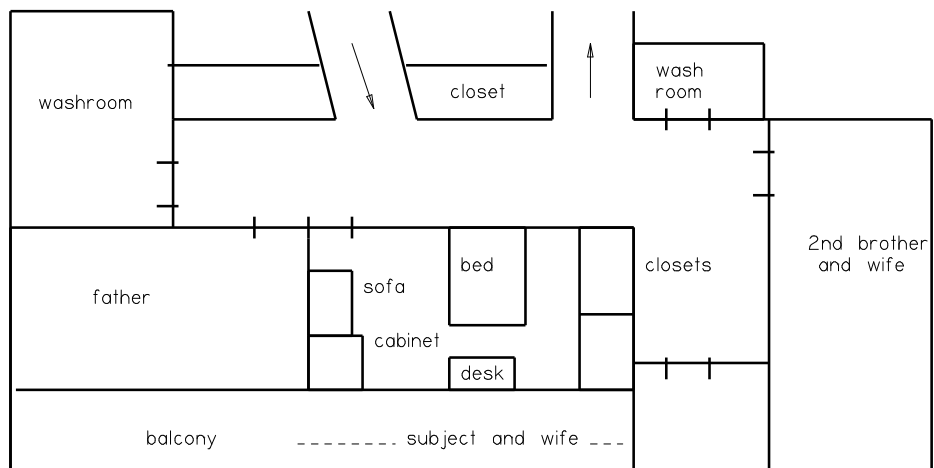
HDG's family lived on the second and third floors of a large bungalow while worker families occupied the ground floor. After his father was cleared of charges, neighbors and co-inhabitants held his family in awe due to the chauffeur who picked up his father for work every morning.

HDG-plan view first floor



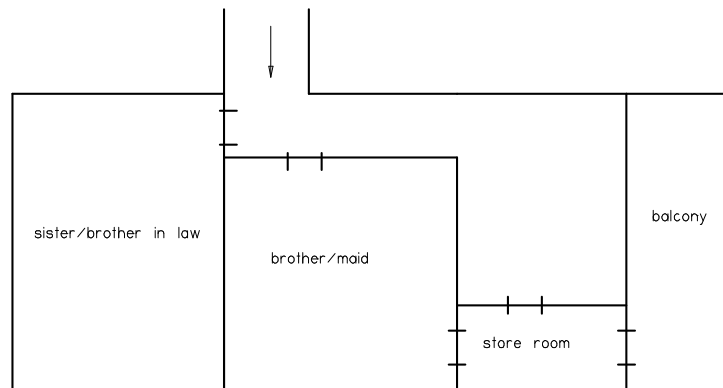
HDG: three-storey bungalow, first storey

HDG-plan view second floor



HDG: three-storey bungalow, second storey

HDG-plan view third floor

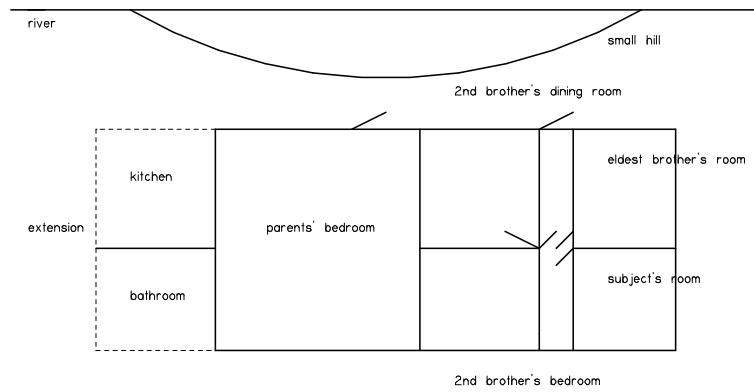


HDG: three-storey bungalow third storey

HDG's family was never bothered by neighborhood surveillance and never worried about any domestic intrusion. Though there was no barrier between the first and the second, third floors, HDG never worried about the inhabitants coming upstairs. He even had sex with his wife sometimes with his room door open, though he controlled the sound they made. His family also had chats at the second floor balcony without any precautions, discussing taboo subjects like their plans for the future, including HDG's illegitimate aspirations of wanting to further his studies in America.²⁰⁸

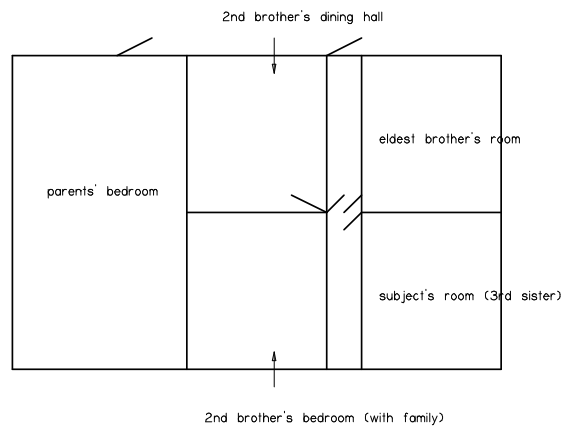
²⁰⁸ HDG, 24 December 2008.

SYZ-plan view of house and surroundings



SYZ: home and surroundings, self constructed single-storey house

SYZ-plan view house interior



SYZ: self-constructed single-storey house

SYZ's household is similar to HDG's whereby the privacy of her family was never threatened though in her case, this was due to their physical isolation. SYZ was a city farmer living in a big self-constructed house in the suburbs built before 1949. SYZ's family was never disturbed, with little neighborhood surveillance. Further, her family was

on good terms with the local police and the production brigade that SYZ served in nearby. The fact that SYZ's family was not harassed is all the more remarkable considering that her father was a sailor who had worked overseas for a German company even after 1949 and her family was known to have Western possessions. Her father could often be seen listening to a foreign-made radio that was capable of listening to foreign broadcasts.²⁰⁹ According to SYZ, she could shout heretical messages at home and no one outside the family would hear as the nearest neighbor was about a mile away. Her family was not afraid of thieves or strangers either as she said that there were no thieves in her area.²¹⁰

Conclusion

What interviewees remembered of neighborhood surveillance and domestic privacy during the Cultural Revolution differed from that portrayed in memoirs, post contemporaneous studies and contemporary observations. Contrary to memoirs and post contemporaneous studies, interviewees noted that neighborhood surveillance in general was non-intrusive, even for interviewees who had persecuted household members. The main threat to domestic privacy was radicals, Red Guards or other unit personnel. Informal surveillance was strong but benign, the result of an open communal life stemming from neighborly proximity and friendly relations. This, however, did not mean families did not cherish domestic privacy as suggested in contemporary works. Rather, residents turned to communal socializing as a response to cramped and inferior housing

²⁰⁹ SYZ, 4 Jan 2009.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

conditions, while finding ways of maintaining domestic privacy amidst the high visibility of neighborhood life.

The neighborhood had its own distinct identity and its own criteria for choosing targets of intrusive surveillance that had little to do with politics. Interviewees had little recollection of the police and militia. The personnel of the neighborhood system interacted with other neighbors in the capacity of fellow residents and not enforcers of the governmental surveillance system. Residents interacted with each other as fellow neighbors and not revolutionary subjects bent on reporting each other for political deviance. The residents of the neighborhood thus used different criteria to determine who to carry out intrusive surveillance upon; targeting residents of bad background who failed to control their display of wealth and maintain good neighborly relations.

Housing conditions were the main determinant of the extent and means by which households secured domestic privacy within a context of benign informal surveillance. In most cases, households opted for 'comfortable privacy'. 'Comfortable privacy' was an adaptation to inferior housing conditions that forced households to keep doors opened to maximize the comfort of domestic living. Strong neighborly surveillance ensured household security from outsiders, while benign relations secured domestic privacy from the neighborhood. The adaptation of 'comfortable privacy' to inferior housing conditions was not affected by other variables like educational levels or the possession of incriminating items. When housing conditions became better, 'comfortable privacy' was no longer needed, replaced instead by a form of domestic life that approximated modern

household living that privileges time spent indoors using direct measures of securing privacy involving the shutting of doors and reduced neighborly interaction. When neighborly relations could no longer be trusted to be benign, households adopted direct measures of privacy in inferior housing conditions. This resulted in a sort of uncomfortable modernity where more habits of privacy characteristic of modern Shanghai households were adopted though not supported comfortably by inferior housing conditions.

**CHAPTER 3: THE ALLOCATION OF INTERNAL
PRIVATE SPACE IN HOUSEHOLDS**

Introduction: Literature review

In this chapter, I examine the allocation of living space within households. Scholars after the Cultural Revolution have commented on the lack of housing space for each individual during the Maoist era and shortly thereafter in Chinese cities. Butterfield estimated that in the early 80s, the average housing space per individual in Chinese cities was 3.6 square yards, about the size of a dining table.²¹¹ The Chinese government considered housing an item of consumption with a less legitimate claim on national resources.²¹² Whyte noted that in roughly the same period, about one fifth of his interviewees lived in overcrowded conditions by Chinese standards.²¹³ During the Cultural Revolution, government policy resulted in the downward leveling of housing space for city residents. Certain groups including professionals and administrators suffered a decrease in their housing space when proletariat families took over their housing as a result of government policy or otherwise.²¹⁴ Friedman stated that the lack of personal housing in Chinese cities limited individual autonomy. Married couples were unable to have their own private space and were often forced to live with parents, seldom even having a separate bedroom.²¹⁵

Deborah Fellow based her work in Shanghai where she examined the lack of housing space and the strategies city inhabitants used to overcome it across the rough period that I study. Fellow stated that the lack of government investment was a prime

²¹¹ Butterfield, *Alive in the Bitter Sea*, p. 111.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, pp. 76-77, 80.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

²¹⁵ Friedmann, *China's Urban Transition*, p. 80.

reason for low housing space per capita. This was a historical problem that stemmed from the anti-Japanese and civil wars that destroyed a lot of housing stock. The housing problem was not resolved even by the late 70s owing to little government investment.²¹⁶ Fellow estimated the amount of housing space per Shanghainese in 1970 to be about 4.4 square meters.²¹⁷ The strategies that inhabitants used in response included the creation of lofts and the usage of furniture to make demarcations.²¹⁸

Yan Yunxiang noted, though in a rural context, how people coped with the lack of housing space in *Xiajia Village* in *Heilongjiang* province during the 70s. Yan noted that in cramped conditions, people were no longer curious about a family member's private business. An individual no longer needed as much privacy to hide from the domestic 'public' gaze.²¹⁹ Yan also noted dexterous techniques that people used, including undressing underneath the comforter after the lights were turned off.²²⁰

While studies and memoirs concurred on the housing problems and discussed the strategies that people adopted in response, my study looks at certain areas not well covered so far or which a different perspective is possible. I examine the claim that city residents only had an average space of one large dining table per inhabitant. The living conditions of my interviewees suggested that there was a substantial minority who had significantly more space than that. I examine the considerations families and individuals

²¹⁶ Deborah Fellow, "No Place to Live, No Place to Love: Coping in Shanghai," in *Urban Anthropology in China*, ed. Gregory Eliyu Guldin and Aidan William Southall, *Studies in human society* (Leiden ; New York: E.J. Brill, 1993), p. 399.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 406.

²¹⁹ Yan, *Private Life Under Socialism*, p. 116.

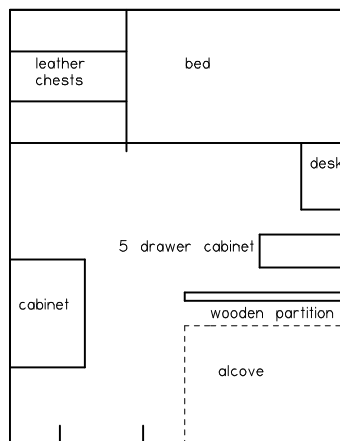
²²⁰ Ibid.

had when they decided how to best allocate living space from limited housing. The principles of allocating private living space, centering upon which family members should get scarce private space, shows how privacy was understood within the context of a family. These principles were held fairly constant across my interviewees. Housing conditions were again an important variable in the allocation of private space.

