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Expanding Political Space In Contemporary China: A Comparative Study Of The Advocacy Strategies Of Three Grass-Root Women's Groups

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EXPANDING POLITICAL SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ADVOCACY STRATEGIES OF THREE GRASS-ROOT WOMEN'S GROUPS

By

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ii

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

iii

Abstract

EXPANDING POLITICAL SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ADVOCACY STRATEGIES OF THREE GRASS-ROOT WOMEN'S GROUPS

By

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Advisor: Professor Irving Leonard Markovitz

The absence of contentious performance has led scholars to question the existence of social movements and to agree with the description of state-social group relations in China as state corporatism. However, defining social movement by confrontational performance is inappropriate to examine social organizing under repression regimes. Most western social movement theories assume that political space for organizing exists before the formation of social movement. My research challenges this assumption by extending the concept of political opportunity structure to conduct process-tracing comparisons of two women's and one lesbian groups' respective strategies when facing interferences from the central authorities. By conducting interviews with forty three major participants of women and lesbian organizing, including founders, activists, academic experts, governmental officers, and ministerial officers of ACWF, along with archive analysis, and participatory observations, this study looks specifically at the campaign against domestic violence from 1988 to 2013.

This research has found that the political space is not assumed to be existed. Instead, it is created and expanded by women's advocacy groups. Three groups have shared experiences of revocation or failure of registration, cancellation of events, difficulty of fund raising, constantly being invited to have tea with security department etc. However, each group develops their own strategies to survive and to further expand their political spaces gradually. Most importantly, they carry on their advocacy work national wide. I argue under a repressive regime, these achievements are indeed confrontational in nature. Therefore, the aforementioned assumption of social movement theory should be reconsidered.

Acknowledgements

With the guidance of my committee members, and the support of my friends and family, this dissertation has been a joyful undertaking.

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Most of all, I want to thank my parents and my sister. Thanks mom and dad, you two have been role models throughout my life. You have taught me how to live by strong beliefs. Thanks to my sister, Wei-I. Both of our parents suffered serious illnesses in the midst of writing this dissertation, and without your care and strong belief in me, this dissertation might never have been finished.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1: Confrontational Strategies in Expanding Political Space:
Three Women's Groups in China

"If you want to do advocacy work, you cannot be too confrontational;

   If you are confrontational, you cannot work on advocacy."

<div align="right">An activist in the women's movement in China</div>

The absence of obvious contention has led scholars to question the existence of social movements in China and to agree with the description of state-social group relations in China as state corporatism[1] (see for example, Florini, Lai, and Tan. 2012, p.95; Unger 2008). However, my study argues that we need to redefine the characteristics of a social movement in the context of a repressive regime, especially the characteristic of confrontation. Furthermore, my study proposes the term "soft confrontation" to describe the confrontation movement of women's advocacy groups in China. In the end, my study presents the idea of interactive political liberalization as a better means of understanding the state-social group dynamic.

After examining the confrontational movement of three women's advocacy groups in China, my study reaches these two conclusions for two major reasons. First, China, as an authoritarian regime, is adaptive and tolerant toward certain advocacy groups, and this trait redefines the confrontational characteristic of a social movement. Compared to social groups in democratic countries, advocacy groups in China have faced quite different challenges in confronting the state. These challenges include the efforts by the regime to marginalize and monitor the operation of advocacy groups.

The opening quotation sheds some light on the reality of social movements in a repressive regime. Since most advocacy work is viewed by the central government as a potential challenge to regime's legitimacy, social groups that aim for social change have encountered continuing interference from both the Party and the state in China. How to survive and to carry on their advocacy work has become a daily challenge for most organizers of advocacy groups in China.

The adaptive government distinguishes advocacy groups from charity groups, and encourages the existence of charity groups. However, although the central government will include women's advocacy groups in certain public policy making processes, it will, at the same

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[1] "(I)n which the state allows hierarchically ordered and controlled associations to play limited roles as a way to reconcile large numbers of divergent interests."

time, continue its interference with the same groups.

The second reason for redefining the characteristics of social movements in the context of a repressive regime is because the political space did not exist before the formation of social groups in China. Indeed, the expansion of the political space for social organizing and advocacy work was the result of the strategic choices made by advocacy organizers.

My study argues that the state-advocacy group interaction is like dancing a tango, and it takes two to tango. My study has concluded that both advocacy groups and the state are adaptive. In other words, the political space for social organizing and advocacy work is expanded by every encounter between advocacy groups and the state. My study has identified two causal mechanisms of their adaptive reaction to each other.

Most importantly, my study proposes a new definition of confrontation movements in an authoritarian regime that give a better understanding of social movements in China. I argue that advocacy groups that can maintain their survival while sustaining their advocacy work and participate further in the public policy area should be recognized as a confrontational movement.

My study first finds that there exist state boundaries on advocacy groups' organizing, and the organizers' strategies have successfully expanded their political space for advocacy work. In the following chapters, I will show how three women's groups with different organizational goals, organizational capabilities, and advocacy strategies, have encountered four similar major forms of repression from the central government.

In addition, my study shows how these three groups chose different strategies in the same campaign against domestic violence, and examines the resulting political opportunity or political constraint. In the end, the idea of interactive political liberalization is explained in order to further demonstrate the confrontational movement of women's advocacy groups.

In order to demonstrate the confrontational movement of advocacy groups in China, this dissertation will answer the following questions. What boundaries has the government set for the social organizing of advocacy groups? What kind of strategies have the organizers developed to expand these boundaries? Which factors have played a role in shifting these boundaries?

Only by answering these questions can we gain a new understanding of social movements in China. In the past few years, there has been a lot of debate about the applicability of the social movement paradigm to Chinese politics. The lack of autonomy of social groups and the absence of confrontational movements are two main reasons to question the existence of social

movements in China. (Lu, 2007; Zhang, 2001)

However, this argument ignores the multiple struggles of advocacy groups when facing interference from the state. The interactions between advocacy groups and the state provide us with extensive data for understanding the changing dynamics of social movements in China. These interactions also raise a series of intriguing questions. Why does the state allow these advocacy groups to exist if these groups are considered to be a threat to the regime's legitimacy? Do these advocacy groups try to challenge the state? If not? Why not?

My research project uses the definition of Linz and Stepan (1996) that civil society is the "political space" between the government and individual households. It presents a new model of social movements that does not appear confrontational on the surface. My study also includes an evaluation of the strategies of three women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence in order to deepen our understanding of these dynamic interactions between advocacy groups and the state. In March 2003, the "Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Law", was submitted by 30 national people's representatives to the National People's Congress (NPC).

This marked a unique moment in the history of China's legislation because this was the first national legal proposition prepared by nongovernmental organizations, and thus, represented a new relationship between the state and social groups. However, while my study analyzed the interactions between the campaign against domestic violence and the central government, I found one phenomenon worth further probing, namely, tensions between advocacy groups in the campaign and the state.

This phenomenon demonstrated a double-faced state that agreed to and encouraged parts of the work of the campaign, while at the same time, imposing repressive boundaries on several advocacy groups involved in this campaign. Why has the campaign to introduce the issue of domestic violence into the political discourse in China been successful, while at the same time, several of the women's organizations involved in this campaign faced severe repression from the central authorities? What strategies were used by women's organizations that have allowed them to survive and to develop their capabilities?

My study argues that the answer of these questions lies in activists' strategic interaction with the central authorities. Specifically, this research extends the theory of political opportunity and political constraint to analyze the results of each chosen strategy.

According to Jack Goldstone and Charles Tilly, political opportunity is "the [perceived]

probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome" (2001: 182). "Thus, any changes that shift the balance of political and economic resources between a state and challengers, that weaken a state's ability to reward its followers or opponents or to pursue a coherent policy, or that shift domestic or outside support away from the regime, increases opportunities" (pp. 182-183).

In this study, I use the idea of political opportunity to refer to the extended political space for social organizing by advocacy groups, which is a result of the chosen strategies of the organizers. Political constraint refers to the relative retrenched political space for social organizing by advocacy groups that resulted from their actions.

By analyzing the resulting political space for advocacy groups, this study aims at explaining the idea of a confrontational movement in a repressive regime. I begin by considering two related pieces in the literature, namely, both Chinese and Western scholars' discussions of possible political changes and state-social group relationship in China.

While these two schools of scholars offer insight into the relationships between the state, the Party and social groups, they are both insufficient in providing the whole picture for understanding the negotiations and adaptive reactions between the state and advocacy groups. Instead, I argue that the multiple strategies of women's advocacy groups when encountering the repressive forces from the state demonstrate the necessity of reconsidering the applicability of the terms "confrontational" and "social movement" in defining ground-level observations in China.

To present the challenge that advocacy groups in China bring to social movement theories, I begin by compiling a list of repressive experiences faced by advocacy groups to find out the boundaries set by the state for advocacy groups. After presenting a list of major interactions between advocacy groups and the state, I then evaluate four driving forces in shifting these boundaries, namely, ensuring the regime's legitimacy; cooperative relationships with local governments; pressure from the international community, and funding from international donors.

These discussions lead to the conclusion that advocacy groups do expand the boundaries that have been set by the central authorities. From here, I present four major struggles of advocacy groups and further analyze the results of the organizers' chosen strategies in two dimensions, namely, the degree of autonomy and the degree of empowerment.

The four major struggles that advocacy groups have experienced are: failing to gain

registration status, trying to build a relationship with the government; encountering political forces that marginalize self-mobilized groups, and facing the prohibition against confrontational movements. Each struggle and challenge can result in the dissolution of the organization.

The sustainability of each organization demonstrates both the success of the organizers' chosen strategies and the adaptive attitude of the central government. I conclude from the facts that there exist similarities between the social groups' responses toward repressive interference. However, even while facing similar interference, the organizers have to choose between increasing their organization's degree of autonomy and increasing their organization's degree of empowerment.

Even though organizers choose strategies based on their organization's stage of development as well as their anticipation of the government's response, this research has found that organizers looking to increase their organization's degree of empowerment will choose a more cooperative strategy, while organizers who emphasize their organization's degree of autonomy will pick a more confrontational strategy. To verify these assumptions, I examined the strategies of three groups in the campaign against domestic violence.

The three organizations that I have studied, namely, The Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center (hereafter the Maple Center), The Peking University Women's Law Studies & Legal Aid Center (hereafter, the Peking Women's Law Center) and The Common Language, have all chosen different strategies to expand their political space for advocacy work.

My study identifies five major actors who play a role affecting each available strategy, namely, the central authorities, the organizers, the local governments, the international community, and the media. Facing challenges from the governance system, organizers will choose to ally with different actors in order to transform these challenges into political opportunities. But sometimes, organizers may accidentally choose a strategy that leads to political constraint instead.

Based on field research, I have concluded that the strategies of the organizers to expand their boundaries vis-a-vis the central authorities can be described as the process of interactive political liberalization. By way of conclusion and to further explain the idea of political liberalization, I designed a two-by-two matrix, which will be presented in Chapter 6, to describe the dynamic relationship between the advocacy groups and the state.

In other words, my study argues that the survival and the sustainability of the advocacy

work of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language have demonstrated a confrontational movement that faces repressive interference from an authoritarian regime.

Furthermore, since these three organizations all focus on gender issues, the process of political liberalization that they have been involved with refers to not only the policy field, but also to daily cultural life. Facing double-marginalizing forces from both the regime and the patriarchal system, the organizers have chosen strategies that have proven successful in creating their own public sphere.

In addition to attempting theoretical dialogue, the most significant contribution of my analysis is documenting the strategy of each activist in negotiating and confronting the central government for her organization's political space. As the second gender in the society, the struggles of women activists have attracted less attention from scholars. My field research and analysis attempt to fill this gap in order to reach a better understanding of the state-social group relationship.

Why Analyze the Relationship with the Central Government?

There are three reasons why an analysis of the relationship between the three women's advocacy groups-the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language- and the central government has been chosen over an analysis of the groups' relationship with local governments. First, even though these three advocacy groups are all based in Beijing, their organizing and advocacy work are nationwide, and as reported by the three founders, they have all encountered multiple instances of interference from the central government.

Second, even though local governments have enjoyed much more autonomy after Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, most decentralized decision making power is still restricted to the area of social issues, for example, education and pollution. The central party-state still controls the boundaries of political liberalization in China, which as a result, affects the organizers' choices of strategies.

When Teresa Wright compares the Chinese student movement in 1989 with the Taiwanese student movement in 1990, she finds significant similarity in that, "In both China and Taiwan, the students' behavior largely reflected the political environment they faced" (2001: 5). She specifies the role of the central authorities in this scenario.

6

"In particular, official prohibition against, and past punishment of, anti-Party activities, coupled with official discrimination against the political activities of certain groups above other, exerted a profound influence on student behavior in each instance." (1999: 144)

The comparison between the student movements in China and Taiwan is valid because both governments had single-party monopolization during that period of time. The similarity of regime type explains the similar reactions and calculations of the activists cross strait, which further indicates the powerful influence of a repressive authoritarian regime upon organizers of social movements. Therefore, the "political space" which is discussed in this thesis is determined by the interaction between social groups and the central party-state.

Third, when discussing state-society relations, one of the most crucial factors is the great desire of the central authority to maintain its legitimacy. Yongshun Cai has argued that the interest in retaining the regime's legitimacy has led to differentiation in the behavior of the central government and local governments. Cai states, "Legitimacy is about the political system's worthiness to be recognized. Given that the central government is mostly responsible for the operation of the political system or it largely represents the regime, it has a greater interest in protecting the regime's legitimacy. In contrast, local officials in China are more concerned with policy implementation and task fulfillment (e.g., maintaining social stability) and local issues; legitimacy is not their main concern" (2010: 5-6).

Based on field research, this study found that the organizers of these three advocacy groups also, as Cai's statement indicates, were able to identify the local public policy concerns of local governments. And the organizers were successful in building their relationships with local governments by providing suggestions and practical models for solving local needs. These connections with local governments help activists to advance their own leverage when dealing with the central government.

Because establishing a working relationship with local governments not only helps social groups to expand the governmental boundaries for social organizing, but also provides opportunities for social groups to demonstrate their capabilities in public policy, this strategy has become one of the major approaches taken by social groups to enable them to survive and promote their own advocacy work. This strategy will be further examined in the following chapters.

Therefore, my field research and interview data show that local governments seldom

intervene in the daily operations of these three advocacy groups since the organizers are viewed as helpers for designing and implementing local public policies. There were some incidents where local police officers paid visits to the organizers' relatives, but for the most part, these visits were paid as responses to concerns from the central authorities.

In other words, my research agrees with Teresa Wright's argument that single-party domination plays the most significant role in shifting the decisions of activists. Furthermore, my research also shares the observations of social movement theorists (Tarrow 1998, Goldstone and Tilly 2001, Meyer 2004) that the outcomes of social movements are the results of calculations from both the state and the organizers.

The Definition of "the Central Government" in this Research

The Chinese polity has been ruled through a dual party-state system, and the leadership of the Communist Party of China is written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Since there are dozens of state agencies in the Central People's Government and party mechanisms of the Communist Party of China, the term "central government" needs to be clarified.

For most of my discussion, the identification of which governance mechanism is being analyzed will be made. But for some specific discussions about multiple forces which all play a role, the term "central government" will indicate both state mechanisms and party institutions. To be more specific, these governmental mechanisms include, on the one hand, the National Security Department, the Police Department, and the Bureau of Civil Affairs of State Mechanisms, and on the other hand, there are the All China Women's Federation, and the Central Political and Legislative Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Why Analyze These Three Women's Groups

There are two major reasons why my study has chosen to analyze the Maple Women's Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language. First of all, these three groups share some similarities. They are viewed as the first-established and leading groups of shared-goal organizations.

The second similarity is that these three groups' activists both negotiate their advocacy space with the central government and collaborate with local governments to carry out their

organizational missions.

Third and most significant, the founders and organizers have all experienced severe challenges from both the state and the society, and yet they have chosen to stay in the movement and find a way to continue their work. In other words, their double marginalized status makes these gender groups different from other social groups, which provides additional insight into expanding the meaning of "confrontational" in social movement theories, both culturally and politically.

The second reason that I choose to study these three groups' interactions with the state is because, compared to other social groups, the interactions between women's advocacy groups and the state present the most contradictory picture. On the one hand, these women's advocacy groups successfully submitted the "Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Law", which marked a milestone in the state-social group relations. Both the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center were leading organizations in preparing this 2003 legal proposition, and they were later joined by Common Language in 2006.

On the other hand, these three groups have continued to suffer repressive interference, including the abolition of their registration status by the state, questioning by the police department, and having their activities cancelled by the police department. In addition, all three have faced funding issues. In China, raising public funds for self-organizing groups is forbidden, and only GONGOs can seek subsidies from the state.

These conflict-laden interactions between the women's advocacy groups and the state have helped me to observe the adaptive characteristic of both sides. And my research has found that only by understanding the adaptive characteristics of the state, can we possibly predict possible political changes in the future.

There is some research that argues that the success of women's advocacy groups in the campaign against domestic violence occurred because of the non-confrontational nature of the issue of domestic violence. In other words, some scholars argue that, compared to other social movements, the campaign against domestic violence was able to make some progress because this campaign did not challenge the regime.

To the contrary, my study found that women's advocacy groups in the campaign against domestic violence not only questioned the state's responsibility in dealing with domestic violence, but also challenged the patriarchal ideology that has penetrated people's daily lives for

9

thousands of years. Furthermore, my research has also argued that organizers choose non-confrontational-on-the-surface strategies purposely in order to achieve the goals of this movement.

Here is a brief description of three women's advocacy groups. The Maple Center was established by Wang Xinjuan and other founders in 1988. Its mission is to provide psychological counseling and social services to women, children and families in both urban and rural areas. In addition, the organizers carry out gender-centered research and policy advocating work. The Maple Center was the first grass-root women's group established in China and the former U.S. first lady, Hillary Clinton, asked to visit its center during her presence at the Fourth Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995.

After Hillary Clinton failed in her attempt, the Chinese government abolished the group's registration status and also put pressure on the landlord not to continue renting the group office space. The Maple Center survived these difficulties and as of today, it has trained more than 300 volunteers. More than 200 of these volunteers answer its women's hotline, a hotline that provides services for women throughout China.

The founder Wang Xinjuan, white haired, is a vibrant woman at her 80s. Based on my interviews with activists, most organizers join the Maple Center because they admire Wang Xinjuan's efforts. Since one of main tasks of the Maple Center is to provide psychological counseling, most of the organizers are middle-aged and spoke softly with a smile during our conversations, even when they shared their experiences of repression.

The Peking Women's Center was established by Guo Jianmei and other founders in 1995 and has volunteer lawyers fighting for disadvantaged women. The Peking Women's Law Center has three major tasks, namely, providing legal aid, protecting women's rights, and promoting gender equality. It is the first public interest organization in China that specializes in providing legal aid for women, and has represented thousands of cases in 26 provinces, and several of these cases were against the state.

As with the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center has faced pressure from the government. Its affiliation with Beijing University was ended in March 2010. This was the second time that Guo Jianmei and her team lost their organizational registration status because of interference from the central authorities.

Most of the activists of the Peking Women's Law Center are lawyers. During our

interviews, they always talked fast with a firm tone. One shared concern of these lawyers is how to reform the governmental mechanism, especially the legal system. Even when they shared their experiences of repression or their personal motivation to become public lawyers, they emphasized their urge to reform governmental institutions .

The last of my case studies, Common Language (CL), which was established by Xu Bin in 2005, is a young lesbian group, and public activities of lesbian groups are forbidden by the Chinese government. Common Language is China's leading LGBT rights organization. Based on its website's statement, "Through community mobilization, public education and legal advocacy, Common Language is dedicated to raising public awareness of the issues of gender and sexual diversity, combating violence and discrimination against LGBT persons, and advocating for equal rights" (*Tongyulala*).

As a lesbian group in Beijing, Common Language has encountered double marginalization status since its establishment. The stigma of homosexuality is still pervasive in the society. Many people in China still connect homosexuality with AIDS. Furthermore, institutional repression has reinforced the stigma of homosexuality.

Most activists in Common Language are in their early 20s. During our interviews, I could strongly feel their enthusiasm for the lesbian movement, even though they did not learn about the idea of a social movement before joining Common Language. Since most of them are students, they use their leisure time to work for and to participate in Common Language's *activities*. Unlike the older lesbian generation, most of them have come out of the closet, and have felt that they should the same civil rights as heterosexual people.

In conclusion, these three women's advocacy groups share the following four similarities: doing nationwide advocacy work; facing repressive interference, enjoying international reputations, and being leaders within similar goal groups.

A comparison of the groups' strategies to prevent domestic violence has been chosen for two reasons. First, the problem of domestic violence is severe and the efforts of women's groups have made significant progress in bringing awareness of the issue to the state. Second, each of my case studies has chosen a different approach, namely, social service, awareness-awakening work, and alignment, in their campaigns against domestic violence.

In fact, since the Chinese government hosted the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, as well as the accompanying Non-governmental Organization Forum in 1995

(hereafter the 1995 UN women's conference), the campaign against domestic violence has made significant progress.

Even though there is an impression that leaders of the Communist Party of China, as Marxists, should pay a lot of attention to issues of gender equality, paternalism still penetrates people's daily lives. And most people regard domestic violence as dirty laundry (a private family matter) and won't discuss it.

My field research has found that there were only a few organizers who had heard the term "domestic violence" before the hosting of the 1995 UN women's conference. People used to call this kind of incident, "husband and wife bit each other" in China.

As Wang Xingjuan recalled during our interview, a representative from the All China Women's Federation (hereafter ACWF), which is a mass organization representing all women in China, lashed out at Wang Xingjuan for hosting a NGO forum to discuss domestic violence issues. These delegates argued that incidents of domestic violence did not exist in China.

Women's groups were awakened to the seriousness of the issue of domestic violence during the Fourth Women's Conference. (Zhang, 2009) Since then, women's groups have made significant progress in forcing the state to recognize the issue of domestic violence. In April 2009, the ACWF released a survey showing that 30 percent of the 27 billion families in China suffer from domestic violence. This is one piece of evidence that demonstrates the rising attention of the Party towards domestic violence issues.

Before awakening the Party's attention to this issue, the central government had only once paid attention to this issue. During the process of the revision of marriage law, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress announced on April, 28, 2001 that domestic violence is prohibited and that the victims of domestic violence will be granted a divorce. However, there was no punishment for violation of this rule.

Another sign of progress was the above-mentioned success of women's groups in submitting a national legal proposition to the NPC. This represented a new relationship between the state and social groups. Since 2012, the NPC has had on its working agenda the design of a law to prevent incidents of domestic violence. Moreover, there are more than ninety provinces and cities that have passed their own laws to prevent domestic violence incidents (*ACWF's Website*).

Recognition by both the central and local governments marks the achievement of the

campaign against domestic violence in expanding the political space of women's groups, both culturally and institutionally. My research will further analyze the strategies used to break down the public/private division, as well as the provision of institutionalized social services that were traditionally viewed as family matters in China.

The Causal Mechanism of Expanding Political Space

The main argument of this research is that by a calculated choosing of their strategies when facing repressive interference from the central government, the three women's advocacy groups in Beijing have not only found a way to survive, but have also further expanded their political space for social organizing. My research describes the results of the strategies of the organizers in expanding their boundaries vis-a-vis the central government as the process of interactive political liberalization.

Based on field research and interviews, my study has concluded that there are four driving forces in shifting these boundaries, namely, the central government's need to ensure the regime's legitimacy; the NGOs' cooperative relationships with local governments; the NGOs' relationships with international organizations and actors, and the NGOs' funding from international donors.

Moreover, there are two major considerations organizers face when picking the strategies available to them. The first one is the organizers' anticipation of government response. The organizers learn from both the experiences of other women's advocacy groups and from the organizers' personal encounters with the governance system.

The second consideration, which is also one of the major focuses of my research, is the developmental stage of the different organizations. My study evaluates organizational development stages from two dimensions, namely, the degree of empowerment and the degree of autonomy.

In this research, the degree of empowerment is evaluated by the organizational ability to participate in the policy-making process. This dimension can include the following perspectives: establishing a professional reputation, gaining more popular support, generating attention from the media, and making connections with other social groups and funders nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, this research project applies Howell's definition of autonomous to define the

degree of autonomy. According to Howell, an organization is autonomous if it meets the following conditions: first, it is able to set its own goals, determine its own priorities, and decide its own structures and principles of organization; second, it is able to appoint its own personnel and recruit its own members; third, it relies primarily on its own source of funding. (Jude Howell, 2000. p. 127)

In addition to considering the anticipation of government reaction as well as the organizational development stage, my study also identifies five major actors who have influence on both how many strategies are available and on which strategy is chosen. These five actors are the activists, the central government, the local government, the media, and the international community.

Based on field research and an evaluation of all the above-mentioned factors, my study has concluded that there exist two causal mechanisms to describe the organizers' efforts in expanding political space. The following is a description of the first mechanism. When an organization encounters repressive interference, the first step the organizer will choose is a way to survive.

At this stage, the founders and the organizers will use all the connections they have, including connections with the central government, the local governments, the media, and the international community. After saving the daily operations, the founders and organizers will work on its capacity-building.

In this research, capability-building is defined to include gaining more popular support, raising more funds, increasing recruitment, generating attention from the media, and making connections with other social groups and funders nationally and internationally. At this stage, the above-mentioned four actors also play important roles.

For the three organizations that I have studied, after building their organizational capabilities, the founders and organizers further work on their organizational degree of autonomy in advocacy work. Conducting conferences, holding press conferences, speaking out in the media, running public events and public educational programs are some of the various strategies used to promote their advocacy work.

It is also at this stage when the founders and organizers put effort into their advocacy work that they will again encounter repressive interference from the governance system. Since the organizers have developed manifold strategies to deal with interference, they will sometimes

successfully carry out their advocacy projects, but sometimes, they will fail in their efforts and have to cancel their original plans. And so, a new cycle of interactive struggle will begin. This causal mechanism is diagramed as below.

Figure 1.1. **The Causal Mechanism of Activists' Reaction after Facing Interference**
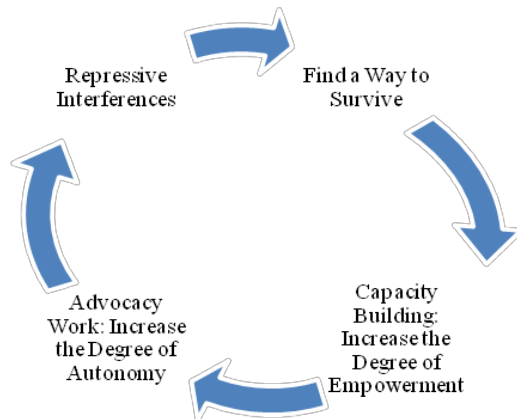
While the first causal mechanism tells us the reactions of the organizers and the central government toward the other side's actions, the second causal mechanism emphasizes how the development strategies of different organizers can result in the choice of different strategies. Here is the description of the second causal mechanism.

First of all, my research has found that even though the three organizations that I have studied are at different developmental stages, there exists a similarity between the organizers' responses toward repressive interference. These similarities are results of two factors. The first factor is that there may only be one specific reaction that may be available for the organizers to choose. For example, when policemen show up at an organizational public event and refuse further communication, the organizers can only choose to end the event.

The second factor is that the organizers learn from their own past encounters with the central government or from other organizers' experiences, and know that one specific strategy will be the best choice to help carry out their mission.

However, my research has found that there exist differences among the similarities. That is, facing similar interference, the organizers will make a choice between increasing the organization's degree of autonomy and increasing the organization's degree of empowerment. This research has concluded that in order to increase the organization's degree of empowerment, the organizers will choose a more cooperative strategy, while, when organizers emphasize their

organization's degree of autonomy, they will pick a more confrontational strategy.

In other words, the main consideration of the organizers for each chosen strategy is to sustain their own organizations and to further carry on their advocacy work. Confrontational or cooperative strategies are evaluated according to the best interests of their organizations. The organizers are not afraid to challenge the central government, but they will act only if they can ensure the survival of their organizations. I will argue that the attitude of the organizers redefines the definition of "confrontational" in evaluating the existence of a social movement.

Furthermore, based on historical analyses, my study is able to find a causal relationship between political opportunity or constraint and each chosen strategy. However, one point worth noting is that any event can create both political opportunity and constraint at the same time. The result depends on the strategies of social groups in utilizing those events. This causal mechanism is diagramed below.

Figure 1.2. **Activists' Consideration in Choosing between Cooperative and Confrontational Strategies**
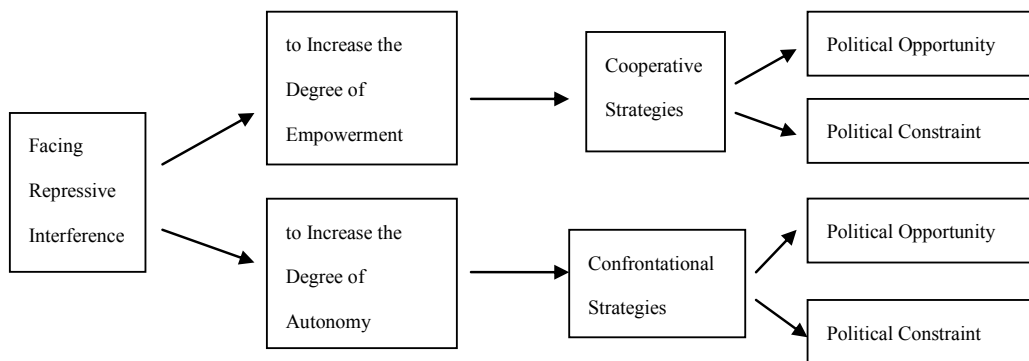
It is worth noting is that each struggle and challenge can result in the dissolution of the organization. This is the main reason why my research has argued that the dynamical strategies of organizers have redefined the word "confrontational" when we try to evaluate a social movement under a repressive regime.

My research has also found that these three women's advocacy groups will push f their advocacy strategies to increase their organizational degree of autonomy after they have ensured their organization's survival. In other words, the founders and organizers have carried out a consistent confrontational movement.

Noteworthy is the counterpart of this process of interactive political liberalization, namely, the central government. My research found that even though the central government does not trust advocacy groups and has made every effort to force these groups out of existence, there is one characteristic of the central government that works to the advantage of the process of interactive political liberalization.

This characteristic is the adaptive nature of the central government. My research has concluded that the sustainability of each organization demonstrates both the success of the organizers' chosen strategies and the adaptive attitude of the central government. Indeed, the adaptive characteristic of the central government has had an impact on both results.

On the one hand, this adaptive characteristic makes the central government easily adjust their repressive interference. My research has confirmed that officials of the central government will learn from their encounters with these advocacy groups and will then develop new strategies aimed at causing these groups to disband by themselves.

Citing funding issue as an example, the governmental regulation only allows registered NGOs to seek public donations. Therefore, most advocacy groups that fail to register rely on international funding. However, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) promulgated the Circular of the SAFE on Relevant Issues Concerning the Administration of Donations in Foreign Exchange by Domestic Institutions on Dec. 30, 2009. This new act allows the central government to monitor every instance of international funding, which will be explained more on Chapter 3.

On the other hand, this learning process also enhances the understanding of some officials about social groups, and most significantly, the central government has learned to identify and differentiate between different goal-oriented groups. Social groups are categorized by their functions and their goals.

My research has observed the gradual increase of NGO-friendly bureaucrats within the government. I interviewed several of them. The shared experience of these officials in building partnerships with women's advocacy groups is that they first participated in training programs that were hosted by women's advocacy groups. Then these officers worked with women's advocacy groups through some projects and became more sympathy regarding the struggles of women's advocacy groups. This increased interaction has helped the organizers of women's advocacy groups to have more alternative strategies to consider using in their relationship with

the central government.

In addition, the attempts of the central government to categorize groups provide another advantage for women's advocacy groups. That is, providing public goods and social services has allowed women's advocacy groups to establish relationships with the state and the society. This strategy will be further examined in the following chapters.

A final observation is that the similarity of chosen strategies indicates that the boundary of the central government has become clearer, and therefore the possibility of extending this boundary has also become clearer. My research will further explain this process of interactive political liberation by comparing the different strategies employed by these three women's groups in both their interaction with the state and in their campaigns against domestic violence.

The Study

The empirical context of this study is women's advocacy groups in Beijing. To give a foundation for our inquiry, the study opens with a general introduction of the relationship between the central government and social groups within the context of the dramatic social changes brought about by the economic opening in 1978.

We observed a wave of emergence of social groups in the 1980s. Compared to other social groups, the uniqueness of women's groups was that most non-governmental women's organizing was in the form of women's study centers at colleges. The only grass-root women's group that was established in 1988 was the Maple Center.

Hence, most participants in women's organizing during that period of time were middle class scholars at the universities. It was only after China's hosting of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women that we witnessed a new wave of women's grass-root organizing. It was also this world conference that introduced the Western term "Non-governmental Organization" (NGO) to the women organizers.