I divide my interviewees into three groups. The first group (CQ, LL, MH, CHN, WYX, GGL, and CCR) includes households comprising mainly one nuclear family each. The second group (CYJ, CLT, HDG, and SYZ) includes households with extended families. A final subgroup includes SWD and CCR due to their special circumstances. The data of YZG and GXQ is not considered as it is too brief.

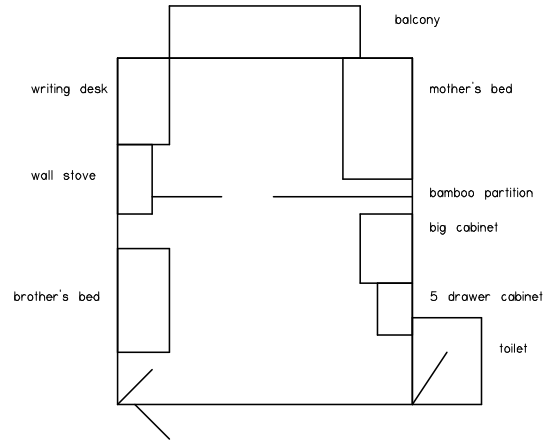
Households comprising mainly a single nuclear family

CQ-plan view interior



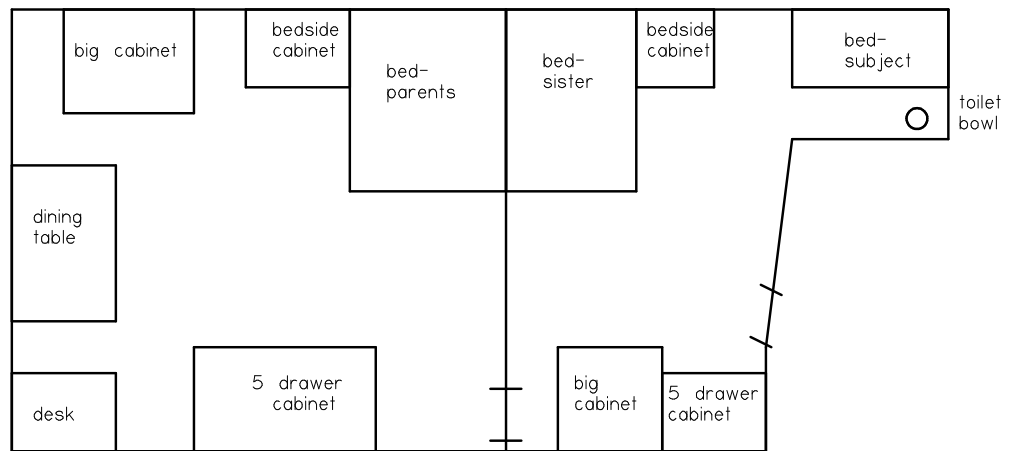
CQ: cubicle unit, three-storey building with third storey converted for housing, third storey

LL-plan view home interior

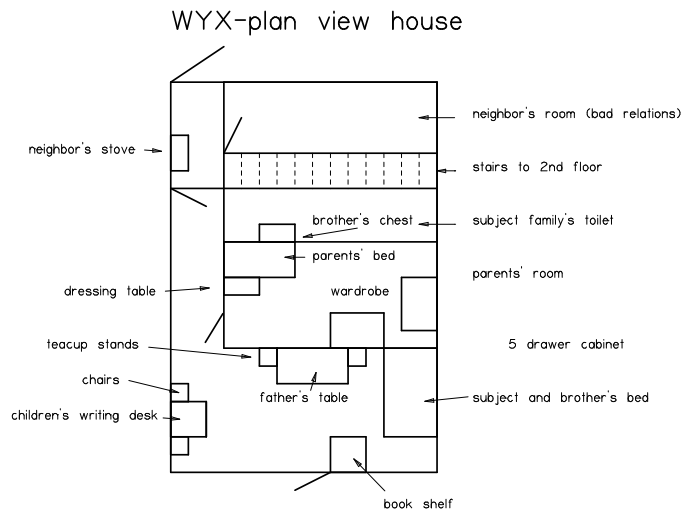


LL: room, three-storey bungalow, second storey

MH-plan view room



MH: room, two-storey terraced house, second storey



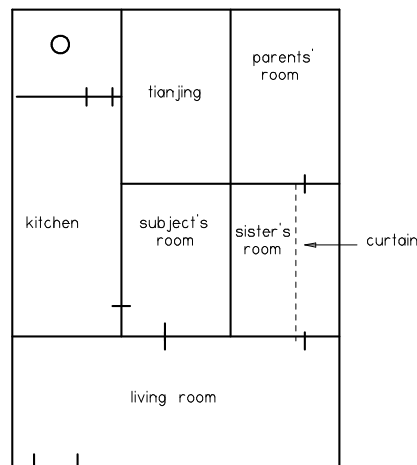
WYX: two-storey *shikumen* building, first storey

CQ, LL, MH, and WYX among interviewees from the first group had comparable housing situations. For these households, a common principle of space allocation was that parents should have a separate living space from children if possible. The four households comprised similarly a single nuclear family, with young children. CQ did not have a child until after the Cultural Revolution. As such, I do not discuss her situation further. As seen from the diagrams, each of the households here separated a private space for parents and another one for children.

The separation of living areas in the homes of LL, MH and WYX protected the privacy of parents but not children as the children were deemed too young to have any special privacy requirements. While parents had free access to the living spaces assigned children, rules of avoidance or other practical difficulties inhibited children's access to the living spaces of parents. The living spaces of parents in LL, MH, and WYX's

households were located in the back of domestic spaces relative to the home door. Parents passed by the living spaces of children on their way in and out of the family's domestic space. For MH and WYX's households, a lockable door separated their living spaces from that of parents while LL's household used a bamboo partition for the same purpose. Parents' usage of the children's living space to travel between domestic spaces and beyond meant that internal doors in MH's and WYX's households were never locked on the initiative of children.²²¹ The children living in MH's and WYX's households thus had little safeguards regarding the privacy of their living area from parents. In LL's household without an internal lockable door, there were times of avoidance and the right of her mother to exclude LL and her brother from her living area for instance when her mother wanted to rest or receive guests.²²²

CHN-plan view home interior



CHN: single-storey *pingfang* house

²²¹ MH, 27 December 2008.; WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

²²² LL, 26 December 2008.

CHN's household shows the principles of internal space allocation where the privacy needs of children became a consideration in the allocation of internal space. The conjugal privacy of parents was still regarded the most important principle in the allocation of internal space. Though CHN's parents did not close their room door often, the parents' room was still the only place not used as a common space. His sister's room was a walkway between his parents' room and the rest of the house, while anyone going to the kitchen or toilet passed through CHN's room. CHN and his sister had separate rooms, suggesting certain concerns about privacy regarding the living spaces of children.

CHN's household considered the gender difference between children in the allocation of private space due to the older age of the children. This was unlike the case in LL and MH's households. CHN was sixteen in 1966, while his younger sister was nineteen.²²³ LL and her brother were eight and ten in 1966.²²⁴ MH and his sister were seven and eight,²²⁵ while WYX and his step brother were ten and twenty six,²²⁶ though the age of WYX's step brother did not affect the allocation of their living space as they were males. The older age of CHN and his sister affected how their respective living spaces were allocated. Firstly, CHN and his sister had separate rooms. While the rooms of both CHN and his sister were common spaces, CHN's room was more utilized in this aspect as it was the link between the kitchen, toilet, and the rest of the home. CHN's room was also more subjected to the disturbances that occurred when many people were in the living room. The disturbance to CHN's sister arising from family members using

²²³ Chen, 29 December 2008.

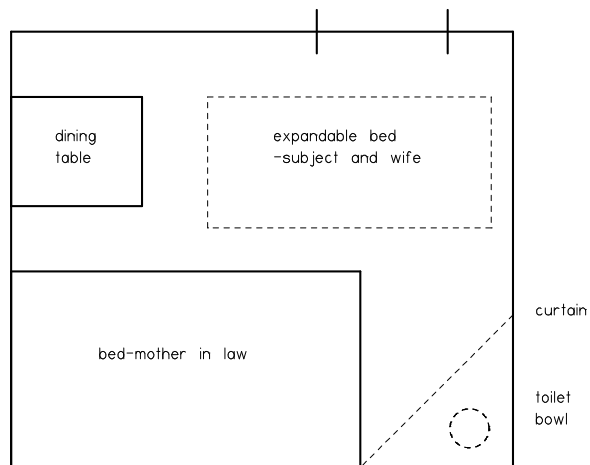
²²⁴ LL, 26 December 2008.

²²⁵ MH, 27 December 2008.

²²⁶ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

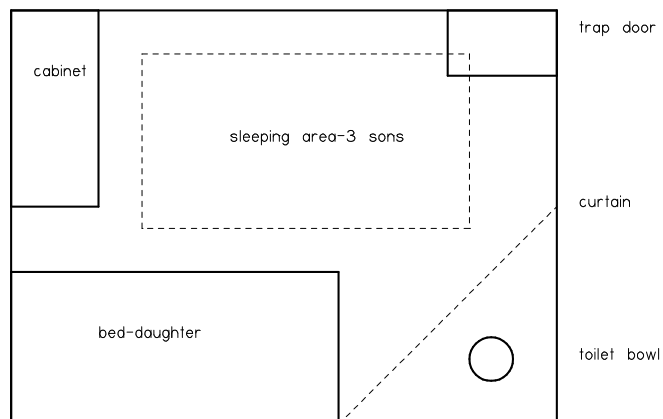
her room as a walkway to his parents' room was further reduced by a curtain separating his sister's bed from the walkway. CHN's sister, being female and older, was accorded more privacy in the allocation of internal living space.

GGL-plan view first floor



GGL: single-storey *pingfang* house with loft

GGL-plan view loft



GGL: loft, single-storey *pingfang* house with loft

While the households of CHN, LL, MH, and WYX had sufficient space to satisfy the privacy needs of individual members, GGL's household had to compromise on individual family members' need for privacy regarding living space. They did so by prioritizing among the various privacy needs to fulfill. GGL and his wife were thirty three and thirty seven years old in 1966 and had three sons and a daughter. The daughter was sixteen, and the eldest son was fourteen. GGL's nuclear family shared the house they lived in with GGL's mother-in-law.²²⁷ GGL's family struggled to resolve the various claims on private space stemming from the privacy that the household believed individual family members should have in accordance to the different ages, gender, and status of household members. GGL and his wife wanted a private space for themselves. They could not, however, arrange for GGL's mother-in-law to stay on the loft with their children as the loft was too cramped. The children could not just stay together in any manner on the loft as propriety dictated that the eldest sister, being sixteen, should be separated from the boys. Claims for private space arising from the desire of GGL and his wife to have a conjugal space competed with claims for private space arising from the need to separate the children.

GGL's family's allocation of space shows the relative importance the family attached to the various claims for private space arising from different privacy needs. GGL and his wife's need for a conjugal space was satisfied by them sharing a similar bed on the ground floor though they had to let GGL's mother-in-law share the same floor. It was regarded a greater breach of propriety if the children lived in their presence and accessed their conjugal activities. The children on the loft could not be separated totally.