Another significant difference between women's advocacy groups and other social groups is the progress organizers have made in the social policy field. After many years of effort, women's groups have been included in the policy-making process, even though repressive interference has continued. Explaining the dynamic interactions between women's advocacy groups in Beijing and the central government is the focus of this dissertation's remaining chapters.

I have collected data during a series of field trips I took to China from 2008 to 2013, as well as from my observations as a participant and coordinator of The Cross-Straits Network to Prevent Domestic Violence. This network was initiated by me when I was the organizer at the Garden of Hope Foundation, Taiwan, and was joined by the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, The Network of Anti-Domestic Violence in China, and other three organizations in Hong Kong.

I interviewed 43 major participants of women's and lesbian organizing, including founders, activists, academic experts, governmental officers, and ministerial officers of ACWF and local women's federations. Along with archive analysis, and my participatory observations during seven conferences in Beijing, Taipei, New York and Manchester from 2008 to 2013, my study looks specifically at the campaign against domestic violence from 1988 to 2013.

This research has conducted process-tracing analyses from 1988 to 2012 for two reasons. First, the Chinese regime began its economic liberalization in 1978, and since then, economic growth has brought the Western idea of civil society to China. Second, the first women's grass-root organization, one of my case studies, the Maple Center, was established in 1988. This research has also documented the process of social liberalization during this period of time.

The initial purpose of this study was to understand the role of women's groups in shifting the dynamic political space when negotiating with the central government. In addition to providing the reality of ground observations and aiming to redefine several evaluations of social movements in China, my research also argues that the mobilization of advocacy groups should be considered when discussing possible political changes in China.

As Florini, Lai and Tan point out, "such societal organizing is key to understanding China's political future. How it develops will help to determine whether China develops the building blocks that could make a meaningful democracy function well" (2012: 89). Furthermore, a comparison between how women's advocacy groups and other social groups each interact with the central government provides unique information for scholars who want to understand the possible political future of China.

According to Margaret Woo, "women arguably make up the subgroup of the Chinese population with the most ambiguous relationship to the Chinese state" (2002: 309). My research has a similar observation regarding the relationship between women's advocacy groups and the central government. This is one of the main inquiries of this study.

My research applies the process-tracing method to find the causal mechanisms behind the process of interactive political liberalization. The process-tracing method is an interactive process and assumes that each factor plays a particular role in the causal relationship. This approach helps to identify (1) the sequence of events and (2) perceptions of key actors in supporting or invalidating my causal assertions.

Here is one example of how I conducted the process-tracing method to find out the causal mechanism of the organizers' chosen strategies. One of the common struggles of the three organizations that I studied was their inability to attain official registration status. This was one strict boundary that the government established in order to control the autonomy of social groups. However, social groups have developed various ways of obtaining formal status, for example, registering as a people's-run-non-enterprise unit[2].

According to the Article 2 of the Provisional Regulations for the Registration Administration of People-Run non-Enterprise Units,
"The people-run non-enterprise units referred to in these Regulations mean enterprise institutions, societies and other social forces as well as social organizations established with non-state-owned assets by individual citizens for non-profit social services."

This regulation was announced on October 25, 1998 by the State Council. 1998 was also the year when the central government employed the "dual registration system" in a much stricter revision of the "Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organizations." In chapter three, I will explain in detail the significant decrease of the number of registered social groups after the implementation of this regulation.

All three organizations that I studied are registered as people's-run-non-enterprise units (hereafter private units). This makes me wonder why organizers have made this decision. After conducting the process-tracing method, my research concluded that the main reason is that this was the only choice available for maintaining the credibility of a social group when encountering repressive interference.

Citing the experience of the Maple Center as an example, as the first women's grass-root NGO in China, it struggled for a long time before other women's NGOs were established. As a result, the founder of the Maple Center, Wang Xingjuan, learned to pull many strings to help her organization survive.

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[2] This term is translated by the Chinese government and refers to the private unit.

The Maple Center was named the Women's Research Institute when it was established in 1988 under the sponsorship of the China Academy of Management Science. It experienced the loss of its registration status in 1996 when the sponsorship was unexpectedly ended. This loss was abrupt since the Women's Research Institute had maintained a good relationship with the central government.

Before the establishment of the Women's Research Institute, Wang Xingjuan was the chief editor of Beijing Publisher Inc. She observed the emergence of the marginalization of women caused by the policy of economic opening, and decided to form a social group in order to discover solutions to this nuanced social issue.

In other words, the mission of the Women's Research Institute was not to challenge the state, but to provide supportive functions for the central government. In addition to its benign task, the Women's Research Institute also enjoyed the connections of Wang Xingjuan within both the central government and the Party.

However, it was also these two advantages that led to the loss of its registration status. Because of the good connection with the governments, the Maple Center was able to register as an NGO and won the reputation as the first women's grass-root organization in China. This reputation attracted the attention of the U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton. Since the Women's Research Institute won its reputation, Hillary Clinton asked to pay a visit to it during her participation in the UN Fourth World Conference on Women.

In chapter three, I have documented more details about the negotiations with the state regarding this attempted visit. In the end, Hillary Clinton was not able to pay this visit, and the Women's Research Institute lost its organizational sponsorship with the Academy of Management Science. Then came Wang Xingjuan's long fight to regain the organization's registration.

Here is a brief description of the organizers' struggle. The organization was not allowed to register in Beijing. Wang Xingjuan decided to go to a village that is outside of Beijing to register. Moreover, Wang Xingjuan was afraid that the local government would recognize her, so she asked her father to register for her. However, all these struggles failed, and the only choice left was to register as a private unit.

This story was one example of the use of my process-tracing method. The significance of this study is that it includes an in-depth longitudinal observation of the women's movement in

Beijing. I have obscured the identities of my interviewees; no real names have been used, except for the three founders of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and the Common Language. The founders asked to be identified by their real names.

The theoretical arguments developed in this dissertation are not intended to account for all activist groups in China, but to draw attention to the interactions between women's advocacy groups in Beijing and the central government, and the dynamic reality of political boundaries in ways that improve our understanding of adaptive strategies of both women's advocacy groups and the central government.

My research argues that women's and lesbian groups are one of the major forces in the process of liberalization of political space, since signal events may result in both political opportunity and constraints for self-organizing groups. As an example, the hosting of the 1995 UN women's conference has created, on the one hand, political opportunity for women to organize. For example, Guo Jianmei stated that her founding of the Peking Women's Law Center was inspired by this conference. On the other hand, hosting the conference also resulted in political threats for already established organizations. The patronized registration status of the Maple Center was revoked in 1996, after the attempted visit of Hillary Clinton during this conference.

In conclusion, the survival and the political space for advocacy work depend on the chosen strategy of women's and lesbian groups when facing interference from the central authorities. Based on the experiences of women's and lesbian groups in authoritarian China, this research will prove the necessity of revising the traditional definition of a social movement, which has long argued for the importance of confrontational performance.

My study argues that the efforts of women's advocacy groups to survive and carry on their advocacy work should be viewed as a confrontation movement in the context of a repressive regime. To be clear, the definition of a confrontational movement I discuss here is different from the one in the social movement school. According to the school of social movement, one of the major characteristics of a confrontation movement is contentious action. However, my study suggests that we must take the regime type into consideration and argues that women's advocacy groups in China have created different kind of contentious movement that I call "soft confrontation."

When political space does not exist before social organizing, women's advocacy groups

have had to first deal with the issue of their survival. And with great determination, the founders and organizers of women's advocacy groups have developed various strategies to expand their own political space. Along with the adaptive authoritarian regime, we can observe the process of interactive political liberalization. In the following chapters, we see the vivid strategies of the women's advocacy groups in Beijing in redefining our understanding of the word "confrontational" in social movement theories.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is arranged topically following the idea of interactive political liberalization. By analyzing the activists' negotiations with the state, Chapter 1 explains the necessity to redefine the confrontational characteristic of a social movement in a repressive regime, which should be defined by the survival strategies of women's activists. Most importantly, the adaptive characteristic of the authoritarian regime presents equal weight as the activists' strategies in the process of interactive political liberalization.

The two causal mechanisms of the process of interactive political liberalization are presented in Chapter 1, and are discussed in the previous sections. These two causal mechanisms focus on the actions of women's advocacy groups when facing repressive interference from the government. Along with these two causal mechanisms, and governments' evolving strategies construct the process of the interactive political liberalization.

Chapter 2 situates my study with one major theoretical school, namely, the discussions of changing state-societal relationships, especially in authoritarian regimes. The following three related theoretical frameworks are applied to analyze the confrontational movement of women's advocacy groups: institutionalization versus political efficacy in explaining women's groups' participation in the public policy area; a study of the relationship between the state, the political party and social groups in China; and a study of redefining the concept of the public sphere.

Chapter 3 chronologically documents the interactions of three women's advocacy groups with the state, and further encapsulates the four driving factors in shifting the state's boundaries in order to buttress this study's major argument, that the term state corporatism is insufficient in explaining the state-social group relationship in China. These four levers in shifting the state's boundaries are the central government's need to ensure the regime's legitimacy; the NGOs' cooperative relationships with local governments; the NGOs' relationships with international

organizations and actors; and the NGOs' funding from international donors.

Chapter 4 studies the four major struggles of women's advocacy groups, namely, failure to gain registration status, difficulties in building a relationship with the government; encountering political forces that marginalize self-mobilized groups, and facing the prohibition against confrontational movements. For each struggle, women's activists have developed three to four strategies to maintain their organizational survival and to further expand their organizational political space. My study argues that these movements redefine the characteristics of confrontation.

My study has observed that the ability of activists to apply the " kill two birds with one stone" tactic to initiate the process of interactive political liberalization. Chapter 4 presents the major achievement of the activists' confrontational movement, that, activists have successfully raised both issues and the organizations' visibility to the public. This achievement is significant considering the marginalized status of women's advocacy groups and gender issues in the whole society.

Chapter 5 compares the strategies of the three women's advocacy groups that I studied in the campaign against domestic violence. It reveals the causal mechanism of the consideration of issues of women's activists when deciding their strategies in negotiating political space with the state. Activists will choose a more cooperative strategy if the organization's priority is to increase the degree of its autonomy, but will choose a confrontational strategy if the organization's aim is to increase the degree of its empowerment.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the campaign against domestic violence has successfully altered societal and governmental perspectives regarding domestic violence issues. Women's activists have witnessed changes in the legal system and in local governments. Furthermore, women's advocacy groups have been included in the public policy making process, a precedent experience for most women's activists.

The conclusion summarizes the major findings of my study and presents a two by two matrix to explain the idea of interactive political liberalization. Chapter 6 points out that both women's advocacy groups and the government learn from each interaction with each other. In other words, my field trip has observed several governmental officials have grown more understanding toward women's advocacy groups, while at the same time, some governmental officials have developed new administrative tactics to govern NGOs. This chapter also discusses

the future challenges of women's advocacy groups and the emergence of a new generation of women's activists.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Why have women's advocacy groups successfully expanded their organizational political space? How does this expansion by women activists shape the state-social group relationship? Will the changes in the state-social group dynamic have an impact on future political changes in China?

Existing theories provide insightful perspectives in answering these questions. Many studies look at the adaptive attitude of the central government in dealing with societal discontent, and conclude that the term "state corporatism" is the most appropriate term to describe this state-social group relationship. Others have argued that activists' framing strategy has played the key role in confronting the central government.

Based on my studies of three women's advocacy groups, namely, the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center (the Maple Center); the Peking University Women's Law Studies & Legal Aid Center (the Peking Women's Law Center), and Common Language, a lesbian/gay rights advocacy group, I argue that although current scholarship has touched upon several important aspects in explaining the dynamics between the state and social groups, the strategies of women's advocacy groups have not been subjected to theoretical examination.

Furthermore, my research has found that, when analyzing social movements, the word "confrontational" needs to be redefined in the context of a repressive regime, and that the idea of "interactive political liberalization" is a more accurate description of the relationship between women's advocacy groups and the state.

My research follows the thoughts of one major theoretical school, which is the discussions of changing state-societal relationships, especially in authoritarian regimes. In the following sections, I will present three related theoretical frameworks: institutionalization versus political efficacy in explaining women's groups' participation in the public policy area; a study of the relationship between the state, the political party and social groups in China; and a study of redefining the concept of the public sphere.

My theoretical focus is based on three major findings in my field research. First, the vivid strategies of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have sustainably expanded the political space for social organizing, and this has presented us with a new understanding of the changing state-social group relationship.

This new understanding moves beyond the idea of the "state corporatist" model, which has

been the common term used by most scholars when analyzing state-social group relations in China. In other words, the trial and error strategies of these three women's groups have not only sustained the survival of each organization, but have also challenged the assumed dominant role of the state when evaluating the state-societal relationships in an authoritarian regime.

Second, the interactions between these three women's groups and the different central authority mechanisms have aroused my curiosity regarding the process before the emergence of social movements. Because, although in most social movement discussions, the existence of political space for social organizing is assumed, this situation cannot be assumed in state-societal relations in China.

The experiences of women's groups in China demonstrate the need to revisit this assumption, since most of the women's activists in China have put most of their efforts into creating organizational political space. Furthermore, social movement theorists need to move beyond looking at contentious collective actions when analyzing the forms and contents of social movements in China.

My analyses show that the daily struggle of activists demonstrates a different kind of confrontational characteristics as a way to present contentious actions in a repressive regime. Furthermore, every strategic movement of the activists is preparation for future confrontation. According to McAdam, "a movement represents a continuous *process* from generation to decline, rather than a discrete series of developmental stages" (1999: 36).

Based on interviews and field observations, this research concludes that without confronting the constraints of social organizing, there is no way against the possibility of the destruction of advocacy groups. In other words, an examination of the continuing struggle of the three organizations that I have studied has proved that social groups face an endless process of establishing and maintaining political space for their advocacy work.

In addition, by raising awareness about domestic violence issues, these three women's groups have also demonstrated the efforts of women activists to redefine the idea of public issues, and thus, present another angle to the discussion of the public sphere. This discussion of expanding the public sphere will be the third theoretical focus.

2. Theoretical Framework and Substantive Focus

This research project will conduct its analyses on the basis of four theoretical frameworks:

an analysis of possible political change in China; a discussion regarding the political process before the emergence of a social movement within an authoritarian regime; a study of the relationship between the state, the political party and social groups in China; and a discussion of the public sphere.

2.1. Analyses of Possible Political Changes from the Perspective of the State-Society Relationship in China

Since the launching of economic reform in 1978, there has been a lot of debate about possible scenarios of political transformation in China. Andrew Nathan argues that the Chinese system has "authoritarian resilience." Minxin Pei believes the gradual approach that the Chinese leaders have taken has caused a "trapped transition" for China. Zakaria (2003) brings up the idea about China being a liberal authoritarian regime. Jiang Zemin's report at the 16th Party Congress called China a "socialist democracy," and a "people's democratic dictatorship."[3] In addition, there are some discussions that point out that the Chinese regime will collapse eventually (See for example, Gordon Chang, 2001).

This research does not aim at reaching a conclusion or predicting the most likely scenario of the political transformation in China. Rather, one of its two main purposes is to examine changes in state-social group relations. This attempt is based on the point that Charles Tilly makes that both democratization and de-democratization consist of changes in the relationships between states and citizens (2007, p.12). Therefore, this research aims at understanding the changing dynamics of the state-social group relationship in China.

There are two reasons behind this attempt. First, China presents a unique case in discussions of changing state-societal relationships. First of all, the governance system in China is composed of the Communist Party of China, the Central People's Government, and their counterparts in local governance systems. China is a single-party authoritarian regime, and its governance system is a dual system of party-state. Moreover, as one can see from the rankings of the Politburo and the wording of the Constitution, the party is leading the state.

As a result, when analyzing relationships between the state and the society, the dual governance system in China necessitates a much more complicated examination. For instance,

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[3] Jiang Zemin's Report at the 16th Party Congress, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200211/18/eng20021118_106983.shtml, accessed on Sep.25, 2012.

based on field observations, this research has found that sometimes local governments have become the leverage for social groups when in encounter challenges from the central authority agencies. In other words, several local governments have cooperated with women's advocacy groups to implement the designated program of activists for social justice.

Most importantly, my analysis has found the adaptive characteristic of the current regime, which significantly affects state-social group relations. Citing the campaign against domestic violence as an example, even though the central government suspects that several women's groups in this campaign have their own political agenda, the central government still chooses to include these groups in discussing domestic violence policies.

The second reason for this attempt is to provide another perspective on the recent views of state-social group relations in China. Many research projects have concluded that the post-Mao reforms have had a profound impact on state-society relations (see for example, Solinger 1992; White 1996). However, most studies agree with the conclusion that the central authorities in China have maintained a "state corporatist" model in dealing with social groups. Citing one example, Florini, Lai and Tan argue that the state corporatist model is a model "in which the state allows hierarchically ordered and controlled associations to play limited roles as a way to reconciling large number of divergent interests" (2012: p.95).

However, based on the interviews and field observations, this research has found this argument to be insufficient. Instead, the strategic responses of women's activists against governmental constraints have revealed an unprecedentedly dynamic relationship between the state and social groups.

In the following section, I will first briefly present the definition of an authoritarian regime, which will be followed a short discussion of regime's adaptive characteristics by analyzing its openness in the public policy field.

2.1.1. The Definition of an Authoritarian Regime

The term authoritarian was viewed as too widely applied, making it too difficult to develop a theory of authoritarianism. Juan Linz (1970) made the first effort toward defining authoritarian, and developed four key elements:

1. Presence of "limited, not responsible, political pluralism." (p.255-256) For Linz, this limited political pluralism is the most distinctive feature of authoritarianism.

2. Absence of "elaborate and guiding ideology" and instead "distinctive mentalities." (p. 255-258)
3. Absence of intensive "political mobilization throughout most of a regime's history." (p. 259)
4. A "leader (or occasionally a small group) exercise power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones" (p.255)

O'Donnell's 1973 classic work, *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*, used Linz's definition of authoritarianism. O'Donnell distinguished three types of authoritarian regimes, namely, the traditional, the populist and the bureaucratic. Differing from Linz, O'Donnell's typology was linked to levels of modernization rather than mobilization. Current research tends to distinguish authoritarian regimes by the locus of "despotic power" (Mann 1988). This generally leads to coding authoritarian governments into three types: personal, single party, and military (Geddes 1999a; Huntington 1991; Peceny et al. 2002).

Applying the same "decisive political power" focus, and combining indicators of Banks (2002), Freedom House, and Polity IV, Hadenius and Teorell present 14 types of authoritarian regimes: multiparty traditional, partyless, dominant party, military multiparty, military traditional, rebel regime, military no-party, no-party traditional, military one-party, one-party traditional, one-party monarchy, traditional monarchy, no-party monarchy, and multiparty monarchy. According to the typology of Hadenius and Teorell, China is a one-party traditional authoritarian regime.

2.1.2. The Openness in the Public Policy Area: Institutionalization or Political Efficacy?

In the discussions of democratization, China represents a unique case. With the largest population in the world and its enormous economic growth, many political theorists have tried to analyze the Chinese government's strategy for maintaining social stability. Of all these attempts, my research pays special attention to the dynamics of the state-social group relationship.

Even though my major discussions focus on the strategies of women's activists , my analyses have also found the crucial role played by the state, especially the adaptive characteristic of the current regime in shaping state-social group relations. My examination has observed that the regime's adaptive characteristic has shaped the forms of contention.

One major hypothesis of my analyses is that state's desire to maintain its regime legitimacy has been leverage for women's advocacy groups in expanding organizational political space. Currently, the increased participation of NGOs in the public policy area has been observed.

In fact, openness in the public policy area has not only been for women's advocacy groups. As Andrew Mertha (2009) observes "the increasing pluralization of the policy-making process in authoritarian China… That is, otherwise marginalized officials, non-governmental organizations and activists of all stripes have managed to wriggle their way into the policy-making process and even help shape policy outcome."

The next important question is how these social groups have been able to get involved in the public policy making process. My analyses have reached a similar observation as Andrew Mertha's statement that "previously-excluded members of the policy-making process in China…have successfully entered the political process precisely by adopting strategies necessary to work within the structural and procedural constraints of the fragmented authoritarianism framework." (p.996)

The openness and inclusion of women's advocacy groups in the public policy area has led to my next question: does the success of women's activists demonstrate the institutionalization of political inclusion in the public policy area, or is the success the result of the state's political efficacy?

Some women's activists have pointed out that including NGOs into the policy- making process is a strategy of the Chinese regime to construct a sense of political efficacy for maintaining its legitimacy. In The Voter Decides, Campbell, Gurin, and Miller (1954) described the concept of political efficacy as "the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change." (p.187) My interviews with some women's activists indicate their suspicion that the openness in the public policy field is part of the state's governance strategy to dissolve societal discontent.

However, other women's activists believe that inclusion in the public policy field is the beginning of the institutionalization of activists' demands for participating in the policy-making process. In other words, China has begun its process of political modernization.

Indeed, from the perspective of the institutionalization theory, providing channels for NGOs to be involved in the policy-making process is a strategic approach of the Chinese government to answer the discontent of people that has resulted from the policies of economic openness. The

institutionalization thesis points out that social mobilization and economic development lead to political instability; therefore, economic modernization requires the state to relax its grip over society and to devise mechanisms to incorporate the views of various groups.

Huntington (1968) studied the role of institutions in modernization and stated that political stability in the face of political modernization requires political development measured by "the creation of political institutions sufficiently adaptable, complex, autonomous, and coherent to absorb and to order expanding participation." (p.315) However, the main foci of the modernization theory and the institutionalization thesis are their connection with democratization. There has been less research studying modernization and political institutions in authoritarian regimes.

My analyses try to fill this gap by examining changes in state-social group relations after the openness of the public policy area to see if the central government has successfully maintained its legitimacy through this governance strategy, or if the openness represents the success of women's groups' expansion in political space.

2.2. The Changing Dynamics of the State-Society Relationship in China: from the Perspectives of Political Opportunity Discussions

Recently, there have been many additional studies that discuss how the state-society relationship influences the political mechanism, especially in local contexts. The study by Lily Tsai is an example. Lily Tsai's 2007 book, *Accountability Without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China*, analyzes the way that community solidarity groups hold government officials accountable.

Her book presents a practice in which government officials are not held accountable by citizens through a democratic mechanism but "governmental performance and public goods provision may still be good when officials are embedded in what I call 'solidarity groups'—groups based not only on shared interests but also on shared moral obligations (2007: 4)." Her analyses prove that government officials can still be subject to informal rules and norms, instead of "elections, government audits, and other formal institutions" (2007: 4).

Lily Tsai's theory is in line with the argument of Gungwu Wang. Wang has studied the influence of Confucianism on the political culture in China and he states that the fundamental ideas of Confucianism "are together as a hierarchy of reciprocal relationships, [and] they also

imply rights that flow from the duties performed" (2003: 24). For example, "the ruler's right to loyalty depends on his fulfilling his own duties of being filial to his parents and kindly towards his people" (2003: 24) Wang believes that the Confucian expectation of rulers is rooted in the political culture of China.

The studies of Tsai and Wang point to a unique state-society relationship. If one applies the definition of Charles Tilly that by "judging the degree of democracy, we assess the extent to which the state behaves in conformity to the expressed demands of its citizens" (2007: 13), one can conclude that the responsiveness of some local governments has helped the central government to maintain regime stability because the government has responded to the people's needs.

From the many different state-society relationships, my research project aims to analyze the relationship between the state and women's groups in general, and also specifically in the campaign of women's groups against domestic violence. There are two reasons for this choice.

First, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women that was hosted by China in 1995, made significant changes in the state-society relationship. As Liu Bohong states, "The hosting of the Women's Conference was the historical moment for the development of women's NGOs in China. It was due to this conference that the concept of NGO was introduced to China" (2001: 142. See also Jin 2001; Howell 2000). One of my case studies, the Peking Women's Law Center, was founded because of this conference.

However, the affiliated registration status of another of my case study organizations, the Maple Center, was revoked in 1995. This abolishment was a result of interference from the central authority, and it was because of the attempted visit of the former U.S. first lady, Hillary Clinton, during the UN Fourth Women's Forum. In other words, if we borrow the discussions of political opportunity structure to examine the 1995 UN Conference, we would conclude that this event created both political opportunity and political constraints for women's organizing.

To be more specific, the host of the UN Forth Women's Forum created a political opportunity for activists to establish women's organizations; however, at the same time, this hosting also resulted in political threats to already established organizations in China. The definitions of political opportunity and threats are borrowed from the school of political opportunity structure. According to Goldstone and Tilly, opportunity is "any changes that shift the balance of political and economic resources between a state and challengers, or that shift

33

domestic or outside support away from the regime, increases opportunities" (2001: 182-183).

Furthermore, this research applies Tarrow's definition of threats, "which are often seen as only the 'flip side' of opportunities, but are actually analytically distinct. Threats relates to the risks and costs of action or inaction, rather than the prospect of success" (2011: 183). This research aims at studying the impact of the 1995 UN conference on women's organizing in China.

Second, as previously mentioned, women's groups have successfully submitted the first legal proposition, which was presented by NGOs to the central legislative organ. This marks a new relationship between the state and social groups, and also implies possible political changes.

Similarly, my research will borrow the theory of political opportunity structure to examine this preliminary success of advocacy work. The main question that will be asked is if this success of women's organizing is a result of political opportunity or threat? Moreover, this research will analyze the impacts of different strategies chosen by women's groups in this law-making campaign.

In addition, this research will examine the interaction between my cases and local governments. Since the mid-1990s, and especially since 2002, many local governments have established domestic violence prevention acts. According to news reports, as of January 2010, there were 27 provinces that had passed domestic violence prevention acts and have set up institutions to deal with domestic violence. Two of my cases, namely, the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, have set up a partnership with different local governments. The responses of local governments toward domestic violence issues correspond to the theory of Huntington.

Huntington's theory states that political stability in the face of political modernization requires political development, measured by "the creation of political institutions sufficiently adaptable, complex, autonomous, and coherent to absorb and to order" expanding participation (1968, p4, 47,55,89,315). My research will examine if the new institutions on the local levels for preventing domestic violence have some implications for the political development of China.

2.2.1. Arguments concerning the Relationship between the State and the Social Groups in China

As China has sustained high levels of economic development in recent years, there have

been a number of discussions regarding the influence of economic development on the state-society relationship. Feng Xu argues that even though China "is not a liberal democracy, it increasingly uses neo-liberal ways to govern" (2009: 55). The neo-liberal policy provides positive conditions for economic performance at "minimum economic and social-political cost" (2009: 55).

Baogang He points out that economic reform not only has encouraged the development of the private sector, but has also created new problems of social control (1997: 8). As a result, the relationship between the state and social groups has changed. As Dorothy Solinger puts it, "what follows in the wake of China's economic reforms is not so much the separation of state and society, but their 'merger'" (1992: 4).

Discussions of state-social group relationships divide these relationships into three topics, namely, social groups are strictly controlled by the state, the state and party corporatism theory, and a discussion of empowerment of social groups.

My research aims to present findings that connect to this last group. This group of studies argues that social groups have developed their own strategies for participating in the decision-making process with the government. The following section will first present some statements of these three research groups.

2.2.1.1. Social Groups are Strictly Controlled by the State

One group of scholars believes that the Chinese regime has strongly controlled social groups. As an example, Jude Howell points out "the role of the state in actively sponsoring social organisations. As a result, the autonomy of particular organisations varies while the overall autonomy of this intermediary sphere is curtailed" (1998: 174).

One type of control requires all registered NGOs to become GONGOs. According to the "Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organizations" which was passed in draft form in 1989 and was revised in its final version in 1998, if a social group wants to register as a NGO, it is required to have a sponsor from a government department.

Moreover, as Da-hua Yang observed, "in order to ensure monopoly of representation for state-sanctioned groups, 'similar' organisations are not allowed to exist at the same administrative level" (2004: 5). Yiyi Lu calls it a "dual management system" (2007: 174). In Lu's article, the author cites the closing of an association for parents of autistic children as an

example of the state's control. As Lu states, popular NGOs lose "their autonomy or even their own identity because of their fear of state retribution for operating outside its orbit" (2007: 201).

The three organizations I study have all experienced repression from the central authorities. As a result of repression, the Maple Center lost its patronized registration status under The China Academy of Management Science in 1995. Under the threat of being invited to have tea with the security department, the Peking Women's Law Center faced difficulties recruiting lawyers from 1998 to 2000. As for Common Language, LGBTI groups are not allowed to register as NGOs in China.

In her article, Xiaopei He described an incident of queer-friendly participants of the UN Fourth Women's Conference. Activists in the Chinese queer movement hosted a gathering during the 1995 UN Conference, inviting foreign and domestic activists to get together. However, "that evening, the disco was full of plain-clothes and military police. Afterwards, Wu Chungsheng (the organizer of this gathering) was detained" (2001: 43). Even today, public activities of LGBTI groups are forbidden.

However, women's activists of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language, all found ways to interact with the central authorities and empower themselves to gain political space and to advance their position, as can be seen in my two by two matrix in Chapter 6. My analyses will examine their strategies when facing repression from the central authorities.

2.2.1.2. State and Political Party Corporatism

The second group of discussions, which is the mainstream point of view of scholars, is that state corporatism is the major strategy that has been used by the state in dealing with social groups in order to maintain stability in China. The following section presents discussions of both embeddedness of the political party and state corporatism.

2.2.1.2.1. The Communist Party of China Embeddedness

In discussing the Chinese case, it is especially important to discuss the relationship between the political party and social groups. The leadership of the Communist Party of China (hereafter CCP) is written into the Constitution of China. The major role that will be discussed in my research is that of the Central Politics and Law Commission of the Communist Party of China.

This Commission is responsible for all political and legal affairs, and most importantly, it controls the police force. Based on the interviews and field observation, this research has concluded the important role of this Commission in state-social groups relations.

There is a lot of research regarding the relationship between the CCP and social groups. According to Tony Saich, CCP is a Leninist party, and the Leninist party has a natural fear of organizational pluralism. In fact, the Leninist party views pluralism of social groups as creating potential for social unrest, and is thus concerned that pluralism will foster an opposition party (2000: 127). As senior CCP leaders state, "this is no free-for-all for society to organize itself to articulate its interests" (2000: 126).

My next question is: which strategies are applied by the CCP to maintain state control over social groups? Bruce Dickson provides a thorough analysis and presents the corporatist approach as a new institutional arrangement that the CCP has created to link the state and society (2003, 83). Based on Dickson's analysis, the CCP has adopted two strategies: the cooptation of new members and the creation of new links with outside organizations (2000-2001, 538-539).

One prominent characteristic of the CCP's strategy is that the CCP "is co-opting only those from the non-critical realm" (Dickson 2003, 27). Using this framework, Unger and Chan found out that industrial unions and peasant associations all served as "transmission belts" to carry out the orders of the state (1995, 37). Based on interviews and field observations, this research has concluded that women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence have grasped the opportunity to be "transmission belts" for the local governments.

This chosen strategy has allowed activists to respond to the needs of domestic violence victims, and at the same time, to enhance their own capacity-building for their organizations. One piece of evidence is that two of my three cases, the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, partnered with local branches of All China Women's Federation during the creation of institutions to prevent domestic violence. The All China Women's Federation was established by the Communist Party of China to be one of the mass organizations.

2.2.1.2.2. State Corporatism

Most studies agree that state corporatism is the best description of the relationship between the state and social groups in China. As Da-hua Yang states, "The model most often invoked to explain the current arrangement is that of state corporatism. According to this interpretation, the

current arrangement exemplifies a corporatist structure imposed by the state upon society in an effort to pre-empt the emergence of autonomous interest groups" (2004, 6)

There are several strategies of state corporatism that are discussed by scholars. One strategy is to regulate the functions of social groups. Jonathan Unger states that until the mid to late 1990s, only intellectual, enterprise and professional associations were able to have input by members (2008, 10). Now the operation of associations depends upon the nature of their functions. Unger points out that the government's "Guideline for the Development of Charities", "stresses the positive role that purely charitable associations can play in augmenting China's welfare system" (2008, 11).

Henry Rowen (2007) also notes that different social groups receive different treatment by the state. He points out that under the same monitor, health organizations, education groups, environmental protection groups, and organizations for disabled people enjoy more de facto leeway. Rowen further analyzes the reason behind the tolerance of the state, namely, the benefit that these groups bring to the state since they are helping the state to solve problems. By contrast, "groups that focus on human rights and cultivate foreign ties have suffered increasing official harassment over the past two years" (Rowen 2007).

Another strategy incorporates social groups by restricting their registration status. Both Bruce Dickson (2003) and Tony Saich point out that the 1998 "Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organizations" is a clear example of the governmental attempt "to incorporate social organizations more closely with existing party-state structures" (2000, 129).

A study of Merle Goldman concludes that, "most of China's growing business and professional communities in the late twentieth century were co-opted into the official establishment" (2005, 228). David Wank explains that a corporatist order emerged when the state created new organizations to control the new groups. The state nurtures peak associations in ways that buttress the power of government agencies that have jurisdiction over social groups (1998, 71).