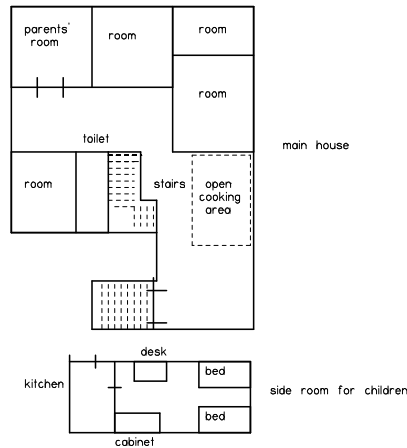
²²⁷ GGL, 18 December 2008.

GGL and his wife thus effected a minimal separation by letting their daughter sleep on the bed, while their sons took the floor.

The various claims on private space in GGL's household were resolved in a manner that reflected the relative importance attached to the various claims. GGL and his wife deemed their conjugal privacy more important than according their daughter more privacy from their sons regarding their daughter's living space. If their priorities were reversed, they could let GGL sleep on the loft with his sons and let the womenfolk sleep on the ground floor or arrange for the sons to sleep on the ground floor with mother-in-law, while GGL, his wife, and daughter slept on the loft. FJC's household prioritized the various claims on private space differently. FJC was twenty in 1966, while his three brothers were eighteen, sixteen, and fourteen respectively. His sister was twelve. FJC's parents shared a room with his sister, while FJC and his brothers took the side house outside the main building.²²⁸ FJC's parents prioritized the need to separate their daughter from her siblings over their conjugal space.

²²⁸ FJC, 17 December 2008.

FJC-plan view house

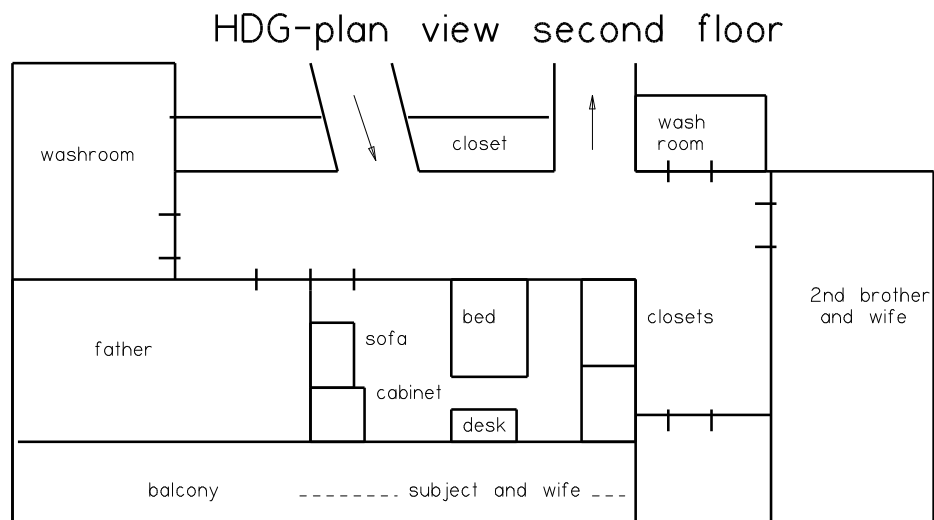


FJC: bungalow with side house

The households in the first group show certain principles in the allocation of living space and how they prioritized claims on private space stemming from the privacy that different family member were perceived to need in accordance with their age, gender and status. A few principles were common. Firstly, married couples generally had the strongest claim to private space. Children were separated from their parents to allow parents a private conjugal space. Children of different gender got separated when they were older, however. Grown daughters were accorded more privacy in the allocation of living space. At older age, daughters were housed separately from brothers even if parents had to compromise on their conjugal private space to make room for the daughter. In households where not every claim to private space could be accommodated, prioritization of claims affected the distribution of internal space.

Households with extended families

My second group of households (CYJ, HDG, SYZ, and CLT) housed extended families. This group is divided into two subgroups. The first group (CYJ, HDG, and SYZ) shows the importance of the belief that a nuclear family should be given space for a separate family life. The second subgroup comprising CLT shows a nuclear family being forced to compromise on their claim to private space when insufficient space existed to allow a nuclear family its own separate existence.



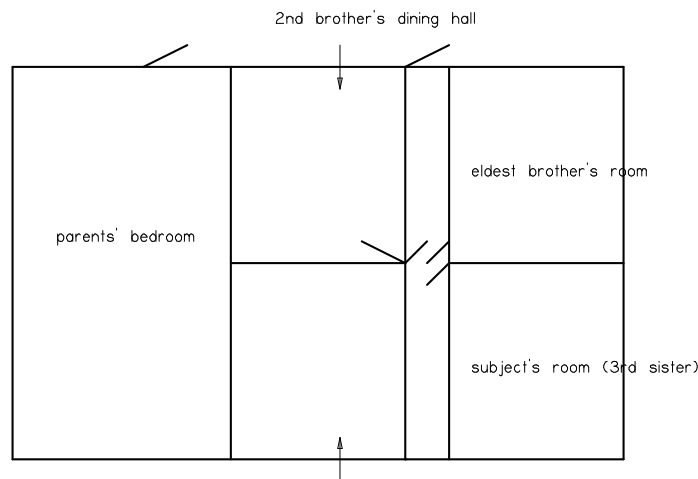
HDG: three-storey bungalow, second storey

The first subgroup (HDG, CYJ and SYZ) demonstrated the strength of the belief regarding granting a nuclear family its own space for a separate family life. New nuclear families were formed in the three households during the Cultural Revolution.²²⁹ The three households, though of different cultural and educational levels, allocated living space from their existing housing for the new nuclear family beyond providing a secluded space

²²⁹ CYJ, 10 December 2008.; HDG, 24 December 2008.; SYZ, 4 Jan 2009.

for conjugal sex. HDG lived with his brother in a second floor room of his house until HDG's marriage in 1971. With marriage, HDG moved to another room on the second floor with his wife whereupon his grandmother vacated that room. HDG claimed that the privacy of he and his wife as a nuclear family were respected.²³⁰ HDG was not given his own private facilities, however, as their home layout made it impossible for anyone to have any amenities located within their rooms.

SYZ-plan view house interior



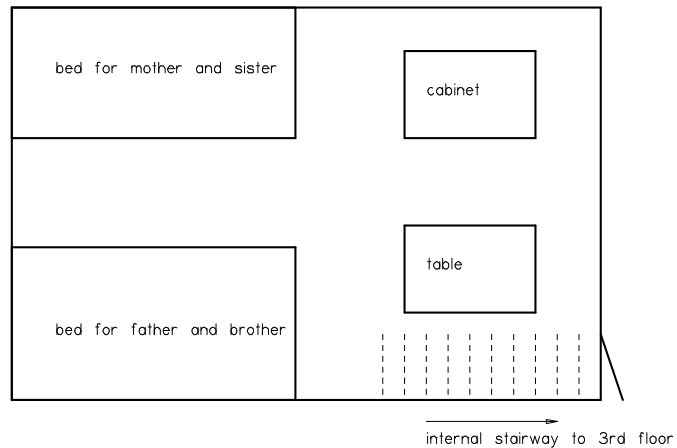
SYZ: self constructed single-storey house

SYZ's household demonstrates the generosity of an extended family towards a new nuclear family. From the diagram, SYZ's home was divided into three columns. SYZ and his eldest brother were living in a column each. When her second brother returned from Wuhan with his wife and two children during the Cultural Revolution, SYZ moved out of the central column. A partition was created in the right column taken by her eldest brother to form a room for SYZ. His second brother was given the central

²³⁰ HDG, 24 December 2008.

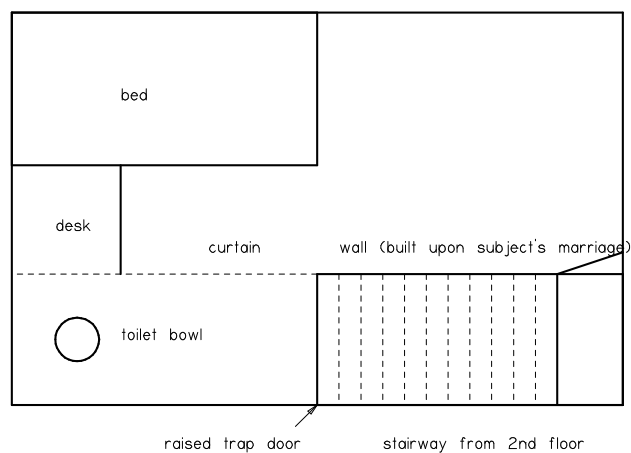
column which he partitioned into a dining hall and a bedroom. SYZ's family was generous to her second brother as his family was deemed an independent unit needing their own space for a separate existence beyond a secluded spot for conjugal sex.²³¹

CYJ new house-plan view second floor



CYJ new home: apartment unit, three-storey modern style apartment block, second storey

CYJ new house-plan view third floor interior

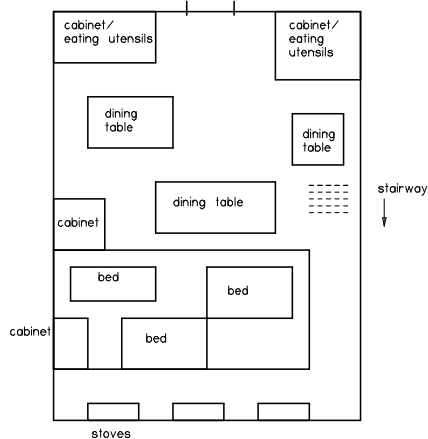


CYJ new home: apartment unit, three-storey modern style apartment block, third storey

²³¹ SYZ, 4 Jan 2009.

CYJ's family's generosity when he got married resulted in significantly less comfortable arrangements for themselves. CYJ moved into the new apartment unit allocated to his family upon his demobilization at age twenty-four in 1968. Initially, he shared the third floor with his second brother, while his youngest brother and sister shared the second floor with his parents. This arrangement was acceptable because his youngest brother and sister were only ten and twelve in 1968. By 1971, however, CYJ got married and was given the whole third floor. For a period, his parents shared the second floor with his youngest brother, sister and second brother who was already twenty-three. CYJ was given his own toilet bowl separated off by a curtain and the raised trap door. His nuclear family only joined the rest of the family during meal times. CYJ and his nuclear family led such an insular life that he did not even know if his extended family used another toilet bowl at home or whether they preferred to go to nearby public toilets.²³²

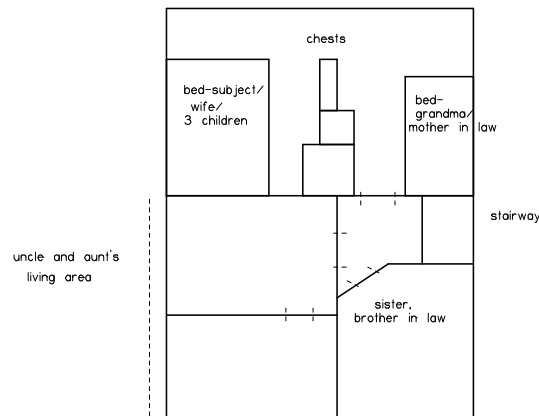
CLT-plan view first floor



CLT: self-constructed two-storey *banfang* wooden house, first storey

²³² CYJ, 10 December 2008.

CLT-plan view second floor



CLT: self-constructed two-storey *banfang* wooden house, second storey

While the households of HDG, SYZ and CYJ granted a nuclear family adequate space for an independent family life, the household of CLT could not. Compromising became necessary. CLT got married in 1956, but he was not assigned new housing. CLT initially shared his parents' room downstairs. With marriage, he was given a space from his grandmother's room upstairs that was partitioned off using chests. By 1966, CLT lived in the second floor space, sharing a bed with his wife, two daughters, and a son all below ten years of age.²³³

CLT and his nuclear family adapted to cramped conditions by being flexible in their beliefs concerning privacy. CLT and his wife believed strongly that conjugal sex should not be witnessed by others. However, the lack of space caused them to be less prudish about letting family members witness their sex life. The partition between their

²³³ CLT, 15 December 2008.

space and that of CLT's grandmother's stood only to shoulder height, too low to prevent visual disclosure of their sex life. CLT and his wife 'did not care' if family members saw their sex life as they were family.²³⁴ This reckless attitude towards his grandmother's accessing of their sex life was due to the fact that CLT's children already had the same access.

The same flexibility regarding CLT's beliefs on the things to be separated by privacy applied to their children's living arrangement. Some form of separation was necessary for the children of different genders. There was, however, no space to house or even bed the son and daughters separately. CLT and his wife thus continued to share their bed with the children, while giving the latter a separate blanket to share. When the children reached roughly ten years of age, they were given individual blankets. CLT and his wife could not satisfy the various claims to private space of his nuclear family members. As such, he accorded family members minimal separation using blankets. The underlying beliefs concerning the privacy that family members should have were similar, however, to that held by other households. The couple was to be given a conjugal space as far as possible, while children of different genders were separated from parents and from each other upon a certain age.

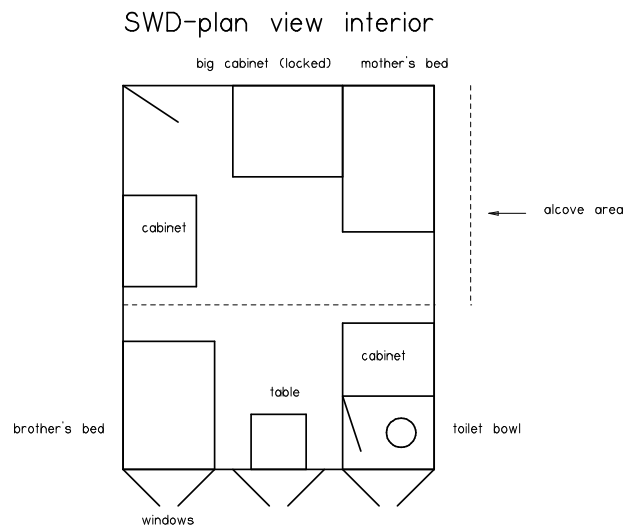
The ten households so far (excluding CQ) shows broad similarities in the principles of living space allocation as influenced by certain beliefs about privacy. These beliefs stayed constant across educational and cultural levels. Households prioritized the claims to private space of married couples. Grown daughters were separated from sons

²³⁴ Ibid.

and accorded more privacy in their living space. When insufficient space was available to satisfy the two principles, the need to house a grown daughter separately from her brothers could undermine the claims of parents to private space.

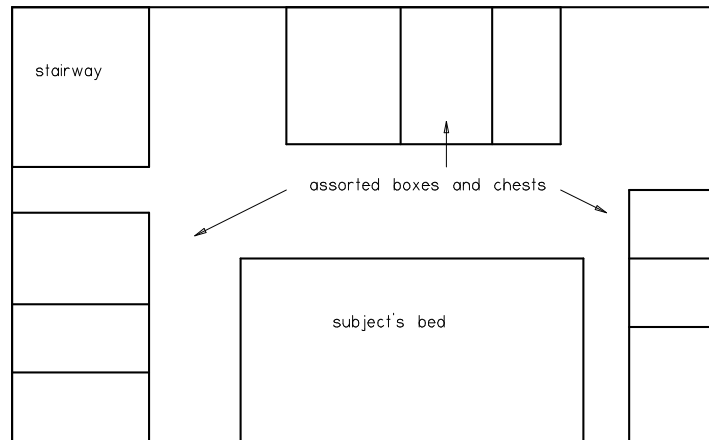
Exceptions: CCR and SWD

While the ten households allocated space based on the privacy that individual household members were deemed to require, the two households here (CCR and SWD) had to allocate domestic space for members to execute public functions involving non-familial people. SWD's household was exceptional on another count in that it lacked the claims on private space common to the previous ten households (the need to set aside conjugal private space and to separate grown children of different gender).



SWD: *shikumen* room with loft, two-storey *shikumen* building, second storey

SWD-plan view loft



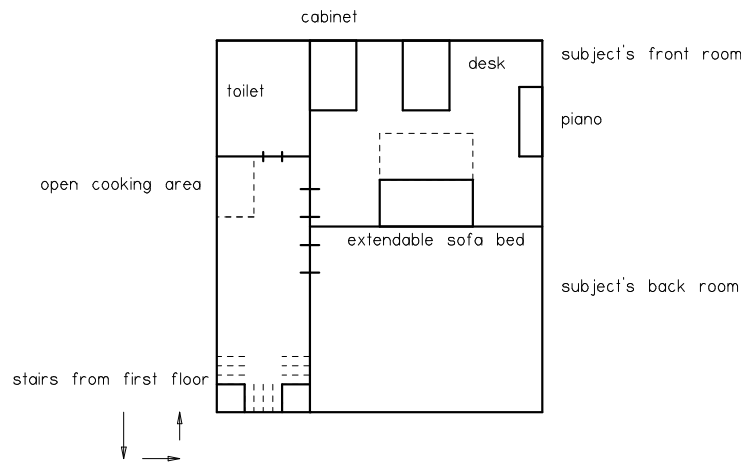
SWD: loft, *shikumen* room with loft, two-storey *shikumen* building, second storey

SWD was twenty-six years old during the Cultural Revolution, while his brother was around the same age. SWD lived on the loft, while his mother and brother stayed on the ground floor, with no partitioning between the living spaces.²³⁵ SWD did not have to live separately from his brother and he had no sisters. SWD's father had died, so her mother did not need private conjugal space. Though LL's mother had lost her husband too, SWD's mother was different whereby she had public functions to execute at home; Neighbors visited the latter frequently to discuss problems.²³⁶ Without the claims to private spaces found in other households, the internal allocation of living space proceeded differently. Her mother stayed on the ground floor to be accessible to neighbors. It was immaterial whether SWD or his brother took the loft. In SWD's household thus, the only consideration in allocating space was that her mother had to be publicly accessible.

²³⁵ SWD, 1 January 2009.

²³⁶ Ibid.

CCR-plan view 2nd floor



CCR: three-storey semi detached houses, second storey

Though CCR needed conjugal space, he had public functions and work that he performed at home. CCR often received colleagues and friends and wanted to ensure that the womenfolk would be out of sight then.²³⁷ Unlike SWD's household, the claims to internal space of CCR's public functions conflicted with his household's claims to private space. The distribution of internal space in CCR's home did not prioritize the claim to conjugal private space in setting aside a permanent room for him and his wife. Instead, he called his wife to the front room whenever they had sex.²³⁸ CCR created a collective private space in the backroom for the womenfolk comprising a wife, a daughter of nine years old in 1966, and a nanny.

²³⁷ CCR, 12 January 2009.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

A substantial minority of interviewees' households had more space per person than what might have been suggested by studies though my findings cannot claim to be necessarily reflective of the wider situation in Shanghai then due to the small number of interviewees. In the distribution of living space, households generally apportioned space in accordance with claims to private space attached to the privacy that individual family members were deemed to require in accordance with their age, gender, marital status etc. The strongest claims to private space came from married couples and mature females. In an extended family, a nuclear family had a strong claim to private space that the extended family did its best to provide, sometimes at great sacrifice. In households that did not have enough space to honor the claims on private space arising from the perceived privacy needs of individual family members, a prioritization of claims was made. Providing a grown daughter privacy from her male siblings could undermine the claim to private conjugal space of married parents. There were exceptional households that had to balance the claims of household members to private space with the need for a space to execute public functions involving non-familial people. The principles of internal space allocation were generally constant across households of different educational and cultural levels.

**CHAPTER 4: PRIVATE STORAGE SPACES AND
POSSESSIONS AT HOME**

Part 1: Private storage spaces

Introduction

While not everyone had their own private living space to stay in and conduct whatever acts deemed private, individual privacy from the family could still be obtained through private storage spaces. I address a few questions here: was it common for people to have their own storage spaces, why were storage spaces assigned, what principles guided their assigning, were storage spaces inviolable and what were the private possessions kept.

My fifteen Shanghai interviewees can be divided into a few categories. In the first section on private storage spaces, I exclude YZG and GXQ as their data is too sketchy. Of the remaining thirteen interviewees, three (GGL, CYJ, and CLT) were married but shared their living space with someone else beyond their spouse. Five (LL, MH, FJC, WYX) were children or not married and shared their living area with others, mostly their siblings. Three (SYZ, SWD and CHN) were children or unmarried with their own living space, while three (HDG, CCR and CQ) were married and had their own space. I do not discuss interviewees with their own individual or conjugal private living space. This is as their individual privacy was already protected somewhat through their own living space. Further, they could store their possessions in their exclusive living space. I focus instead on those without their own living spaces, examining how their privacy relative to their

family was secured through private storage spaces. I thus only consider the situations of married couples without an exclusive conjugal space, and children who had to share their living spaces with others, mostly their siblings.

Married couples without a private conjugal space

GGL, CYJ, and CLT had private storage spaces though not private conjugal space. These interviewees were adults then and needed a secure place to at least store things of importance to the family like coupons and other valuables. The three cases also show that no matter how destitute the living conditions (the three interviewees lived in the worst conditions among interviewees), storage spaces were still allocated to parents, then if space allowed, to children. GGL claimed a lockable drawer in the cabinet on the loft for placing money, coupons and other valuables like a watch and a gold ring.²³⁹ CLT had a lockable chest for cash, coupons, household registry and his sister-in-law's package.²⁴⁰ CYJ had lockable chests for valuables and necessities in both homes.²⁴¹

Chests were common and enabled people to store things with limited space and resources. CYJ and CLT used chests. According to CLT, chests were the cheapest and most common solution to storage spaces. CLT's extended household did not create a main door that could be locked from the outside to save money. His nuclear family, however, owned two wooden lockable chests. CLT mentioned that most families no matter how poor had a lockable chest for valuables. Poor families could use wooden

²³⁹ GGL, 18 December 2008.

²⁴⁰ CLT, 15 December 2008.

²⁴¹ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

boards to construct a chest and lock it with a normal lock.²⁴² GGL and CYJ concurred with CLT on the common use of chests due to its lower cost.²⁴³ While GGL had a cabinet with locked drawers, but he had a chest too for New Year clothes not worn often.²⁴⁴

Chests were also used more commonly than cabinets because they saved space and were available easily. CYJ said that someone had to queue up for a long time to get a cabinet.²⁴⁵ MH said that chests saved space for poor families with little living space.²⁴⁶ CLT saved space by stacking chests vertically to partition his nuclear family's living area from his grandmother's space.²⁴⁷ CYJ freed up space in his conjugal living space by placing chests under his bed.²⁴⁸

Poor families did not plan the assigning of specific storage spaces to their children out of certain principles. Rather, storage spaces were assigned to children whenever they became available in a haphazard manner. CLT and CYJ (in both homes) did not assign any specific storage spaces to their children.²⁴⁹ GGL however, did. GGL had four children (three boys and one girl) in 1966. His daughter was sixteen in 1966 and was dispatched to the rural areas in 1968. His eldest son was fourteen in 1966. His other two sons were in primary school. The only storage space available to his children was the cabinet on the loft with four drawers. The other storage furniture was the chest placed under the daughter's bed. GGL took the top drawer for family valuables and necessities

²⁴² CLT, 15 December 2008.

²⁴³ GGL, 18 December 2008.; CYJ, 10 December 2008.

²⁴⁴ GGL, 18 December 2008.

²⁴⁵ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

²⁴⁶ MH, 27 December 2008.

²⁴⁷ CLT, 15 December 2008.