Based on these studies, my research will analyze the different paths three women's advocacy groups have taken to build their capabilities under state corporatism. As Lu Zhang stated, "In the Chinese context, the state is a crucial influence on the Chinese women's movement" (2009, 70). Nevertheless, it was the efforts of women's groups that introduced the term 'violence against women' to the Chinese state's policy discourses" (Lu 2009, 70).

Women's groups not only bring the attention of the government to the issue of domestic violence, but also partner with local governance systems in combating domestic violence. Based on field observations, this research has found that this cooperation with local governance systems has helped the three women's groups that I have studied to expand their own political space for women's organizing and advocacy work.

This finding corresponds to Baogang He's argument is that "the government now relies on social organizations to exercise effective social control, while social organizations draw on the power of the state to develop themselves" (1997, 9). Based on my analyses, local governments rely on the effort of women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence to learn about domestic violence issues and to provide social services for victims.

2.2.1.3. Empowerment of Social Groups

The third group of studies holds a much more optimistic observation. Scholars indicate that many social organizations have been effective in negotiating with the state to influence the policy-making process or at least to bring key issues to the public domain.

Based on interviews and field observation, my analysis has come to a similar conclusion as this group. More specifically, my analysis has found that there were two significant achievements of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language in the campaign against domestic violence. First, the three women's advocacy groups have successfully raised awareness of political rights among their organizers and volunteers. Second, the activists' efforts in the campaign against domestic violence have also broken the traditional view of domestic violence as a family matter.

The first finding confirms the argument that the development of social groups will contribute to the process of political liberalization in the society. Gordon White sees the emergence of new associations as the first step in the development of civil society in as much as they involve the devolution of power away from the central state (1996, 203).

Furthermore, Merle Goldman suggests that the growth of civil society will begin the process of constructing a democratic sense of citizenship and rights (2005, 67). Goldman notes that there is now a growing sense of political rights consciousness (2005, 2). Qiusha Ma also indicates that NGOs empower ordinary people by providing opportunities for participation in public affairs and practice expressing themselves, as well as giving them the chance to develop their interests

(2006, 6).

In addition to the awareness of political rights, social groups also introduce many new perspectives on the traditional values of the society. As Alex Inkeles (1998) observes. "[M]any fundamental values are being challenged and reformulated, basic human relationships are redefined and reordered, and numerous traditional ways of thinking and behaving are undergoing a great transformation."

Based on interviews and field observations, my analysis has concluded that the efforts of the three women's advocacy groups in the campaign against domestic violence have resulted in both changes in political rights and traditional values. The activists' achievement has been, as Lu Zhang states, to force the state to recognize domestic violence "as a legitimate 'women's question' and to introduce the issue into public discourse" (2009, 70. See also Liu, 2001, 146).

In addition, there is the wide variety of strategies used by social groups in interacting with the state, including the central government, local governments and the Communist Party's proxy, Fulian (Chinese pinyin of All China Women's Federation). As mentioned in the previous section, the Chinese state tolerates some social groups in order to bolster its authority. For example, after analyzing a peasants' movement, Jean Oi (2003) concludes that, "the state has made a conscious decision not to use its full coercive powers to stop demonstrations. The airing of peasant grievances has become an accepted part of local politics."

This de facto leeway provides an opportunity for social groups to build up their capabilities. In his analysis of rural protests, O'Brien presents the strategies of peasant activists and notes, "Savvy 'peasant leaders' have been quick to seize opportunities, and in some instances have expanded the size of openings, helping to nudge once-forbidden types of claims into the realm of the acceptable" (2009, 26).

Here is another example. Building upon the "Fragmented Authoritarianism" paradigm, Andrew Mertha (2008) analyzes three campaigns that resisted the construction of various dams. These three campaigns occurred in the same region; however, the outcomes of these three campaigns were very different. Mertha uncovered the reason behind the success of the Dujiangyan case, namely, that the resistance focused on the dam's adverse effect on China's "cultural heritage." Mertha's study also shows how forces outside the government can participate in the decision-making process.

Based on interviews and field observations, my analysis has concluded that women's

groups in the campaign against domestic violence have also seized every opportunity to empower their organizational capabilities, especially when facing repression from the government. The activists' interaction with the state has, at some point, changed the political mechanism, and this has led to the establishment of new institutions to combat domestic violence. The strategies of the women's activists will be further analyzed.

2.3. Political Process before the Emergence of a Social Movement

Social movement theories have focused on the appearance of contentious collective actions, and have developed three interpretive models, namely, the resources mobilization model, the framing process model, and the political opportunity model. However, these three schools have one common omission, namely, a discussion regarding political space in a repressive regime.

In other words, most scholars assumed the existence of political space before the emergence of social movements. The important role of a repressive regime is ignored. Without a discussion of the existence of political space, most research only focuses on the actions of members and challengers upon the changing exterior and interior dynamics. Therefore, an analysis of the political space will be my first examination.

This research aims to explore the political process of expanding political space by the efforts of social groups before the emergence of contentious collective actions. This research applies the definition of political space from Cheeseman Nicholas (2006). According to Nicholas, "the concept of political space here refers to the arenas within which political actors engage in political activities in the absence of coercive pressure."

The focus of my second analysis is to redefine the confrontational characteristic of women's advocacy groups, because, for most discussions regarding political space in China, the main focus has been on collective contentious action. For example, Cai Yongshun argues that "political space for popular contention does exist," and "collective resistance has remained an important mode of political participation in China" (2010, 186&198).

However, based on interviews and field observations, my analysis has found that the daily survival of advocacy groups has been a crucial confrontational demonstration that gradually challenges the repressive interference from the state. In other words, the political space for social organizing has become a priority task for the three women's groups that I have studied to fight for. The survival of women's advocacy group is dependent on the strategies of the activists in

responding to the central government's marginalizing forces.

Therefore, the study of the strategies of advocacy groups in expanding their political spaces has become significant. This research believes that understanding the way that advocacy groups fight for the survival of their own political space will contribute to the discussions of possible political changes in China. This research plans to present the following two arguments.

First, this study will verify the argument that political space needs to be created by advocacy groups in authoritarian regimes before the emergence of contentious collective actions is possible. Second, this study will demonstrate that a social movement is a continuing process, and therefore, the confrontational characteristic of a social movement needs to be redefined in a repressive regime.

According to Tilly, "Instead of a short-run generation of strain, followed by protest, we find a long-run transformation of the structures of power and of collective action" (1975, 254). McAdam also maintains that "social movements are an ongoing product," and he points out that this ongoing product results from the interaction between external and internal sets of factors (1999, 40). Tilly and McAdam's arguments point to the second purpose of my research.

Based on interviews and field research, this study has found that political space that are expanded by advocacy groups are in fact the result of the organizers' evolutionary strategies. And the transmutation of the organizers' strategies are ongoing revisions that are learned from each interaction with different central authorities.

My analysis applies the model of political opportunity structure to examine each strategy's chosen process. There is one point worth noting about this application, namely, that most of time, advocacy groups in China experience threats instead of opportunities when encountering interference from the central authorities.

When the school of political opportunity structure analyzes the results of changes in political circumstances, theorists assign equal weight to opportunity and constraint. Both opportunity and threat are viewed as stimulants to contentious collective action. However, according to McAdam, "over the years, threat has given way to opportunity as the analytic *sine qua non* of many social movement scholars" (1999, x).

My analysis applies Tarrow's definition of threats that was discussed in the previous section. The major goal of this study of women's organizing in China is to examine Tarrow's argument that, "threats relate to the risks and costs of action or inaction, rather than the prospect

of success" (2011, 183).

In other words, instead of pursuing policy success, the major challenge of women's advocacy groups is to survive every threat against them from the central government because every threat can lead to the destruction of their groups. Based on interviews and field observations, this research has found that threats from central authorities leave advocacy groups without any other alternatives but to take action. This point will be further discussed in the following sections.

At the end of this study, this research attempts to argue that the way advocacy groups fight against threat has demonstrated a new understanding of the definition of social movement. This attempt aims at bringing discussions with theorists who have argued that a social movement must include contentious collective actions. In fact, it is Tarrow who has stated that, "But all are part of the broader universe of contentious politics, which emerges, on the one hand, from within institutional politics, and can expand, on the other, into revolution" (2011, 7).

In other words, the success of women's activists in maintaining their daily organizational operations and strategies in expanding organizational political space have demonstrated a new form of confrontational movements.

2.4. Expanding the Discussions of Public Sphere

One finding of my analysis is that the efforts of women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence have shifted the distinction between public and private spheres and successfully increased women's participation in political affairs. This finding confirms Anne Phillip's statement that, "feminists have always challenged, and will continue to challenge the way that particular divisions between the public and private secure the exclusion and oppression of women" (1993, 108-109).

After interviewing Wang Xingjuan, the founder of the Maple Center, Virginia Cornue states that the establishment of a women's hotline at the Maple Center is a sign of women's "breaking new social ground." The Maple Center is also one of my case studies. And Cornue's reasoning behind her argument is that the hotline of the Maple Center is the first one that was ever set up. Moreover, this effort deals with "problems women face from economic restructuring in the post-Mao era" (1999, 71). Following Cornue's theory, my study further examines the way women's groups construct a public space that is more inclusive and diverse.

Habermas is the major theorist who initiated discussions of the public sphere. In his *Structural Transformation*, Habermas describes the growth and ultimate decomposition of a "bourgeois public sphere" growing out of mixed class crowds at London coffee houses and Parisian salons. Habermas defines the public sphere as the "sphere of private people [who] come together as a public" (1962, 27), and where citizens can have meaningful dialogue on topics of public interest.

However, Habermas's idea of a public sphere has faced challenges from feminist scholars. Iris Young criticizes the Enlightenment concept of public space as "exclusionary" and "too rounded and tame an ideal of public." Young believed that Habermas's idea of public space is based on opposition between the public and private dimensions of human life. Differing with Habermas, Young presents an idea of a more heterogeneous public that includes the recognition of difference and would be more democratic (1987, 76).

Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser and Iris Young have shifted the conceptual framework of the public sphere to one that is more flexible. Both Benhabib's (1992) idea of "associational public sphere" and Fraser's idea of "strong publics" describe the public sphere as composed of multiple, alternative publics. Benhabib's associational public sphere is composed of private people, and these publics sometimes struggle against state policy and sometimes work with the state to promote certain policies. Fraser's "strong publics" function in both opinion formation and decision-making (1997, 90).

Since Confucianism emphasizes family roles and harmony in both family and society, it is especially difficult for women's groups to raise awareness of domestic violence and to construct a public space for women, as well as to encourage women's participation in discussions of policies to prevent domestic violence. However, the three women's advocacy groups I have studied, joining with the efforts of other women's groups, have altered this situation and have successfully brought discussions of domestic violence into local communities. My research project will analyze the strategies of these three women's groups.

Chapter 3 : Shifting the State's Boundaries: Experiences from Women's Social Activist Groups

My research reexamines the assumption of most social movement theories that political space for organizing exists before the formation of a social movement, and further argues that securing political space for social organizing should be regarded as one kind of confrontational act in an authoritarian regime. As part of this undertaking, this research project also presents the idea of "interactive political liberalization" to demonstrate that there are women's and lesbian groups in China that go beyond the idea of state corporatism.

Much of my dissertation is devoted to challenging the thesis of state corporatism, and it provides documentation of the confrontational movement of women's advocacy groups. Since research on women's advocacy groups has not been one of the foci of the school of social movement, this documentation makes a significant contribution to understanding the state-social group relationship in China,. My study has also gone beyond the existing materials and applied the research method of participatory observation for my field research.

Two significant findings are presented in this chapter. First, there exist state boundaries regarding the political space for social organizing of advocacy groups. Secondly, women's advocacy groups have successfully expanded these boundaries. In other words, my research on three grass-root women's organizations has found lively and dynamic relationships between social groups and the state in China.

Of all the aspects of the state-social group relationship in China, the most important and yet least understood is the state's boundaries on the advocacy work of social groups. These boundaries are described as vague, or "a grey area." Indeed, my field research has confirmed that there are boundaries to the government in monitoring the activities of social groups. Furthermore, my research has found four factors that play significant roles in shifting these boundaries. These are: the legitimacy of the regime; cooperative relationship with local governments; pressure from the international community; and funding from international donors.

In other words, interference from the government has continued; however, the social groups that I have studied have applied different strategies to resist these repressive forces. Sometimes, their efforts have failed, but sometimes they have successfully expanded their political space for advocacy work. Rather than emphasizing a one way reaction from either the central government

or a social group on the other side, the central question driving this chapter is as follows: what kind of interaction between the central government and a social group could result in expanding governmental boundaries for social organizing.

Furthermore, why have the central authorities not chosen to crush these three organizations? There are several social organizations, which have disbanded after facing marginalizing forces from the government. As noted in Chapter 1, failure to register can have a significant influence on the operation of a social group. According to one news report, several social groups have had to disband their organizations since the organizers were unable to register because of governmental pressure (*Iqilu News*).

Only by first addressing these questions can we begin to understand how these advocacy groups could survive in a repressive authoritarian regime and could continue carrying out their work for social change. As emphasized in Chapter 1, the struggles of women's advocacy groups have redefined the confrontational characteristic of social movements in the context of a repressive regime. My study has suggested the term "soft confrontation" as a better description of the ground-level movement of women's advocacy groups.

This chapter analyzes the confrontational movement of three women's advocacy groups, namely, the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center (the Maple Center); the Peking University Women's Law Studies & Legal Aid Center (the Peking Women's Law Center), and Common Language, a lesbian/gay rights advocacy group.

The hypothesis of this chapter is that facing similar governmental interference, women's groups can transfer this interference into political opportunity that allows them to develop their organizational capabilities[4] and expand their political space. The dependent variable of this study is the relationship between the three women's advocacy groups and the central government. The independent variable is the interaction between these three women's groups and other institutions, including other mechanisms within the party, the local governments, the media, and international donors. By analyzing each move of the three organizations, my concept of "the boundaries of political space" is introduced, followed by an examination of each driving force in shifting these boundaries of the state.

This chapter will first present a brief introduction of the changing state-social group

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[4] In this research, capability-building is defined as including gaining more popular support, raising more funds, increasing recruitment, generating attention from the media, and making connections with other social groups and funders nationally and internationally.

relationship since the economic opening in 1978, especially the emergence of women's organizing. Three key agents in affecting the women's movement are identified, namely, the All China Women's Federation (hereafter, ACWF), the 1995 UN Conference, and the Ford Foundation.

The confrontational movement of the three women's advocacy groups will be demonstrated by chronological documentation of the continuing harassment from the central government as well as the organizers' strategies of response, with an emphasis on how the organizers utilized four factors to increase their own leverage.

3.1. The Changing State-Society Relationship and the Emergence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The year 1978 marked a milestone in the societal transformation of China. A series of economic reforms was launched that year which also had a significant political and social impact. Based on my observations during field research and interviews with the organizers of women's groups, the dissolving of state-owned enterprises and the decentralization of decision-making power on social issues expanded the political space for social organizing.

The 1980s is the period of time in which we observed a wave of emergence of social groups. Most importantly, the aims of these groups were quite different from the purposes of traditional Chinese associations. In other words, these emerging social groups aimed at social change. According to an interviewee who was the ministerial officer at ACWF, "There have been two waves of women's organizing in China. The first movement happened during the 80s. Most of the organizers at that time were feminist scholars. And four women's study centers were established before 1995. MWPCC was also established during this period of time, and was named WRI. The formation of these women study centers was the result of the impact of economic reform." (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 16, 2009).

Wang Xinjuan, who is the founder of the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center, and is in her 80s, explained the reason why she wanted to form a women's group. "WRI was established in 1988. During that period of time, Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang were still in power; therefore, the political circumstances were more open. And it was easier to register an NGO. I was retired and found that there was no institution to work for women's issues. This is the first reason that I wanted to form a social group. Secondly, because of policies of the State

Council, there were more and more laid-off female workers. Many female laid-off workers went back home and suffered discrimination in society. Some media reported suicides by these women. These reports raised my concern that the cost of social development was one generation of women" (interviewed by author, Taipei, Taiwan, Sep. 10, 2010).

Economically, the privatization of state-owned enterprise meant the dismantling of the iron rice bowl[5], and as a result, more and more social problems appeared, such as an increase in the number of laid-off workers and a phenomenal jump in internal migration across the country. Facing increasing pressure from people's discontent, the central authority decentralized a certain degree of decision-making power to local governments in order to make local governments responsible for social stability. Based on my observations, this decentralization process also provided political opportunity for social organizing.