²⁴⁸ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

²⁴⁹²⁴⁹ CLT, 15 December 2008.; CYJ, 10 December 2008.

and the second drawer for clothes. That left the bottom two drawers. Before GGL's daughter and eldest son were dispatched to the rural areas, children had no specific storage spaces. His daughter might have needed a private storage space on account of her age and gender, but there was insufficient space to assign a specific drawer to her. The four children had to share two drawers. With two children dispatched, a drawer was assigned to each remaining son. The drawers assigned were not really private, however, in that they were not locked.²⁵⁰ The process of assigning storage spaces depended solely upon availability of space. The only principle regarding allocating storage spaces was that parents needed a secure storage space. Any space left over was haphazardly given to children.

Children who shared a living space with siblings

LL, MH, FJC, and WYX were children from better off families. Though they shared living spaces with siblings, parents wanted them to have their own storage spaces for various reasons. For these households, more space and furniture were available. Parents could develop certain rationales and be more indulgent regarding assigning individual storage spaces to children. MH's parents asked MH's uncle to make a cabinet for the children with five drawers. MH's parents decided that MH and his sister should have individual storage spaces as they got older so that their increasing belongings could be stored tidily. MH and his sister then took specific drawers. When MH's sister was dispatched to the rural areas, MH took the whole cabinet.²⁵¹ FJC lived with his three

²⁵⁰ GGL, 18 December 2008.

²⁵¹ MH, 27 December 2008.

brothers in the side house. Each brother was assigned a drawer in a common cabinet there. Each brother was also given a chest. These storage spaces were not locked however as FJC's parents intended the individual storage spaces solely to facilitate house keeping, whereby each brother tidied and stored his own possessions in his own storage space.²⁵²

An asymmetry regarding the privacy of storage spaces existed between parents and children in the two households. FJC and his brothers did not ask what parents kept in their own storage spaces. Parents did not go through the brothers' storage spaces, but this was as parents knew what was inside. Siblings were not interested in each other's storage spaces. Reflecting the practical reason behind the assigning of storage spaces, siblings opened each other's storage spaces when required for orderly housekeeping like when brothers helped each other keep their clothes.²⁵³ MH and his sister did not go through each other's drawers. The drawers, however, were not locked. Further, while MH's parents did not access his storage spaces, MH did not feel confident that his storage spaces were inviolable. MH feared parental disapproval of the banned books he obtained and concealed them. He did not place the book in his drawers but in other locations like underneath his bed mattress.²⁵⁴ There was no guaranteed inviolability implicit in the drawers assigned to him.

WYX and LL's parents assigned storage spaces due to seeming respect for children's privacy. There was a table with a central drawer and four side drawers in the living area of LL's mother. LL's mother assigned drawers to each child telling them that

²⁵² FJC, 17 December 2008.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ MH, 27 December 2008.

they all had treasured things and to lock these things in their drawers. LL believed her mother had a sense of privacy derived from both her upbringing in a family steeped in Confucian values and her university education before 1949. LL's mother wanted her children to develop the same sense of privacy and selfhood.²⁵⁵ WYX was deemed too young to need his own storage space. His step-brother, however, was eighteen in 1966. WYX's parents gave his step-brother a lockable chest in the toilet as WYX's mother understood that his step-brother needed a private space to put the photo of his birth mother who had died before WYX's father remarried.²⁵⁶

There was a relation between housing conditions, family background and the assigning of private storage spaces. GGL, CLT and CYJ (old home) lived in poorer housing conditions and they came from good worker class backgrounds. The three interviewees lacked housing space and money for excessive furniture. Storage and living spaces were thus scarce. The children were not given specific storage space in CLT and CYJ's households. Specific storage spaces were given to children in a haphazard manner when space became available in GGL's household. The second group of interviewees comprising LL, MH, FJC and WYX were children who shared a living space with siblings. While they did not have a private living space, the children in their households mostly had individual storage spaces. Better housing conditions also allowed parents to develop rationalities in the provision of specific storage spaces for children. Such rationalities include to facilitate housekeeping, to inculcate selfhood in children and to respect and nurture their sense of privacy. In households with better housing conditions,

²⁵⁵ LL, 26 December 2008.

²⁵⁶ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

family background affected the rationale behind assigning storage spaces to children. FJC and MH were from lower educated families. Their parents assigned them storage spaces out of practical considerations to facilitate housekeeping. The privacy of their storage spaces was thus not guaranteed. LL and WYX meanwhile, came from intellectual family backgrounds. Their parents provided children inviolable storage spaces to nurture and respect the latter's sense of privacy.

Even while individuals did not have private living spaces, they could still have individual storage spaces. The existence of private storage spaces was common to all married couples among interviewees who did not have exclusive conjugal living space. While specific storage spaces were assigned to children, they may not be private in the sense that access to them was restricted to the assignee. Storage spaces that were truly private to children only arose where living conditions permitted in families of intellectual and Confucian backgrounds.

Part 2: Private possessions

Illicit possessions

English and Chinese language memoirs depicted a spectrum of things kept in domestic privacy. My focus in this chapter, however, is on illicit possessions to avoid being overwhelmed by the myriad of private possessions depicted. The possession of illicit items at home is also a surer gauge of domestic privacy. Illicit or potentially

dangerous items kept in domestic privacy as depicted in memoirs can be grouped as follows: items reflecting illegitimate individual identities, things reflecting a luxurious, feudal or bourgeois style of living and items of explicit political significance. Everyone was expected during the Cultural Revolution to be revolutionary citizens and items suggesting that the owner had other identities like old style clothing worn before 1949 signaled incorrect thinking.²⁵⁷ Other such items include old documents related to official and responsible capacities a person held in various governments before 1949.²⁵⁸ Things that indicated bourgeoisie, feudal, or luxurious habits of living include luxury goods²⁵⁹ and propitious objects like jade charms and bibles.²⁶⁰ Politically charged items include dissenting materials against political leaders.²⁶¹

Households with members persecuted lived in fear of home raids, at least early on during the Cultural Revolution and refrained from keeping anything dangerous. This was true regardless of background. Families with bad backgrounds who were not persecuted kept things required for committing illicit acts, such as old English textbooks. Families of good background lacked the desire and courage to commit illicit acts and did not keep such ‘accessories’ to illicit acts. Rather, they kept various forms of material wealth that families of bad background avoided regardless of whether anyone at home was persecuted.

²⁵⁷ Chihua Wen, "Introduction," in *The Red Mirror: Children of China's Cultural Revolution*, ed. Chihua Wen and Bruce Jones (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 9, 44, 45.

²⁵⁸ "A Tough Guy," in *Voices from the Whirlwind: An Oral History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, ed. Jicai Feng (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), p. 57.

²⁵⁹ Xiao Di Zhu, *Thirty Years in a Red House: A Memoir of Childhood and Youth in Communist China* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 83.

²⁶⁰ Wen, "Introduction," p. 9.

²⁶¹ Tai-yun Yueh and Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 353.

My fifteen interviewees are divided into four groups. GXQ's data is not used because it is too sketchy. The first group (CHN, SYZ, GGL, SWD, FJC, and CYJ) came from households of good background with no persecuted household members. The second group (CQ and CCR) came from households of bad backgrounds with no persecuted household members. The third group (YZG, LL, WYX, and HDG) came from households of bad backgrounds with persecuted household members. The fourth group comprising CLT and MH came from households of good backgrounds with persecuted household members.

Households of bad backgrounds with persecuted members dared not keep anything dangerous, with the exception of WYX's household where neighbors kept things for them. LL and HDG's household even destroyed incriminating things themselves. LL's mother understood her vulnerability as a cadre. Before she was persecuted, she and her husband destroyed incriminating things, including old records of classical music, the gramophone player and LL's mother's diary.²⁶² The raiding radicals from HDG's father's unit neglected some Mexican silver coins and gold bars. HDG's father, however, told him to surrender them to the radicals.²⁶³

The same fear of keeping anything dangerous applied to households of good backgrounds with persecuted members. CLT kept the secret package from his sister-in-law and his gold ring with great fear whereas more dangerous things would not bother

²⁶² LL, 26 December 2008.

²⁶³ HDG, 24 December 2008.

another family of good background. GGL was not worried about his gold ring, knowing that it was regarded as legitimate for workers to possess valuable goods.²⁶⁴ CLT, however, never took the gold ring out of his pocket for the whole Cultural Revolution. CLT's persecution led him to such fear of a home raid that he dared not even trust his extended family with the location of his gold ring.²⁶⁵ MH's father was extremely anxious when MH's mother was persecuted. As such, his family dared not keep anything indicting.²⁶⁶

Some households with persecuted members kept potentially dangerous things in special circumstances or nearing the end of the Cultural Revolution. WYX's family kept jewelry with neighbors of good background who were not persecuted.²⁶⁷ The households of other interviewees with persecuted members acquired illicit possessions only when they were sure the danger had passed. MH kept hand copied volumes nearing the end of the Cultural Revolution without his parents' knowledge.²⁶⁸ LL kept hand copied volumes with her mother's approval after the latter's reinstatement.²⁶⁹ HDG kept hand copied volumes and Chinese classics upon his father's rehabilitation.²⁷⁰

When households had no persecuted members, they dared to retain potentially indicting items. Households of good background with no persecuted member were audacious in retaining dangerous ostentatious products. Households of good class

²⁶⁴ GGL, 18 December 2008.

²⁶⁵ CLT, 15 December 2008.

²⁶⁶ MH, 27 December 2008.

²⁶⁷ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

²⁶⁸ MH, 27 December 2008.

²⁶⁹ LL, 26 December 2008.

²⁷⁰ HDG, 24 December 2008.

backgrounds could keep wealth legitimately. Some such households, however, kept unjustifiable forms of wealth politically dangerous even for them if discovered. CHN's parents kept jewelry of unknown value and did not submit them to the unit in the confidence that they would not be harassed.²⁷¹ SYZ's household kept jewelry, commemorative gold coins from England, Swiss watches, and Parker pens that her father brought back from overseas in confidence of their good city farmer background.²⁷² SWD's mother kept jewelry and silver dollars issued by Yuan Shikai's government. SWD's family was confident that it was safe as their good background offered protection against disturbances. Further, his family believed neighbors would not suspect them of hoarding such things, because his family appeared very poor. His family could not even afford to utilize their meat ration coupons.²⁷³ CYJ's family was unique among interviewees of good background in keeping things that were politically dangerous. CYJ retained Chinese and Russian classics procured before the Cultural Revolution.²⁷⁴ CYJ cited his worker and PLA family background as reasons for his family's confidence.²⁷⁵

Households of bad background without any persecuted members also displayed more audacity than similar households with persecuted members though the illicit things they kept differed from households of good background. Like households of good background with persecuted members, CCR and CQ displayed the same fear of holding wealth. CQ kept nothing she regarded valuable.²⁷⁶ CCR's wife handed up their

²⁷¹ Chen, 29 December 2008.

²⁷² SYZ, 4 Jan 2009.

²⁷³ SWD, 1 January 2009.

²⁷⁴ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ CQ, 13 December 2008.

ostentatious products to her unit, including gold, jade ornaments, jewelry and even diamonds.²⁷⁷ The two households, however, kept other illicit items in their households that households of good background without persecuted members did not, namely accessories required for their committing of illicit acts. These included banned classics, old English textbooks, self written poems, Western musical records, and Western musical score sheets.

Conclusion

Households that had persecuted members avoided dangerous illicit possessions generally. Those that still kept illicit items did so only under special circumstances, or when the danger had irrevocably passed. Households without persecuted members were more audacious in keeping illicit items, but there was a difference between the illicit items that households of good background kept, as compared to those of bad background. The illicit items that households of good backgrounds kept included various kinds of ostentatious products excessive for a family of good background, while households of bad background avoided that, keeping instead accessories required for illicit forms of leisure or illicit acts that bettered the material future of their households.

²⁷⁷ CCR, 12 January 2009.

CHAPTER 5: PRIVATE ACTS AT HOME

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the most common illicit and private acts conducted at home depicted in memoirs written in both English and Chinese languages. I compare that depiction with what interviewees recalled. Illicit acts carried out in domestic privacy as depicted by extant literature suggested that many people lived in resentment or disillusionment impelling them towards illicit acts. This depiction does not reflect the full picture of the mindset and lives of the people. Only a minority of interviewees practiced the most common forms of illicit private acts reflected in the literature with different motivations than the latter suggested.

Contemporary observers stated that disillusionment and boredom gave rise to illicit acts. Whyte stated that rusticated youths facing the possibility of meaningless jobs and rural exile sought alternative, non-official values leading them to various prohibited activities like gambling and the listening of traditional songs.²⁷⁸ Watson stated that the crumbling of party authority led youths towards disillusionment manifested in deviant habits like smoking.²⁷⁹ The myriad of private and/or illicit acts reflected in memoirs and observations could be organized into three categories; ‘the written word, the spoken word, and beyond words’. ‘The written word’ covers all the activities that people did involving mainly some form of written text including the writing of poems,²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, p. 319, 321.

²⁷⁹ Watson, *Living in China*, p. 309.

²⁸⁰ Fuxing Xiao, *Chumo wangshi [Remembering Days Past]* (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1998), pp. 164, 167, 168.; Jung Chang, *Wild Swans : Three Daughters of China* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 487 488.

sentimental literature (including love letters),²⁸¹ politically dissenting writing,²⁸² diaries,²⁸³ the reading of banned books (usually English and Chinese classics) and hand copied volumes.²⁸⁴

My focus is on private acts of an illicit nature, but I include private acts that are not necessarily illicit under ‘the written word’ because of the prominence of such acts in memoirs. Besides the high number of times that acts to do with the ‘written word’ occurred, some authors stated explicitly their prevalence. Xiao Fuxing, a rusticated youth from Beijing, wrote that it was fashionable to give each other journals meant for writing poems as everyone was writing poems.²⁸⁵ Bai Ge noted that about seventy percent of students from junior middle to senior middle second year were keeping diaries.²⁸⁶

Another reason for including non-illicit private acts under ‘the written word’ was the inherent danger in committing anything to paper as their meanings could be distorted. One of Anchee Min’s school teachers was accused of attempting to subvert her due to an

²⁸¹ Chang, *Wild Swans* pp. 599, 604.; Min, *Red Azalea*, p. 94.; Xiaoying Wang, *Kelian wushu shan [Pity the Endless Hills]* (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1998), p. 22.

²⁸² Nien, *Life and Death*, p. 445.; Yueh and Wakeman, *To the Storm* p. 342.

²⁸³ Liang and Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution*, p. 162, 189.; Wenfa Fan, *Baishan heishui: Yige Shanghai zhiqing de chenfeng riji [White Mountains and Black Rivers: The Dust Covered Diary of a Shanghai Educated Youth]* (Zhuhai: Zhuhai chubanshe, 1998), p. 119.; Yuan Gao, *Born Red : A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 314.; Shen Fan, *Gang of One: Memoirs of a Red Guard* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 147.; Niu Niu, *No Tears for Mao: Growing Up in the Cultural Revolution* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1995), p. 122.; Xiao, *Chumo wangshi [Remembering Days Past]*, pp. 125, 236, 251.; Zhu, *Thirty Years in a Red House*, p. 85.; Wang, *Kelian wushu shan [Pity the Endless Hills]*, pp. 54, 56.

²⁸⁴ Fan, *Gang of One*, p. 28.; Xiao, *Chumo wangshi [Remembering Days Past]*, pp. 94, 96, 98.; Niu, *No Tears for Mao: Growing Up in the Cultural Revolution*, p. 130.; Chang, *Wild Swans* pp. 489-490.

²⁸⁵ Xiao, *Chumo wangshi [Remembering Days Past]*, pp. 164, 168. (author states that writing poems was practiced by nearly everyone),

²⁸⁶ Ge Bai, *1966-1976 : Zhongguo baixing shenghuo shilu [1966-1976 : A Record of the Lives of China's Common People]* (Beijing: Jingguan jiaoyu, 1993), pp. 264, 266.

entry in the teacher's diary suggesting that Min was 'educable'.²⁸⁷ Some activities to do with the written word are obviously illicit like the reading of banned books. Others, however, are private, though not illicit. Xiao Fuxing wrote sincere and personal poems conveying revolutionary sentiments or using revolutionary language when he was dispatched to the rural areas.²⁸⁸

The 'spoken word' includes all illicit activities centering mainly on some form of oral transmission. The most commonly depicted illicit activities under this category include the expressing of political dissent,²⁸⁹ listening to foreign broadcasts²⁹⁰ and the learning of English in certain prohibited ways.²⁹¹ The category 'beyond words' includes illicit acts not covered by the first two categories like gambling, playing mahjong, the listening of banned traditional music, superstitious rituals and religious worship.²⁹²

There are a few broad differences between the portrayal of illicit acts in the literature and what interviewees recalled. Firstly, there were contented people who were not driven to illicit acts out of any sense of disillusion or dissent. The majority of my interviewees, though somewhat resentful, did not commit illicit acts at home. Interviewees who committed dangerous illicit acts were motivated by different reasons than that suggested in contemporary observations. These people committed illicit acts to

²⁸⁷ Min, *Red Azalea*, p. 35.

²⁸⁸ Xiao, *Chumo wangshi [Remembering Days Past]*, p. 167.

²⁸⁹ Wang, *Kelian wushu shan [Pity the Endless Hills]*, pp. 50, 142.; Min, *Red Azalea*, p. 17.; Wang, *Kelian wushu shan [Pity the Endless Hills]*, p. 62.; Chang, *Wild Swans* pp. 442-443.

²⁹⁰ Zhu, *Thirty Years in a Red House*, p. 133-134.; Gao, *Born Red* p. 325.; Nien, *Life and Death*, p. 558.; Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, pp. 319, 321.

²⁹¹ Zhu, *Thirty Years in a Red House*, p. 87.; Chang, *Wild Swans* pp. 621-622.

²⁹² Ningkun Wu and Yikai Li, *A Single Tear : A Family's Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993), pp. 327-328.; Whyte and Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, pp. 319, 321.

improve their lives. Further, they were strategic, undertaking only illicit activities that would better their current or future situations and eschewed acts that were either too dangerous or useless to that end. The pragmatic motivation meant interviewees did not commit many of the illicit and non-illicit private activities noted in literature.

Interviewees: little resentment, little illicit acts

Three interviewees, CYJ, GGL and FJC, neither felt a lot of dissatisfaction nor engaged in illicit acts. FJC had little resentment as his life was pretty smooth then.²⁹³ CYJ said that people of his generation generally supported Mao now and then.²⁹⁴ GGL and his wife had a revolutionary mindset then and were devoted to the revolution, with GGL being a unit radical and his wife being a red guard.²⁹⁵ The families of these interviewees were not persecuted and all had good working class backgrounds.²⁹⁶ Ironically, CJY (in his old home) and GGL had the worst housing conditions among my interviewees though they had relatively little resentment during the Cultural Revolution.

For CYJ, FJC and GGL, things that the family regarded private include mundane issues like the disposition of wealth, the future of their children and domestic quarrels. These issues were kept private by the precept that family wealth and shame should not be broadcasted. CYJ committed the only illicit act among these three interviewees as he read some banned Chinese and Russian classics. He procured such books legally before the

²⁹³ FJC, 17 December 2008.

²⁹⁴ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

²⁹⁵ GGL, 18 December 2008.

²⁹⁶ CYJ, 10 December 2008.; FJC, 17 December 2008.; GGL, 18 December 2008.

Cultural Revolution and retained them.²⁹⁷ None of the interviewees harbored any significant political discontent nor had damming secrets. For CYJ, the only secrets his parents and later, he and his wife held pertained to issues like how to spend the money that they earned, the future of their children etc.²⁹⁸ The same issues dominated discussions between GGL and his wife and between FJC's parents.²⁹⁹

However, family members did keep secrets from each other so as not to worry anyone in the family but not due to the fear of family members reporting on them. Some memoirs and observations stated that families often split apart due to the latter. Gao Yuan noted that in Yizhong middle school in Yizhen County, the children of many teachers publicly severed relations with their parents and some tried to expose their parents' supposed crimes.³⁰⁰ Ai Xiaoming noted she had denounced her parents in wall posters in her Hankou school for behaving like a warlord at home.³⁰¹ Families of my interviewees did not denounce each other, suggesting another aspect of domestic life that differed from representations. The secrets that CYJ and FJC kept from their families were about conflicts that they had with others in their unit that would worry their parents if their parents were told.³⁰² The source of most trouble for people during the Cultural Revolution came from their units. As such, interviewees were reluctant to discuss unit related problems with their families due to the fear it would cause the latter.

²⁹⁷ CYJ, 10 December 2008.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ GGL, 18 December 2008.; FJC, 17 December 2008.

³⁰⁰ Gao, *Born Red* pp. 77-78.

³⁰¹ Xiaoming Ai, *Xuetong : Yige heiwulei nuzi de wenge jiyi [Blood Type: The Cultural Revolution Memories of a Woman from the Five Black Categories]* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1994), p. 33.

³⁰² CYJ, 10 December 2008.; FJC, 17 December 2008.

Interviewees: resentful, no dangerous illicit acts

CLT, SWD, LL, MH, CHN, SYZ, and WYX reported that though family members felt resentment or disillusionment, this did not result in illicit activity though they kept their discontent secret. For these interviewees, only CLT and SWD were adults then and only CLT was married. The other interviewees were young, ranging from primary to middle school in 1966. CLT's discontentment was due to his persecution by unit radicals. He, however, had neither the courage nor desire to commit illicit acts.³⁰³ What CLT and his wife regarded secrets included the resentment he felt towards the radicals and mundane issues that centered upon family shame and wealth. The one illicit act that he committed was joining his household in transporting his mother's body to burial nearby.³⁰⁴

SWD felt mild resentment over the Cultural Revolution but he stayed away from illicit acts at home though he listened to foreign broadcasts in school. SWD was not struggled against in school. He regretted however that his students compromised on their education. SWD listened to foreign broadcasts, however, not out of resentment though it was arguably boredom. SWD wanted to test whether his home-made radio could receive foreign signals. He had few leisure activities and thus took to tinkering with electronic equipment.³⁰⁵ SWD avoided other activities that he perceived too dangerous or unnecessarily risky. He only listened to the radio in school sporadically when no students were around at night. He also used ear phones. SWD did not read banned books though

³⁰³ CLT, 15 December 2008.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ SWD, 1 January 2009.

other interviewees thought it safe. This was as SWD's students would visit him in his dormitory during the day and might chance across him reading such books. He also avoided writing a diary as he saw people indicted in the anti-rightist campaign based on distortions of their diaries.³⁰⁶

The other interviewees in this category were children or unmarried youths. These interviewees knew their parents were resentful, but insisted that the latter did not commit illicit acts. SYZ was an exception. Her parents lived in oblivion to the outside world. Her parents stayed at home often, with her father in retirement and her mother serving as a housewife. Her father was convinced that China then was better than before 1949. SYZ, however, felt the outside atmosphere terrifying, whereby a careless remark could land one in fatal trouble.³⁰⁷ Like FJC and CYJ, SYZ did not tell her parents about the outside world so as not to worry them. While SYZ was slightly resentful, she lacked the courage and desire to commit illicit acts.³⁰⁸

The other interviewees in this group, LL, MH, CHN, and WYX were very young then. CHN was in middle school in 1966, while MH, WYX and LL were in primary school. LL's mother was upset by her persecution. Further, LL's father died after his release from cadre school due to a nervous breakdown.³⁰⁹ MH's mother was persecuted too.³¹⁰ WYX's home was raided and his father persecuted by student Red Guards.³¹¹

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ SYZ, 4 Jan 2009.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ LL, 26 December 2008.