Along with China's increased openness to foreign influence in the economy, the Western idea of civil society has also been introduced to China. It was not until the late 1970s that NGOs were allowed to form in China (Florini, Lai and Tan, 2012, 16). The number of NGOs has increased dramatically after the launching of openness in 1978. According to statistics of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, as of the summer of 2012, there were 259,000 registered social organizations; 209,000 civil non-enterprise institutions, and 2,711 foundations.

3.1.1. The Tension between the State and Social Groups

The majority of registered social organizations are membership organizations (*Ministry of Civil Affairs*). In addition, the number of registered NGOs is far fewer than the estimated one, since the central authority has always been skeptical about the existence of NGOs. As Wang Xinjuan points out, "From my point of view, the reason that central authorities suspected all NGOs was because the NGO was a new form of organization in China. The central authorities viewed all NGOs as threats to the regime" (interviewed by author, April 25, 2011).

According to Tony Saich, "The natural Leninist tendency to thwart organizational plurality is compounded by the fear of the potential for social unrest and the opposition that the reforms have created. There has been a consistent fear that social organizations might become covers for

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[5] "Iron rice bowl" (tiě fàn wǎn) is a Chinese term used to refer to an occupation with guaranteed job security, as well as steady income and benefits. The Chinese term can be compared to the similar (but not identical) English concept of a breadwinner with cradle to grave socialism. Traditionally, people considered to have iron rice bowls include military personnel, and members of the civil service, as well as employees of various state run enterprises (through the mechanism of the work unit). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_rice_bowl, accessed 2013/09/20.

groups engaging in political activities or to represent the interests of disgruntled workers and/or peasants" (2000, 126).

The revised and much stricter regulations on NGOs in 1998 are one recent and good example of this concern. After the emergence of NGOs in the 90s, the central government promulgated a more efficient system to monitor NGOs, and required "re-registration" for all NGOs. According to the "Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organizations" which was passed in draft form in 1989 and was revised in its final version in 1998, if a social group wants to register as a NGO, it is required to have a sponsor from a governmental ministry or a party affiliation. Furthermore, after obtaining the sponsorship, social groups need to seek approval from the local Civil Affairs Bureau.

This dual registration system makes it difficult for social groups to register, and the requirement for "re-registration" has caused some NGOs to lose their registered status. As presented in the following table, 1998 was the first year that we observe a significant decrease of the number of registered social organizations, and the number continued to drop in the following three years. Moreover, 1999 was the first year that data on the registration of non-profit institutions could be seen by the public. The difficulty of registration has resulted in a huge number of NGOs in China whose legal status is vague.

Table 3.1. Numbers of Different Kinds NGOs' Registration Status

Year	Total Number of Registered Social Groups	Number of Registered NGOs	Number of Registered Non-enterprise Institutions	Number of Registered Foundations
Before 1988	There was no requirement for NGOs' registration			
1988	4,446	4,446	None	None
1989	4,544	4,544	None	None
1990	10,855	10,855	None	None
1991	82,814	82,814	None	None
1992	154,502	154,502	None	None
1993	167,506	167,506	None	None
1994	174,060	174,060	None	None
1995	180,583	180,583	None	None
1996	184,821	184,821	None	None
1997	181,318	181,318	None	None
1998	165,600	165,600	None	None
1999	142,665	136,764	5,901	None
2000	153,322	130,668	22,654	None
2001	210,939	128,805	82,134	None
2002	244,509	133,297	111,212	None

| 2003 | 266,612 | 144,167 | 124,491 | 954 |
| 2004 | 289,432 | 153,359 | 135,181 | 892 |

Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs, National Administrative Bureau of Non-governmental Organizations
http://www.chinanpo.gov.cn/2201/20151/yjzlkindex.html

As a result, most social groups have no better choice than to register as a for-profit enterprises. Some social groups manage to be sheltered under a government unit, a mass organization, or other social organization that has registered. In Chinese, this sheltered status is called *gua kao*, which means "patronized groups." As of 2005, it is estimated that there are three million NGOs in China, and a majority of them are not registered (Chan, Qiu and Zhu 2005, 145).

3.1.2. The Enhancement of Management and Control

2005 was another challenging year for social groups. Because the central authority believed that foreign foundations were the force responsible for the "Color Revolutions" in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, and Ukraine, the central authority scrutinized foreign funding of social groups whose work focuses on human rights issues.

Qi Zhi's (2005) statement reveals the worries of the Chinese authority. "[They] disseminate propaganda about democracy and freedom, so as to foster pro-Western political forces and train the backbones for anti-government activities….All that the NGOs have done is play a crucial role in both the start and final success of the 'Color Revolutions.'"

The challenge was even worse in 2010. On Dec. 30, 2009, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) promulgated the *Circular of the SAFE on Relevant Issues Concerning the Administration of Donations in Foreign Exchange by Domestic Institutions*. According to this new act, all NGOs that were foreign sponsored needed to open special bank accounts. And according to Article One of this Act, "Donations in foreign exchange by domestic institutions must be conducted in compliance with the laws and regulations and other relevant administrative rules of the Peoples Republic of China, and shall not be in violation of social morality, nor be detrimental to the public interest and legal rights and interests of other citizens." This article provided the authorities with great power to decide whether foreign donations are acceptable or not.

This new act is a serious challenge to the survival of advocacy groups, since, for most advocacy groups, if they fail to find governmental sponsorship, they also fail to register. Without

registration status, these advocacy groups are not allowed to conduct public fund-raising. Based on my field observations, these advocacy groups rely heavily on foreign donors. Facing increasing governmental interference with foreign sponsorship, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have found it is much tougher to maintain their daily operations. As an example, one interviewee from the Peking Women's Law Center expressed, "Sometimes, I worry that if our center cannot survive, I will lose my job." And also a senior activist from Common Language said, "There are not many foundations that will support our work; therefore, I worry whether our organization can sustain itself."

One additional point worth noting is that governmental scrutiny is mostly applied to advocacy groups. For most associational style groups and groups which provide social services, there is much less governmental interference. In fact, the central authority has publicly recognized the role of social groups in providing services.

In March 2011, the National People's Congress adopted its 12th Five-Year Plan on Economic and Social Development. The main theme was social stability. This plan called for an increased role for social organizations in providing social services, while at the same time it allocated more funding for "upholding stability," and asked for more effective government supervision of social groups. These two policies seem to contradict each other. However, the seeming contradiction of the two policies reveals a more strategic attitude of the central authority in dealing with social groups.

Concerning the ambivalent situation of the authorities in their relationship with AIDS groups, Florini, Lai and Tan point out "the authorities know that the country needs organizations like AIDS Care China to focus on China's enormous social and environmental problems...., but they fear their potential capacity to organize politically in opposition to the existing system. As a result, social organizing is simultaneously permitted and constrained" (2012, 88-89).

3.1.3. Beyond the Concept of "State Corporatism"

Many studies have applied the idea of "state corporatism" to describe the relationship between the state and social groups. However, this study has found that the strategies of the three organizations that I have studied help organizations to avoid being compromised by the state. But, at the same time, the state also has categorized social groups and has developed various attitudes towards them in accordance with the categories it has defined.

In other words, the attitude of the central authority toward social groups is differentiated. It depends on the scale of threat that social groups can cause to the regime's legitimacy. On the one hand, advocacy groups are viewed as a possible force in challenging the regime's legitimacy. On the other hand, the services provided by these groups help to reduce people's discontent, and are viewed as playing a supporting role in maintaining the regime's legitimacy. My study on three women's organizations has found that the organizers have strategically combined advocacy mission with service providing tasks, which give the organizers leverage when negotiating with the government.

3.1.4. The Continuing Harassment Experiences

However, this strategy of using the advantage of providing social services does not protect them from intervention by the government, and the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and the Common Language have all experienced repression. Citing the issue of registration as an example, the Maple Center lost its registration status in 1995. The Peking Women's Law Center's sponsorship relationship with Beijing University was revoked in 2010. As for the Common Language, advocacy groups for LGBTI rights are not allowed to register as NGOs in China.

Registration is not the only challenge for these three groups. Inability to rent office space, difficulty raising funds, cancellation of events, and invitations to have tea with police offices as well as other examples have become routine challenges for these organizations. Furthermore, for these organizers, their physical safety has often been threatened. Here is one example. In her article, Xiaopei He described an incident of queer-friendly participants at the Fourth Women's Conference. "That evening, the disco was full of plain-clothes and military police. Afterwards Wu Chungsheng, "the organizer of this gathering, was detained" (2001, 43). Up to now, public activities of LGBTI groups have been forbidden.

However, despite all these challenges, the three organizations that I have studied not only have found ways to interact with the central government, but have also found ways to empower themselves to gain political space for advocacy groups. The organizers' strategies have not only increased their organizations' degree of autonomy, but have also fueled their degree of empowerment. These strategies will be analyzed.

3.2. A Brief Introduction to the Emergence of Women's Groups

It was not until the 1980s that we saw a resurgence of women's NGOs organizing in China "both within and beyond the established framework of the official Women's Federations" (Judd 2002, 4). However, the majority of these organizations were women's studies centers in colleges. It was only after 1995, when the central government hosted the official United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum in the Huairou district of Beijing, that one could observe the emergence of Chinese women organizing.

According to an interview with a ministerial officer of ACWF (All China Women's Federation), who is also among the few leaders of ACWF who pay attention to women's issues and have participated in women's organizing, "There was a wave of formations of women's organizations before the hosting of the Fourth UN Women's Conference. These formations were encouraged by the government because the parallel NGO forum was a routine arrangement for all UN Women's conferences, and at that time, there were not enough women's NGOs. Therefore, most of these women's organizations were established by the government and the party, and included the Association of Chinese Women Lawyers, the Association of Chinese Women Procurators, and similar organizations" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 24, 2011).

However, she further explains, "Most women's associations which were formed by the government after hosting the Fourth World Conference on Women did not pay attention to gender issues" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 24, 2011). It was other women's organizations that were established by participants in the UN Women's Conference that continued their efforts on women's issues. For example, Guo Jiamei, the founder of PUWLSLA, indicated in the interview that she was inspired by the discussions of this conference and made a decision to leave her government position and form a new organization.

Guo attended this conference as a reporter for a governmental newspaper. She is a lawyer and is full of energy. Every time, when she recalled her experiences at this UN Conference, I could still feel her excitement. She told me, "I was amazed by all the talks from the participants. I learned so many new things by participating at this conference. My original plan was to return home after the first day of interviewing. But I ended up staying there for the whole conference". (interviewed by author, Taipei, Taiwan, Sep. 9, 2010).

PUWLSLA is not the only women's group whose founder was inspired by the 1995 women's

conference. Thus, one can conclude that the 1995 UN Women's Conference played an important role in encouraging the establishment of women's organizations.

3.2.1. Key Roles in Women's Organizing: ACWF, The 1995 UN Conference, and the Ford Foundation

In fact, when discussing the development of women's groups in China, there are three important groups and events that must be considered. They are the All China Women's Federation (hereafter, ACWF), the Fourth Women's Conference, and the Ford Foundation. The ACWF is the premier organization in the field of women's issues. The ACWF is considered a "mass organization" and is funded and supervised by the Communist Party of China.

ACWF was established in 1957. But prior to 1949, the Communist Party had set up the All China Democratic Women's Federation to be in charge of women's mobilization. The task of ACWF is to be a transmission belt of the Communist Party and is, at each level of the bureaucratic system, to carry out the Party's policies. However, to be a transmission belt means that the main mission of the ACWF is to help the party to maintain social stability rather than to respond to the interests of women.

Moreover, the staffs of ACWF are civil servants and are assigned by the Party. As Jude Howell states, "Since its resurrection in 1978 ACWF has developed extensive roots, with representation down to the village level….It has full-time staff down to the civil level, all paid for and appointed by the state" (2000, 128).

In field research, I have observed the powerful status of women's federations in villages. In villages, officers of these women's federations also are put in other positions. Therefore, many of them enjoy multiple resources to help women in need. I think this is why the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and the Common Language have made efforts to build up different degrees of partnership with ACWF.

The campaign against domestic violence works with ACWF as well as with local women's federations. Furthermore, in some local areas, construction of new institutions to prevent domestic violence has depended on efforts by ACWF. As will be discussed in the following section, the relationship with ACWF has affected the degree of autonomy and empowerment of many other women's groups besides the three organizations that I have studied.

However, ACWF is not the only group to consider when analyzing the changing dynamics

of state-society relationships in China. Based on interviews with organizers, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women played an important role in introducing the Western idea of NGOs[6] to Chinese women. Several founders of women's organizations pointed out that they did not learn the term "non-governmental organization" until they participated in the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. In fact, the idea of social organizing had been viewed as a threat to the regime's stability. And it was not until the launch of economic openness in 1978 that Chinese society became much open to embracing some Western ideas, including the idea of civil society.

As Judd points out, prior to the 1980s, "there has been little in the way of an independent women's movement, since the ground for legitimately organizing in the interest of women was occupied by the official women's movement" (2002, 18) The women's conference that was held in Beijing in 1995 was a milestone in the development of women's groups in China. As Tamara Jacka points out, "The term 'non-governmental organization' was not widely used in China until the Fourth World Conference on Women" (2006, 596).

As previously discussed, when the Chinese government was granted the opportunity to host the Fourth Women's Conference, more women's groups were established for the purpose of joining the NGO Forum at the Fourth Women's Conference. As one of organizers of this event, a ministerial level officers of ACWF recalled of the emergence of women's organizing before the Fourth Women's Conference, "At first, there were twenty-two NGO forums applied for by Chinese associations, but in the end, the total number of Chinese women's NGO forum was forty-seven. I categorize these women's associations which were formed around the1995 Women's Forum into three groups, namely, academic, service-oriented and friendship-associated" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 16, 2009).

In addition, at the forums gender issues and terms were presented to the Chinese women and the forums inspired many of them to set up their own organizations. As Lu Zhang points out, it was this conference that "brought domestic violence into local consciousness, and stimulated the growth of a group of women's NGOs" (2009, 68). Not only were gender issues introduced to Chinese women, but also women in China were introduced to the world.

One interviewee of only a few activists who participated in the first wave of lesbian

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[6] Several organizers indicate that they prefer not to use the term "NGO" because this term will be misunderstood as "anti-government." See also Spires 2011, 34.

organizing, recalled that, "In 1995, I went to NYC and met the director of an international lesbian foundation. She told me that they would give me money as long as I established a lesbian organization. I did not ask for the money because I thought the organizing work we were doing did not need money" (interview by author, July 16, 2012).

A third important influence on Chinese women organizing has been the Ford Foundation, whose presence was approved of by Deng Xiaoping and that was introduced to Chinese women during the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. Since then, the Ford Foundation has funded a number of women's groups and their projects in China (Jacka 2006, 585). For example, one of organizations that I studied, the Peking University Women's Law Studies & Legal Aid Center (the Peking Women's Law Center), was set up because the founders gained financial support from the Ford Foundation.

Funding from the Ford Foundation played an important role during the early period of time when newly established women's organizations struggled for survival. As discussed previously, only registered foundations are allowed to seek donations from the society. Moreover, it wasn't until 2011 that several local governments, for example Beijing, began to subsidize NGOs for their provision of public services.

As a result of these limitations, seeking external funding is an alternative way for women's groups to sustain their operations. As Lu Zhang points out, "One of Chinese NGOs' notable features is their considerable economic dependence on foreign donors, especially institutional ones" (2009, 78). In addition to their funding resources, training programs provided by foreign foundations or international women's organizations also help local women's groups to build up their capabilities.

As for the campaign against domestic violence, funding by international donors supports the efforts of many women's groups in combating domestic violence. As Lu Zhang states, "Many international donors in China, including the Ford Foundation, have funded women's NGOs generously to address the issue of gender violence, especially domestic violence" (2009, 79). The three organizations that I studied all gained financial support from the Ford Foundation for their domestic violence projects, and my research project examines the influence of this support on the capacity-building of these three organization.

3.3. Three Case Studies and their Relationships with the Central Authority

The three organizations that I studied are the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center (the Maple Center, *Beijing hongfeng funü xinli zixun fuwu zhongxin*), which was founded in 1988; the Peking University Women's Law Studies & Legal Aid Center (the Peking Women's Law Center, *Beijing daxue falüxuexi funü falü yanjiu yu fuwu zhongxin*), which was established in 1995; and Common Language (*tong yu*), which was organized in 2005.