³¹⁰ MH, 27 December 2008.

³¹¹ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

CHN's father had to destroy a coffin meant for CHN's grandmother during the 'destroy four olds' movement. CHN's grandmother died from anger consequently.³¹² While the parents of these interviewees were resentful, they did not tell their children so as not to upset them. Further, these parents did nothing illicit though they kept their discontent secret. MH's parents discussed their resentment in lowered voices. MH's father kept secret from the children the fact that MH's mother went missing from home to escape radicals from her work unit.³¹³ CHN's father did not express resentment to his wife over his grandma's death.³¹⁴ LL and WYX were also not privy to their parents' resentment.³¹⁵

While the parents of interviewees in the second group did not commit illicit acts, some interviewees did certain dangerous things their parents did not know about out of curiosity and ignorance. MH read hand copied volumes nearing the end of the Cultural Revolution.³¹⁶ WYX listened to foreign broadcasts during a school trip to the rural areas.³¹⁷ LL's situation was unique. After LL's mother's reinstatement, her family has access to books in public libraries forbidden to the public. Subsequently, LL obtained banned Chinese classics. LL's mother acquiesced, only reminding her periodically to return the books.³¹⁸

³¹² Chen, 29 December 2008.

³¹³ MH, 27 December 2008.

³¹⁴ Chen, 29 December 2008.

³¹⁵ LL, 26 December 2008.; WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

³¹⁶ MH, 27 December 2008.

³¹⁷ WYX, 7 Jan 2009.

³¹⁸ LL, 26 December 2008.

Interviewees: consciously committed dangerous illicit acts

CQ, CCR, and HDG committed illicit acts that they knew were dangerous with a strategic mindset underlining their decisions. They also developed justifications should they be discovered. The three interviewees wanted to better their situations and took risks to that end. The three interviewees avoided illicit acts common in memoirs but which were overly dangerous or useless to bettering their situations. These interviewees also undertook some illicit acts for leisure but only when they were sure that the actual danger was low. CQ read banned Chinese classics and learnt English through old textbooks she retained. While reading banned Chinese classics was mildly dangerous, reading old English language textbooks were more so. Chang Jung obtained English language textbooks published before the Cultural Revolution that contained extracts from writers like Dickens. She hid those books as their contents were regarded 'bourgeois'.³¹⁹ CQ felt safe reading Chinese classics. She, however, prepared a justification to defend her learning of English.

CQ was confident firstly that no one would know about her study of English as no one would raid her home. She started learning English as she wanted to carry on practicing medicine after the Cultural Revolution. During that time, she was only allowed to learn medical terms in Latin forms with little practical application. CQ mentioned that, '...I had a feeling that the Cultural Revolution would not last forever... that... if I want to carry on doing medical practice, then I would have to learn English...though some of

³¹⁹ Chang, *Wild Swans* p. 622.

these materials were banned, but that (whether or not she could still possess such books) depends on whether you chose to hand them up to the state...I was a nobody then and so I was aware that I was not in a dangerous position (regarding the possibility of her home being raided)'.³²⁰ Later on, her unit's workers' propaganda team found out that she was learning English from old textbooks and accused her of being 'white and expert'. She retorted that she did it to do her job better.³²¹

CQ however, eschewed illicit acts that were dangerous or produced no tangible benefit to her situation. She stopped the habit of keeping a diary as it was dangerous. She avoided listening to foreign broadcasts as the frequency was distorted and she felt it was not worth the risk. CQ did not turn to other dangerous acts like listening to old records, gambling, or writing poems, beyond reading Chinese classics. She listened to model operas and read approved novels for leisure instead.³²²

CCR permitted illicit activities to improve his daughter's prospects while minimizing the risks incurred. Commenting on the illicit activities of his household, CCR said, 'I was not smashing my head with a stone'.³²³ CCR's daughter was graduating from middle school and CCR wanted a comfortable job posting for her. Consequently, CCR decided to let his daughter master the cello to enable her to perform propaganda work, though this entailed some risk. CCR obtained Western musical scores for her daughter to practice on. CCR was aware the scores themselves were damning, so too was playing

³²⁰ CQ, 13 December 2008.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ CCR, 12 January 2009.

Western music. CCR thus hid the scores. He intended to tell any intruder that the scores recorded revolutionary music, chancing on the intruder's inability to differentiate. CCR told his daughter to play Western music for practice and insert a few lines of revolutionary songs to convince others that she was playing revolutionary music and that the other lines were just practice.³²⁴

CCR, however, did certain dangerous things for leisure that he was sure carried only a low risk while avoiding higher risk acts. He wrote poems to criticize and praise friends for their behavior. He deemed such poems safe as he stayed off dangerous topics to do with politics or his life before 1949.³²⁵ CCR was not worried about radicals distorting his poems as he was sure of his relations with his students, neighbors and colleagues. He also felt that people were not that unreasonable. While he was aware that others could accuse him of 'worshipping the West' as he listened to Western musical records, he felt safe as the same musical instruments were used in revolutionary operas. CCR however, did not write diaries as they could be distorted to suggest sincere counter revolutionary thoughts or listen to foreign broadcasts. His father too burnt his own diaries with the Cultural Revolution.³²⁶

HDG lived in the best conditions among all my interviewees with the most promising future. He was a doctor living in a big bungalow. His father was a prominent doctor who attended top leaders. Despite that, HDG put himself at the greatest risk to better his situation and expressed the greatest resentment. HDG was the only adult

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

during the Cultural Revolution who consistently listened to foreign broadcasts at home and in Gansu where he was later dispatched after finishing his medical education. He only stopped listening after a few years when an acquaintance was arrested for it. HDG listened to foreign broadcasts to know when there would be an end to the Cultural Revolution and his suffering whereby he was unable to become a prominent doctor. He also wanted to lose his stigma as a 'stinking intellectual' and return to Shanghai. HDG's family also conducted dangerous discussions regarding their future. While families like GGL's discussed the future in private, HDG expressed illegitimate aspirations during such discussions, including his desire to further his education in America and to become a 'big doctor'.³²⁷

HDG however, exercised restraint regarding dangerous activities that were useless or only done for leisure. No one in his family wrote diaries as too many people were persecuted on that account. HDG also avoided committing anything to paper. While he discussed his future with his family, he did not share overly seditious thoughts even with his wife including his desire for Mao's death. For leisure, HDG was reading banned books and hand copied volumes. He did not regard these activities as dangerous due to his family's protected status that granted them freedom from neighborhood surveillance.³²⁸

³²⁷ HDG, 24 December 2008.

³²⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

Memoirs and contemporary observations suggested that many people committed illicit or dangerous acts in domestic privacy. Scholars attributed illicit acts to a sense of resentment, disillusionment, or boredom during the Cultural Revolution. Most interviewees, however, did not commit many of these illicit acts. Disillusionment, resentment and boredom did not necessarily lead to illicit acts for some interviewees due to fear, contentment and the influence of an orthodox education. Interviewees who consciously committed illicit and dangerous acts to better their situation did not receive an orthodox family upbringing, even if some had an orthodox education.

Activities to do with ‘the written word’ featured prominently in memoirs as regards the illicit and dangerous acts that people committed in domestic privacy, especially the writing of poems, reading of banned books and the keeping of diaries. My interviewees suggested such acts were seldom practiced. While some interviewees read banned books, they did not regard it dangerous. Committing things to paper was regarded more dangerous, especially writing diaries. Interviewees and their families avoided that, apart from the sisters of FJC and CHN who wrote revolutionary diaries. Both families nonetheless felt secure about their safety and contented.³²⁹

While children committed illicit acts out of ignorance or curiosity, people were most driven to illicit acts when they wanted to improve the situation of the self or the family. This occurred mostly among interviewees of higher education and problematic

³²⁹ FJC, 17 December 2008.; Chen, 29 December 2008.

backgrounds. These interviewees, however, were strategic regarding the illicit acts they committed. While they committed certain illicit acts for leisure, their assessment of the danger these acts entailed were much lower. Dangerous act depicted in memoirs like penning down of political dissent and writing sincere diaries served no other purpose other than to gratify the author emotionally.³³⁰ Such dangerous acts without practical benefit were avoided by interviewees.

³³⁰ Fan, *Baishan heishui [White Mountains and Black Rivers]*, p. 119.; Nien, *Life and Death*, p. 445.; Yueh and Wakeman, *To the Storm* p. 342.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER

Domestic privacy: memoirs, studies, and interviewee memories

This thesis intersects two groups of literature in modern Chinese history. The first group of literature covers the study of modern Chinese 'privacy'. Scholars here generally agree that there is no singular Chinese notion of privacy. Rather, different people have understood 'privacy' differently in the Chinese context. One important aim of the study of modern Chinese privacy involves attempting to find the various ways by which different people or groups of people have understood privacy by their actions, speech and other artifacts or things that they have left behind. The main methodology employed has been via the study of textual sources.

The second group of literature concerns the study of daily life in cities during the Cultural Revolution. Majority of the work here done were produced in the contemporaneous and near contemporaneous period following the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, the main observations were produced by foreigners who visited China. Following the Cultural Revolution, memoirs, especially in the English language, have been the primary source of impressions regarding daily life. While contemporary works produced a positive picture of daily life in Chinese cities, memoirs and post contemporaneous works are negative in their depiction. The 'dark ages' narrative outlined by Zhong, Wang and Bai³³¹ describes the work done after the Cultural Revolution that depicted daily life in Chinese cities as being driven by terror and paranoia.

³³¹ Zhong, Wang, and Bai, "Introduction," p. xx. introduction, some of us

I did not define similarities in how city residents during the Cultural Revolution understood privacy like *Chinese Concepts of Privacy*. Rather, I examined the possibilities of privacy in homes. Georges Duby mentioned that the home has always been the place where a private haven could be found.³³² Studies on the Cultural Revolution done after the Cultural Revolution, however, discounted the home as such a place, while contemporary studies denied the need for the home to fulfill such a role.

In chapter one, I argued that contrary to studies and memoirs done after the Cultural Revolution, neighborhood surveillance in its institutionalized and informal forms was not intrusive. Personnel of the neighborhood system left most residents alone and were popular. None of my interviewees recalled institutionalized neighborhood surveillance personnel intruding upon someone's place uninvited. Informal surveillance on neighbors was strong, but not intrusive. Neighbors watched out for each other as a function of proximity and warm relations, but did not monitor and denounce each other. Residents related to each other as familiar neighbors rather than as revolutionary subjects or enforcers of the state security system. As such, targets of neighborhood surveillance were not people who had simply violated certain political criteria. Rather, relations with neighbors were important in determining the targets of neighborhood surveillance. I agree thus with contemporary literature that found neighborhood surveillance benign and popular.

Chapter two, however, refuted the notion in contemporary literature that the open communal life of Chinese neighborhoods reflected a lack of any desire for individual or

³³² Duby, "Foreword," p. vii.

domestic privacy. I used the concept of ‘comfortable privacy’ to explain that the openness of Chinese households was an adaptation that enabled households some domestic privacy amidst inferior housing conditions, while not making living at home overly uncomfortable. Domestic privacy could be secured from the neighborhood even among households who led the most open lives due to the trust between neighbors, whereby neighbors kept an eye out for, but not on, each other.

Inferior housing conditions and good neighborly relations supported ‘comfortable privacy’. When neighborly relations could not be trusted to remain benign, households turned towards a more interior-based domestic life characterized by frequent closing of doors and reduced interaction with neighbors. When housing conditions improved, however, a certain modernization regarding domestic life occurred. ‘Comfortable privacy’ became redundant as better housing conditions permitted ‘modern’ or ‘maximum’ privacy characterized by reduced interaction with neighbors and frequent closing of the home doors, much like modern Shanghai households. The reduced neighborly interaction also meant neighbors lost the familiarity necessary for ‘comfortable privacy’.

Chapter three examined the logic behind the allocation of private living space at home. Scholars noted that generally, housing was cramped and personal autonomy was stunted, with newly married couples often denied separate housing. I argued that a substantial minority of people, at least from among my interviewees, had more housing space than depicted though this may of course, not be reflective of the broader situation

in Shanghai then. I examined the logic of allocating living space and concluded that families went to great lengths to accord private living space to newly married couples. The space accorded was more than just a secluded spot for having sex but whenever possible, allowed a newly wed couple space for an independent family life. Whenever space was scarce, families prioritized the various claims on private space stemming from the privacy that individual family members were perceived to require in accordance with their age, gender and marital status. The claim of married couples to private space was the strongest. With children of different genders and ages, however, married couples might compromise on their private space to allow a daughter to live with them. In extreme space deprivation, a teenage daughter would still be accorded a modicum of privacy in her assigned space by maybe giving her a separate bed. When someone else had to be housed within conjugal space, the elderly was preferred over children. The principles behind the allocation of living space stayed constant across family backgrounds.

Chapter four examined private acts in the house, focusing on illicit acts prominently depicted in memoirs and studies. The ability to commit illicit acts at home is also a surer gauge of domestic privacy. I made this point in chapters one and two, whereby despite people having illicit possessions and conducting illicit acts at home, ‘comfortable privacy’ was still adequate, reflecting the strength of domestic privacy that ‘comfortable privacy’ provided. I examined what sort of people committed illicit acts and why. I classified the main illicit acts depicted in memoirs under the categories of ‘written word’, ‘spoken word’, and ‘beyond words’. Many of the illicit and dangerous

acts depicted in memoirs and studies like listening to foreign broadcasts and writing diaries were not undertaken by most people. This was as people were strategic regarding the illicit acts they committed. Interviewees conducted illicit acts that they deemed not dangerous or if it helped them better their prospects. Dangerous acts committed out of boredom, disillusionment, or discontent that served no tangible purpose were eschewed. Interviewees and households that lived in better conditions with higher educational and cultural levels had the most discontent and the greatest aspirations. These people were driven towards dangerous illicit acts. People living in the worst conditions, often with a good background, were generally more contented and avoided illicit acts.

Chapter five examined private possessions and storage spaces. Even should a person lack his own private living space, he could still retain individual privacy from the family by having his own storage space. The issue, however, is whether the storage space was 'private' and inviolable. Living conditions was predominant in determining whether a family member had his own storage space. Whatever the living conditions, parents had private storage spaces out of bounds to children on account of the need to store things important to the family. The storage spaces assigned to children on the other hand were determined primarily by availability. For households of good political background but low cultural levels like that of MH and FJC, storage spaces assigned to children were intended for practical reasons such as to facilitate housekeeping. Such storage spaces were not inviolable. For households of higher educational and cultural levels like those of LL and WYX however, storage spaces assigned to children were inviolable almost in the

sense that the West understands privacy in that the inviolability of such spaces pertained to the emotional well-being and autonomy of the individual.

While illicit acts were conducted by those of bad political background and higher cultural levels, the reverse was true of private possessions. Households of good backgrounds that avoided illicit acts kept dangerous items mainly of an opulent nature. Those of bad political background and higher cultural levels eschewed secretly keeping forms of wealth. Interviewees and households of good backgrounds kept wealth that might not be justifiable for households of a good background. These households banked on their confidence that their homes would not be raided.

Whither privacy?

Scholars of modern Chinese privacy have realized the difficulties of using privacy as a concept to explain phenomena. Individuals may withhold things, but to classify such behavior as privacy is difficult. Furthermore, the definition of privacy in the West is debated as well. My main concern has been to show the physical possibilities of privacy at home. Interviewees and their households then used such possibilities to various ends from keeping illicit possessions, committing illicit acts, to simply enabling a family member a separate living space.

Though using the term ‘privacy’ in describing things that happened in China before 1980 was difficult, scholars and memoirists continued using the term with

reference to happenings during the Cultural Revolution and shortly thereafter. Contemporary and near contemporary observers used the term ‘privacy’, if only to describe its absence in China. Butterfield noted that privacy was a non-existent concept whereby hotel staff would barge into rooms when guests were sleeping.³³³ Mackerras stated that Chinese did not know the concept of privacy. Students in the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute confided intimate secrets to their teachers.³³⁴ Sidel stated that instead of privacy, there was only communal mindedness in China.³³⁵

Memoirists used the term ‘privacy’ to explain certain aspects of their lives during the Cultural Revolution as well. Some memoirists with prior interaction with the West or a Western education used the term ‘privacy’ in reference to aspects of their lives.³³⁶ Some authors claimed they understood the concept of ‘privacy’ due to their education.³³⁷ Many memoirists writing in both English and Chinese languages did not have either a Western education or prior interaction with the West, but used the term ‘privacy’ or *yinsi* to describe aspects of their lives too.³³⁸

The use of the term ‘privacy’ and *yinsi* in memoirs and studies on the Cultural Revolution raises the question of how the experiencing selves described in memoirs experienced ‘privacy’ in a period where the Chinese equivalent term of *yinsi* had not appeared. My conclusions are somewhat similar to scholars of modern Chinese privacy in

³³³ Butterfield, *Alive in the Bitter Sea*, pp. 42-43.

³³⁴ Mackerras and Hunter, *China Observed*, p. 48.

³³⁵ Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, pp. 156-157.

³³⁶ Ross, *Caught in a Tornado*, p. 116.; Nien, *Life and Death*, p. 168.

³³⁷ Zhang, *Fox Spirit: A Woman in Mao's China*, p. 40.; Wu and Li, *A Single Tear*, p. 149.

³³⁸ Min, *Red Azalea*, p. 26.; Wang, *Kelian wushu shan [Pity the Endless Hills]*, p. 251.; Zhu, *Thirty Years in a Red House*, p. 79.; Zhenhua Zhai, *Red Flower of China* (New York: SOHO, 1993), p. 99.; Fan, *Gang of One*, p. 130.; Yueh and Wakeman, *To the Storm* p. 276.

that a range of phenomena central or peripheral to what different people may have regarded as 'privacy' did exist even if there was no linguistically equivalent term for it then. WYX and HDG, for instance, both recalled certain things that they or their family members did that the parties in question tried to keep from others like WYX's brother keeping of his birth mother's photo in a box and HDG's intimate conversations over the telephone with his wife. HDG and WYX both noted that it was only after the Cultural Revolution, with the existence of the term '*yinsi*', the closest Chinese linguistic equivalent to 'privacy', did they start to note the similarities between that term and what they were doing then. There were also differences in what interviewees and their family members believed had to be kept apart from others. CLT, partly due to a lack of living space, had built only a shoulder height partition to separate his living space from his grandmother's. He mentioned that he and his wife 'did not care' if family members saw their sex life. Furthermore, he and his wife were willing to have sex even with their children sharing their bed. CCR and HDG, however, differed in their insistence on absolute privacy for their sex life. CCR had a room to himself and he would have sex with his wife apart from the other members of his household in this room while HDG would only have sex with his wife at night when everyone else was asleep. HDG's experience also shows a similarity to what McDougall noted in her studies of Lu Xun and Xu Guangping, in that HDG and his wife had different notions of what were meant to be kept apart from others. HDG's wife for instance, locked the letters that HDG sent her from gansu. HDG on the other hand, did not take extra measures to secure the letters she wrote back, but just placed them as and where.

There are, however, certain similarities in what people chose to withhold from each other and what were the things that people and families felt they had to accord more non disclosure towards. Neighbors generally did not come into each other's homes as and when they desired despite the open and friendly neighborhood life. Rather, people preferred using the courtyard or other common spaces to interact in some cases. Pre entry signaling was also used by residents to notify each other when they wanted to enter a family's home. In the internal allocation of private living space, interviewees collectively suggested that newly wed couples, nuclear families and young females would be given more priority in the allocation of such space. Seniority in the family also seemed to matter in the above regard, with the private living space of parents seemingly being more respected than that of children. There also seemed to be certain shared underlying concepts driving the decision to keep certain things apart from others. CLT, for instance, stated that neighbors did not enquire each other about how much money their family had due to the precept that family wealth and shame should not be told to outsiders.³³⁹ SWD concurred with CLT on the significance of the precept of family wealth and shame being a matter private to the family.

While interviewees and their household members did keep certain intimate things private like conjugal sex and items of sentimental value, they kept private certain things as well that were not of an intimate nature and hence would not be regarded an exercise of privacy by Inness though other theorists may say otherwise. According to Inness, an exercise of privacy would involve a decision to withhold or grant someone else various forms of access to certain things, insofar as the granting of access reflected an agent's

³³⁹ CLT, 15 December 2008.

love, liking and concern for the other party. Privacy is inherently valuable because of our recognition of whoever we allow privacy as an autonomous individual with freedom in deciding who he wants to love.³⁴⁰ An exercise of privacy would concern thus mainly intimate things. If so, decisions like CLT keeping secret the package from his wife's sister would not be regarded exercises of privacy, as they deal more with self protection. In this regard, Silber suggested that doing things out of concern for self rather than for others like not allowing a salesperson to interrupt a person's solitary evening at home would not accord with Inness's definition of privacy.³⁴¹ Furthermore, not every interviewee equated keeping apart certain things from others with the exercise of privacy of 'yinsi' in the manner of WYX and HDG. CLT said there were just some things that could not be told others as it would bring trouble, while FJC stated he just did not discuss things that should not be discussed with others. FJC commented that the general rule in interaction was to keep quiet about things that were either unnecessary to tell others, or which could get oneself or others into trouble.³⁴² Both interviewees stressed the need to avoid trouble by not disclosing certain things, and not 'yinsi'. Such things in CLT's case include his resentment about his persecution. For FJC whose life was smooth sailing, the things that he kept silent about included conflicts he had with others in his unit.

Not everything that was kept apart from others during the Cultural Revolution by my interviewees or their families could thus be regarded exercises of privacy by either my interviewees or Inness's theory of privacy. Where interviewees like HDG, his wife and WYX did note that there were certain matters that pertained to 'yinsi' then, the

³⁴⁰ Inness, *Privacy, Intimacy, and Isolation*, p. vii.

³⁴¹ Silber, "Privacy in Dream of the Red Chamber," p. 77.

³⁴² FJC, 17 December 2008.

contents of what constituted '*yinsi*' differed between people. This conclusion affirms that upheld by most scholars of modern Chinese privacy in that there is no singular definition or sense of 'privacy' in the Chinese context, just like in the Western one. The aim of this thesis, however, is not to identify certain common ways of understanding privacy or whether people during the Cultural Revolution retained a sense of privacy though I have provided some opinions on it. The focus of the thesis, rather, has been on the domestic possibilities of privacy, identified as whether a space existed to enable a family or a family member to keep certain things apart from others, whether people utilized such possibilities and to what ends they utilized such possibilities towards. Through my interviews, I have shown an alternative picture to the above questions apart from that given in contemporary observations which depicted people as not having a desire to keep anything from the collective. I have also attempted to provide an alternative picture to the depiction of deprivation and intrusion drawn out in post contemporaneous studies and memoirs. Though the conclusions I have derived cannot claim to be representative of everyone living in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution and suffers on that account, the alternative picture I have provided has not been portrayed substantially in other works and may hopefully serve to open up other lines of questioning in studies of domestic life during the Cultural Revolution.

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