These three groups share some similarities. First of all, they are advocacy groups for women's rights and lesbians' rights. Second, their advocacy and mobilization work is nationwide. And third, they constantly face repression from the authorities, such as the negation of their registration status, cancellation of their events, and interviews by the police and security departments. In addition, all three groups have faced the problem of raising funds and recruiting organizers because in China, raising public funds for self-organizing groups is forbidden, and only GONGOs can seek subsidies from the state.

These difficult experiences made me wonder about their survival strategies. Also, how could they continue their advocacy work and why does the government allow these groups to exist at all? This research project aims to answer these questions by comparing the different strategies of these three women's groups both in their interaction with the state and in their campaigns against domestic violence.

3.3.1. Case One: The Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center (*Beijing hongfeng funü xinli zixun fuwu zhongxin*)

By applying the process-tracing method, seven significant changes in relations between the authorities and the Maple Center can be identified. This study will explain these changes chronologically and will discuss them by using the model of political opportunity and political constraint.

The predecessor of the Maple Center, Beijing, was the Women's Research Institute (WRI), China Academy of Management Science (*zhong guan yuan*). It was established in October 1988 by Ms. Wang Xingjuan and a group of women intellectuals dedicated to women's issues. Most importantly, it was the first grassroots women's group set up before the 1990s.

Wang Xingjuan, in her 80s, white-haired, is a vibrant woman who has influenced many women's activists. One organizer in a remote area of China told me, "We learned the way of

women's organizing by observing the actions of Wang Xingjuan" (interviewed by author, China, April 21, 2013). Another activist who has dedicated herself to the women's movement for more than 20 years, stated, "Whenever I see Wang Xingjuan with her grey hair, and still working so hard, I know I cannot stop my work" (interviewed by author, China, March 18, 2013).

As discussed previously, dramatic social changes made Wang Xingjuan decide to form a social group for women. These social changes were the results of economic reforms that were launched by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. And in 1985 the central authority started further reforms of state-owned enterprises. During this period of time, state-owned enterprises began to lay off workers, and were no longer a safety net for workers. Women were the first group of victims of this new direction of the country.

According to a WRI report in 1988, 70 percent of the laid-off workers were women. Observing the increase in the number of women who were forced to leave their jobs and to go back home to household work, the founders of WRI decided to take action for women's rights. Wang Xingjuan stated at the opening ceremonies for the WRI in 1988,"Intense social competition…[leads us] to have no choice but to recognize that our sisters who are independent enough to successfully adapt to the overwhelming challenges in the face of the competitive market are only a fraction of those who are struggling to survive….Therefore, what the WRI strives towards is to help women gain their own rights, to develop their own abilities, and to not only adapt to, but also succeed in the face of the rapidly developing society" (Cornue 1999, 71).

In other word, dramatic social changes created a political opportunity for WRI to organize. WRI provided the first hotline service in China, and its grass-root work for women's issues also gained recognition from the UN ECOSO. The WRI became the first grassroots women's NGO to enjoy consultation status with the UN ECOSO. As a result, this research has concluded that WRI was able to increase its degree of its empowerment from 1988 to 1995.

During this period of time, organizers gradually learned how to build WRI's capacities such as fund-raising activities, while, at the same time, WRI's activities helped it to build up its reputation internationally.

3.3.1.1. Facing the first Repressive Force

This international recognition also brought attention and interference from the Beijing City Political and Legislative Committee of the Communist Party of China, and caused WRI to lose

its registration status in 1996. During the time period of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, many international organizations and international media sought to visit the WRI. The most famous figure was the former U.S. first lady, Hillary Clinton.

However, this enthusiasm brought out the suspicions of the authorities. Wang Xingjuan recalled the pressure from the central authority at that time, "When Hillary Clinton attempted to visit our center, the pressure was enormous. The central authorities had doubts about our connections with foreign countries. I was told that this issue had been brought to Li Peng, prime minister from 1987 to 1998. Our deputy director was invited twice to the Zhongnanhai, which is the Communist Party headquarters. I did not think I did anything wrong. The central authorities also couldn't find any wrongdoing by my center. They just kept asking why Hillary Clinton requested to visit only your center". (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 25, 2011.)

"They did not let us to respond to the request from Hillary Clinton. The central authorities told us to ask permission from the Foreign Affairs Department. However, when I asked the Foreign Affairs Department, they answered that they did not have any opinion about this issue because they did not view visiting our center as part of foreign affairs. In the end, Hillary Clinton did not visit our center. However, this incident has caused damage to our center. The central authorities mistrust us, and we lost our patronized registration connection. Even though the central authorities did not find any evidence to prove the center was a threat to the regime, the central authorities decided to let the center dissolve. But, how to dissolve the center? The central authorities asked the Institution (China Academy of Management Science) to revoke their sponsorship relation with us" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 25, 2011).

In 1996, the China Academy of Management Science revoked its sponsorship of the WRI. After several failed attempts at re-registration, WRI was renamed the Maple Center and is currently registered as a people-run non-profit enterprise unit. Its abolished registration was only the beginning of challenges that the Maple Center has encountered.

3.3.1.2. The Wave of Interference after the Revocation of Registration Status

After the revocation of its registration status, the Maple Center continued to encounter more interference from the government. For example, finding office space has always been a tough task for organizers. Wang Xingjuan described the challenging situation, "Along with the revocation of registration status, our landlord also received a phone call and was asked to cease

the housing tenancy. We were kicked out by the landlord, and then we were unable to find another office space for a long time. It happened several times that we got a phone call from the landlord after signing the lease, and they said that they could no longer rent the space to us" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 25, 2011).

Examining the results of political opportunity and political constraint presented on the matrix, the revocation of the registration of WRI in 1996 marked a significant drop of its degree of autonomy. One point worth noting is that, contracting to the perspective that a registered NGO is controlled by the government, my field research has found that a registered NGO which aims for social change could benefit from legitimacy and protection of its sponsor institution (see also Saich 2000).

This is the reason why this research considers registration status to be an important factor in determining the degree of autonomy and organization has.. Facing loss of registration status, the organizers of the Maple Center decided to focus on their capacity-building work. They adopted a strategy of seeking support from international donors.

This strategy successfully helped the Maple Center to survive interference from the governance system, and further created political opportunity for the Maple Center's advocacy work. This strategy brought a significant change in 1998. Because Wang Xingjuan continued submitting proposals for international funding and because organizers of the Maple Center carried on their hotline services despite all the challenges, in 1998 the Ford Foundation sponsored Wang Xingjuan to join a conference in India to discuss issues of gender violence. This experience shifted the focus of the Maple Center's efforts towards working on domestic violence issues, and with the efforts of its organizers, the Maple Center has built up its nationwide reputation as a professional organization on issues of domestic violence.

In other words, the wave of repressive interference did not stop the mission of the founder and organizers of the Maple Center. Instead, the organizers of the Maple Center have confronted each incident of interference by using different strategies to create their own political opportunities.

3.3.1.3.   Creating Political Opportunities for its Advocacy Work

Since 1998, the Maple Center has steady increased its organizational capacity. At the same time, the organizers also made every effort to get involved in the policy-making process. These

efforts achieved a significant result in 2001. The year 2001 marked the fifth significant change for the Maple Center. The Maple Center began its collaboration program with Tianjin Women's Federation that year, and as a result, was given the political opportunity to join in the decision-making process of the local authorities. From 1998 to 2001, the Maple Center's degree of autonomy increased along with its degree of empowerment.

The sixth development happened in 2004, when Peiyun Peng, the honorary chairperson of the All China Women's Federation, visited the Maple Center, and gave high acknowledgement to the works of the center. That year, the degree of autonomy of the Maple Center reached a significant level, and most importantly, this visit brought an opportunity for the Maple Center to work with the governmental media, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Recently, the Maple Center has tried very hard to extend its participation into the policy-making process. And current notorious domestic violence incidents, namely the Li Yang incident, brought media attention nationwide to the work of the Maple Center (*Beijing Review*). Li Yang, the founder of a popular English school, was accused by his wife of physical and psychological abuse. Li Yang admitted his abusive behavior and claimed that his behavior was normal in Chinese families.

This incident attracted media attention and provided an opportunity for the Maple Center to present its expertise on domestic violence issues. Furthermore, this incident also awakened people's concern regarding the law-making process of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act. As a result, according to my research, the Maple Center has strengthened both its degree of empowerment and autonomy, which will be discussed more in Chapter 4.

The degree of autonomy and empowerment of the Maple Center was further increased in 2012. Over all, the degree of its empowerment has increased steadily, but the degree of its autonomy has dramatically changed. As one can see from the two-by-two matrix, when the Maple Center was first established, its degree of autonomy was high. This was because the open attitude of the central authorities toward social groups at that time.

However, we observe a dramatic drop in its degree of autonomy in 1996. This abrupt decrease was caused by government interference, including the revocation of the Maple Center's registration status and the withdrawal by the landlord of its rental contracts, even after deposits were paid, as a result of phone calls to the landlord from the police department.

Despite these problems, the organizers of the Maple Center chose strategic action to counter

each episode of interference and treated each obstacle as an opportunity to empower itself, with the result that the degree of its empowerment has increased. Thus, despite the ups and downs in the degree of its autonomy, the strategies of the Maple Center organizers have successfully resulted in the empowerment of the organization.

In addition, funding resources have been scant. Nonetheless, the Maple Center survived these difficulties and as of today, it has trained more than 300 volunteers. Wang Xingjuan further expressed this achievement, "Many people here are touched by my personal experiences. Some of our volunteers have been here since our first training program. This kind of cohesive force is not easy to achieve" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 17, 2009).

The Maple Center has set up six hotlines to help women nationwide in 24 years and more than 200 trained volunteers are answering its women's hotlines. The slogan of the Maple Center is, "Women study women's issues, women educate women, and women help women." the Maple Center's working model carries out this slogan; the Maple Center learns about women's issues from its hotlines, and organizers follow up on these issues by deploying in-depth research.

As of today, the Maple Center has published various research results about women's issues, including women and law, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and women in communities. Despite all the interference from the police department and both the central and the local political and legislative committees, the organizers do not only do research and provide services for women, but also do advocacy for women's rights.

Hence, the Maple Center's relationship with the central authority has enjoyed certain degree of autonomy. Based on field research and secondary materials, it can be seen that events held by the Maple Center seldom face interference by the police department, and most of the time, the government-owned media reports on the Maple Center's events. One organizer of the Maple Center, who does not learn about social organizing before joining the Center, states that, "I think the media reports most of our events. The media often put our events under the category of public interest activities. If our events interest them, they will also send a reporter to cover our events" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

3.3.2. The Peking University Women's Law Studies & Legal Aid Center (*Beijing daxue falüxuexi funü falü yanjiu yu fuwu zhongxin*)

Unlike the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center has not only experienced

dramatic changes in the degree of its autonomy, but also in the degree of its empowerment. Based on field research and interviews, this study has concluded that these two significant changes are correlated, which will be explained in Chapter 5.

The Peking Women's Law Center was established in 1995 after the founder, Guo Jianmei, was inspired and encouraged by the Fourth UN World Conference on Women. Guo Jianmei is described by an activist, "She combines her lifelong goals with the pursuit of gender equity" (interviewed by author, Taipei, Taiwan, Nov. 7, 2011). Another women's expert told me, "Guo Jianmei dedicates herself to legal reform. She never takes a rest. And she is willing to go to any remote area for a lawsuit" (interviewed by author, China, March 18, 2013). Since its establishment, the founders and organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center have encountered persecution from the central authorities, but they have been able to change each incident of repression into a political opportunity.

The Peking Women's Law Center has volunteer lawyers fighting for disadvantaged women, and it is the first organization that aims for both reform of the legal system and an increase in women's rights. The Peking Women's Law Center carries out its goals by providing legal aid[7] service for marginalized women, while, at the same time, representing violations of women's right in courts to promote reform of the legal system. Since its establishment, the Peking Women's Law Center has represented thousands of cases in 26 provinces and several of these cases were against the state.

According to Guo Jianmei, three historical milestones have inspired the founders to establish this first legal aid center which focuses on women's rights, namely, the passage of Women's Rights Act in 1992; the establishment of the Chinese legal aid system in 1994, and the UN Fourth Women's Conference in 1995. During our interviews, Guo Jianmei concluded that there have been three key periods in the development of her organization.

3.3.2.1. The Period of Development: Political Opportunities and Political Constraints

The first period was from 1995 to 1997. During this period of time, the main tasks of the organizers were to develop a working model and to establish the organization's reputation. A

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[7] This paper borrows the definition of legal aid from a research document of the Asia Foundation that legal aid (the current Chinese usage is: fa lu yuan zhu) has a simpler and more restricted definition, meaning the provision of professional legal services to a deserving party free or at a reduced or subsidized rate, usually in litigated proceedings. Allen C. Choate, "Legal Aid in China", Program Development, China, The Asia Foundation, Working Paper #12, April 2000.

dramatic decrease in its degree of autonomy in 1996 was observed on the two-by-two matrix. This was because the Peking Women's Law Center faced considerable political constraints that year. According to Guo Jianmei,

"We almost closed our center in July 1996, because I had asked my connections in the media to publish our center's announcement on March 8. As a result, every newspaper, including *People's Daily*, published our small advertisement, and another founder and I were questioned by the Beijing Legislative and Political Committee. They asked who was behind this idea, and who asked us to do this" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, July 8, 2011).

The consequence of this public education activity was serious. Guo Jianmei added, "Our center was registered under a law firm. The head lawyer of this law firm asked us to leave because the Justice Department and Beijing Legislative and Political Committee came to see him" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, July 8, 2011). Leaving the law firm where the Peking Women's Law Center was *gua kao* (affiliated) meant that the Center lost the protection from this law firm to develop its advocacy work.

Facing her first experience of political repression, Guo Jianmei did not stop her movement. She tried other personal connections and the Peking Women's Law Center was finally registered, and from 1996 to 1997 increases in both the degree of autonomy and degree of empowerment were observed. There were only four full time organizers, and between them, they counseled more than 1,000 marginalized women. Moreover, during this period of time, the Peking Women's Law Center represented marginalized women in more than one hundred and forty separate cases.

One organizer who joined the Peking Women's Law Center right after the establishment recalled that there were crowds every day at the center. Marginalized people came from all over the country to seek legal help. She described the center as becoming a hot spot for "letters and visits"[8] for ordinary people that, "many people who came to seek help and who had nothing left after their travel expenses slept outside the center" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 26, 2011).

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[8] According to the Article 2 of Regulations on Letters and Visits, [The term "letters and visits" in these Regulations means that citizens, legal persons or other organizations give information, make comments or suggestions or lodge complaints to the people's governments at all levels and the relevant departments of the people's governments at or above the county level through correspondence, E-mails, faxes, phone calls, visits, and so on, which are dealt with by the relevant administrative departments according to law.] http://xinfang.shaanxi.gov.cn/0/1/6/23/294.htm, accessed on May 2, 2013.

Guo Jianmei also described her feelings at that time. "In 2000, I felt tired again. Our center gained a nationwide reputation, and people from different provinces all came to our center. Our center became one stop on their "letters and visits" trips. Our center was surrounded by waves of tired and impatient people, who had not taken a shower for many days because of the travel. But we did not have enough staff to cover all their requests" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 26, 2011).

Guo Jianmei continued describing the pressure during that period of time. "Since we were unable to give a hand to every visitor, people became angry with us. Some of them even accused us of being unwilling to help because we had already achieved a good reputation" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 26, 2011).

This overwhelming experience made organizers rethink the role of the center and undertake its transformation. This created the second period of development of the Peking Women's Law Center, which lasted from 1998 to 2002. Guo refers to this period of time as a speed-up of development of the Peking Women's Law Center. All the organizers transformed their major task from providing legal assistance to as many marginalized women as possible to representing some significant cases which both are representative of similar cases and present a strong challenge to both the legal system and the status of women's rights.

According to the Peking Women's Law Center's chronicle, cases which have been represented by the center involve important and difficult issues such as gender discrimination in the workplace, labour rights of women, sexual harassment in the workplace, violence against women, the rights of female migrant workers, and land rights of rural women. This transformation helped the Peking Women's Law Center build its capabilities. We can observe from the two-by-two matrix that the degree of empowerment was increasing at that time.

3.3.2.2. The Development of Advocacy Work: Repression and Growth

With the transformation of the organization, the Peking Women's Law Center began to focus on advocacy work and building up alliances across the country. In December 2000, the Peking Women's Law Center set up a "Chinese people's legal aid task force" (*Chinese Women Legal Aid*). And later in July 2002, there was the formation of the "Chinese women's legal aid task force." This women's network brought in more than 100 lawyers from all over the country.

According to the Peking Women's Law Center, as of 2007, this task force represented forty

cases, one third of them leading to nationwide repercussions. The Peking Women's Law Center also submitted more than forty law proposals to judicial departments and implementation institutions. Some of them have been adopted. During this period of development, the Peking Women's Law Center began to build its reputation.

In 2002, the Peking Women's Law Center was named one of the ten most influential NGOs by *China Finance and Economics*. One point worth noting on the two-by-two matrix is the significant drop in the degree of its empowerment in 2001. This is because Guo Jianmei took a leave of absence for a period of time.

Guo Jianmei explained this situation during our interviews. "I got serious melancholia at that time. I felt so depressed for three reasons. First of all, I had heard a lot of tragedies and I was traumatized too. Second, I faced so much repression. Third, people criticized the shift in our working method. People questioned why we could not help all of them. Everyone was saying that Guo Jianmei was finished" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, July 8, 2011.)

Facing this challenge, Guo Jianmei took some time to rest, and at the same time, the Peking Women's Law Center formed its first board committee. In addition, the society has become more accepting of NGOs. The years 2003 to 2009 represent the third period of time in which the uniqueness of the Peking Women's Law Center was distinguished. According to the Peking Women's Law Center, this period of time marked the maturation of organizational construction.[9] After the transformation it undertook in the second period of its development, the Peking Women's Law Center initiated another transformation during this later period, and decided to dedicate itself to the construction of a legal aid system in China.

In 2007, the Peking Women's Law Center invited other legal aid lawyers and founded the Public Interest Lawyers' Network for Women's Rights. In 2009, the Peking Women's Law Center expanded the services of this network and changed its name to China Public Interest Lawyers' Network. Through the present time, this network has recruited more than three hundred lawyers from more than twenty provinces and cities. The aim of this network is to provide legal aid for marginalized and vulnerable people.

It was also during this period of time that the Peking Women's Law Center began to reconstruct its own organization. In early 2003, the Peking Women's Law Center formed its first board committee, while at the same time starting a three-year capability-building program for its

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[9] The Development of Chinese Women's NGOs, my translation.

organizers. As it stated in its ten-year review statement, it was during this time period that its organizational culture was built. As a result, a steady increase in the degree of its empowerment since 2002 on the two-by-two matrix has been observed.

However, along with the growth of its reputation and services, interference from the police department and the Central Politics and Law Commission has become increasingly severe. But, contrary to expectations, facing interference from the central government can force organizers to further develop their capabilities. As Guo Jianmei stated, "After our Centre started its operation, we had attracted some social attention and the officers of Politics and Law commission came to ask us what exactly we intended to do. We were very skillful in handling that enquiry: we said that the Centre was an important classroom and foundation for teachers and students of Peking University's Law Department to participate in the realization of the rule of law" (Hsiung, Jaschok, Milwertz and Chan 2001, 227).

This statement is one piece of evidence that supports my argument that registration status provides protection for advocacy groups in China. In other words, being able to register implies a different meaning for advocacy groups than for other types of NGOs. In the case of the Peking Women's Law Center, its registration status has been used as a strategy to expand its political space for advocacy work.

As can be seen from this example, the organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center, when facing extraordinary political constraints in 2010, handled them with steady steps. As discussed previously, it is difficult for social groups to retain sponsorship from a governmental ministry or a party affiliation and then get approval from the local Civic Affairs Bureau for registration. But the two founders of the Peking Women's Law Center are graduates of the Law Department of Beijing University and this connection helped them to become affiliated with Beijing University.

However, Beijing University ended this affiliation in March 2010 when the organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center refused a request to keep its distance from sensitive women's legal cases. This revocation of affiliation brought a distinct impact on the Peking Women's Law Center, both on its organizers and on the center. As the founder, Guo Jianmei, stated, "To an entity that has been single-minded in purpose and enterprise for the last 15 years, expulsion from the Peking University family is a major and unexpected setback which affects more than just the

entity itself."[10]

The sentence "single-minded in purpose" can be read as the organizers' statement to the Central Politics and Law Commission of the Communist Party of China that challenging the regime's legitimacy, which was believed to be the main reason for the revocation, was never an agenda for the Peking Women's Law Center. After discussions with friends and supporters, the Peking Women's Law Center was renamed the Beijing Zhongze Women's Legal Counseling and Service Center. Zhongze is a Chinese term that can be translated as people will be benefited. At the same time, Guo Jianmei and her team also funded the Qian Qian Law Firm. As a result of the revocation of its registration status, a significant drop in the degree of autonomy on the two-by-two matrix was observed in 2011.

Based on field research and secondary materials, this research has concluded that the Peking Women's Law Center currently enjoys a high degree of empowerment, and a relatively lower degree of autonomy. There are several observations that account for this status. On the one hand, based on interviews with Guo Jianmei and other organizers, we understand that the police department and the Commission of Politics and Law have put serious pressure on the daily operations of the Peking Women's Law Center, which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

On the other hand, the Peking Women's Law Center has applied its various strategies to get itself involved in the policy-making process. One example is that since its establishment, the Peking Women's Law Center has voluntarily sent its legal suggestions to various ministries, hoping that its perspective would be incorporated into the policy-making processes. After several years of trying, some institutions, including the Ministry of Justice and the All China Women's Federation, have begun to invite the Peking Women's Law Center to join their legislative consultative meetings. The organizers' strategies will be discussed thoroughly in the following chapters.

3.3.3. Case Three: Common Language (CL)

Of three organizations that I studied, Common Language's use of vivid strategies in confronting its double marginalization buttresses my thesis of advocacy groups constituting a

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[10] Guo Jianmei's statement after the revocation of affiliation. Access on Aug. 26, 2012.
http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2010/06/farewell-beida-statement-by-guo-jianmei-and-her-team.html

confrontational movement.

3.3.3.1. Dual Pressures: Stigma and Governmental Interference

Common Language (CL), which was established on January 23, 2005, is a young lesbian group. As a lesbian group in Beijing, Common Language has encountered double marginalization status since its establishment. First of all, the stigma of homosexuality is still pervasive in the society. Based on interviews with lesbian organizers, many people in China still connect homosexuality with AIDS. Furthermore, institutional repression has reinforced the stigma of homosexuality.

Before 1997, homosexual practice was criminalized in China (*USA Today* 2010). In addition, it was not until 2001 that homosexuality stopped being classified as a mental illness by the Chinese Psychiatric Association. Even now, strict censorship is still applied to any homosexual content in the media (*Time* 2011).

Moreover, public activities of lesbian groups are often curbed and suspended by the police department. The founder of Common Language, Xu Bin (also known as Xian) stated during an interview with *USA Today*, "If something's different and you publicly promote it, (the authorities) worry it could get out of control and threaten their harmonious society" (2012). According to a news report by *Time* magazine, "The state's approach is sometimes called the Triple No Policy: no approval, no disapproval, no promotion" (2011).

Based on interviews with lesbian organizers as well as secondary materials, the first appearance of queer activity in Beijing took place on 1995, when a UN staff member, Susie, began to host parties and salons in her apartment. As He Xiaopei states, "Beijing *tongzhi* activity spaces first appeared in the summer of 1995" (2001, 50). He Xiaopei was the co-host of these gathering with Susie. During my interview with He Xiaopei, she recalled that they did not know how to invite queers to join the gathering. People just "spread the word to other queer friends one by one," and as a result, she and Susie did not know most of the people who showed up at their salons.

However, in 1999, police officers raided and disrupted the first lesbian cultural festival and the queer gathering was abruptly dismissed. It was not until the return of the funder of Common Language, Xu Bin, that lesbian organizing appeared again. During my interviews with several other young lesbian leaders, they all indicated that Xu Bin is the one who introduced them to

other lesbian organizers. Talking softly and always with a smile, Xu Bin was described by an women's activist, "She is constantly in working mode; even when we hang out at bars, she still talks or thinks about work" (interviewed by author, China, March 18, 2013).

Xu Bin recalls her first attempts at community organizing, "I posted an announcement on a lesbian website, and asked if there was anyone who wanted to form a group to please contact me" (interviewed by author, Taipei, Taiwan, Sep. 8, 2010). Xu Bin shared the memory of the first gathering day with us. "Many people came that day. Some of them knew each other. But the majority had not met each other before this gathering. Or we had met each other before, but we never had the chance to discuss lesbian issues. We asked everyone to suggest what tasks she would want this new group to focus on" (interviewed by author, China, April 23, 2011).

One participant of lesbian organizing since 1995 describes the important role of Common Language. "The work of Common Language is very important to lesbians in China because it organizes many activities and many people. Xu Bin has organized a group of students and professional people. Common Language provides a platform for every one of us to express our passion and to contribute our abilities. We all participate in its activities" (interviewed by author, Nov. 14, 2012).

A senior organizer of Common Language joined this gathering and has worked first as volunteer and now as an organizer. She remembers that "people had various ideas for different missions for this new group. However, I remember that the majority opinion was to publish a lesbian magazine. Some people wanted to form a hotline. Common Language did set up a hotline and we have sustained this service until now. There were also some wishes for training programs. Common Language has carried out this mission too" (interviewed by author, Aug. 12, 2011).

3.3.3.2. From Community Building to Advocacy Movements

According to Xu Bin, there have been two periods of development for Common Language. The first period was from 2005 to 2007. The major tasks of Common Language during these three years were training activists, supporting other grassroots lesbian organizations nationwide, and most importantly, eliminating discrimination against LGBTI people in the society. To eliminate the public idea of the connection between homosexuality and AIDS, Common Language initiated the project Lesbian Health Research in 2005.

One senior activist of Common Language shared the motivation behind the Lesbian Health Research. "Common Language had just formed, and we set up a project to let college students carry out their dreams. This project was initiated by these students because they were eager to understand the life experiences of other lesbians. The reason why they named it health research is because we could only get financial support from an AIDS institute" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

From 2005 to 2008, Common Language conducted various projects to develop its own capabilities. By training volunteers, it also helped Common Language to sustain its human resources. As one interviewee shares, "I felt busy conducting that research project, but at the same time, I felt that I had learned a lot. Therefore I stayed on to be a volunteer after the end of this research project" (interviewed by author, Oct. 15, 2012).

One senior activist shares her observation of the development of Common Language during this period of time. "We began to conduct larger scale research projects in 2007. Several of our key organizers joined us in 2007 as volunteers on these research projects. At the same time, we helped with the formation of lesbian groups in other provinces" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011). As a result of the organizers' efforts, we can observe significant increases in both the degree of autonomy and the degree of empowerment from 2005 to 2008.

The second period of development is from 2008 to the present day. Since 2008, Common Language has dedicated itself to advocacy work for lesbian rights in China. During my interview with Xu Bin, she explained the reason why Common Language has shifted its focus to advocacy work. After three years of effort, there are more and more organizations that also spend their efforts supporting other LGBTI groups nationwide. In contrast, there has been less advocacy organization for LGBTI rights.

During this period of time, Common Language has used various strategies in its advocacy work. First, Common Language has tried to get involved in the policy-making process. Common Language joined other women's groups in providing another perspective when studying the issue of domestic violence. From 2007 to 2009, Common Language organized volunteers and put the organization's resources into its study of the "Lesbian Anti-Domestic Violence Program." By working on this project, Common Language also has build up alliances with other women's groups.

Also from 2007 to 2009, Common Language worked on another project, the Blood

71

Donation Law Research. At that time, gays and lesbians were both not allowed to donate blood. Common Language publicized the findings of this research and also tried to lobby the Health Department. The great news is that recently the Chinese government announced that it has made changes to its blood donation laws, and since July 2012 has lifted the ban on blood donation from lesbians.

In addition to its work involving policy, Common Language has also inaugurated vivid cultural events to raise the public's awareness of queer issues. On Valentine's Day 2009, Common Language launched a same-sex marriage event that was held at Qianmen. Qianmen is a commercial district and is also a tourist hotspot. Two dressed-up brides and two grooms took pictures with passengers while organizers distributed roses and flyers about gay marriage issues.

This event attracted several news reports from the international media. Most importantly, the government-owned *China Daily* also reported this event. This was the first time that a state-owned newspaper reported on a public lesbian event. However, this does not mean that the central and local authorities have loosened their censorship regarding lesbian organizing.

In answer to a question during my interview, Xu Bin said, "We will only inform a very few friendly news reporters in advance. For most of the media, we call them after the event is carried out. Otherwise, we will face the risk that the event will be called off by the police department before being brought into operation" (interviewed by author, China, April 16, 2013).

Another pilot cultural task is called the Beijing Lesbian Community Development Oral History Program. This was started in 2009, and can be traced back to 1995. This project encompasses a variety of the lesbian movement in Beijing.

In summary, the relationship between Common Language and the central authority in 2013 was marked by increases in both the degree of empowerment and autonomy. But, as a relatively young organization, Common Language still works on organizational development while its organizers try to build up channels for participating in the policy-making processes. However, the stigma of homosexuality as well as monitoring by the police department have made it tough for Common Language to host public events. As a result, Common Language has not enjoyed great degree of autonomy.

Interactions between the government and social groups can result in political opportunity or political constraint, and it seems that the chosen strategy of the organizers will decide whether it is possible to expand the political space of each group. In the next section, this research will

discuss the factors that play important roles in affecting the attitude of the central authorities toward social groups. These factors are derived from my field research, secondary materials and my interviews with major participants of the women's and lesbian movements.

3.4. Driving Forces in Shifting Boundaries Set by the Central Authorities

At the 17th National Congress of Communist Party of China, Hu Jintao asked leaders of the government and the party to make "building a harmonious society" the first priority of his agenda (*People. cn*). This talk was in response to the increased social conflicts that resulted from the acceleration of economic growth.

The goal of this research is to evaluate if the relationship between the central authorities and the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have changed after the 17th National Congress as Hu's statement can be viewed as a political opportunity for collective action.

Indeed, the relationship between the central authorities and various social groups sometimes changes dramatically. Based on field research, this research has concluded that there are four factors which play significant roles in the relationships between the three organizations that I studied and the central authority: steps to ensure the regime's legitimacy; pressure from the international community; cooperative relationships with local governments; and funding from international donors.

3.4.1. Ensuring the Regime's Legitimacy

Maintaining the regime's legitimacy has been the first priority of the Chinese central authorities. This research has concluded that there are four factors that engender tension between social groups and the central authorities: the suspicious attitude of the central authorities; the gathering of a significant number of people; the gathering of several famous figures; and events which attract media attention.

The suspicious attitude of the central authorities toward social groups is a prevailing factor. One governmental officer shared his observation during our interview, that "our government controls every charity group because it is afraid that NGOs will obtain control of resources if they join in charity work. Furthermore, another reason to forbid most NGOs is because the government feels that it cannot control each of them. As a result, the government makes

registration tough for NGOs."

My field research also confirms the above statement. Only registered foundations are allowed to accept public donations, but the requirement for registering, as a foundation is too high a barrier for most social groups. Therefore, social groups rely mostly on international funding. It was only after 2011 that the Beijing city government began to contract services from social groups. In other words, if a social group provides social services for citizens, this group will receive subsidies from the city government. However, the prerequisite for receiving subsidies is to be a registered group, which has proven to be a challenge for the three organizations that I studied.

This research concludes that there are two kinds of actions that attract the most attention from the central authorities. The first is the gathering of a significant number of people or several important public figures. Several organizers from different lesbian groups have shared this experience. Some of them were paid a visit at their homes by police officers because they were contact persons for events. It is frightening that these organizers only revealed their pseudonyms on event contact information, yet the police could find their real names and home addresses, indicating that they were under intense surveillance.

Moreover, almost every activity where a sizeable number of people gather has been cancelled by the security departments. Some examples of cancelled events are queer art activities in Beijing and Shanghai, the Independent Queer Film Festival, and the anti homophobia event that college students from several universities organized.

The second kind of activity that has attracted concern from the central authorities is those that result in a considerable amount of media reporting. Several organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center have pointed out that they believe their organizing work for the Chinese Women's Legal Aid Task Force and the Chinese People's Legal Aid Task Force were the cause of the revocation of their affiliation by Beijing University.

According to the organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center, there are two reasons why their organizing work attracts the media's attention and then the attention of the authorities. First of all, the mission of legal aid lawyers is to fight for people's rights. Secondly, there were more than one hundred lawyers who joined the Chinese Women's Legal Aid Task Force, and more than three hundred lawyers with the Chinese People Legal Aid Task Force nationwide. One organizer of the Peking Women's Law Center said, "This kind of assembling has attracted media

reporting, and as a result, it also drew attention from the central authorities" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China. Aug. 17, 2011).

However, the alliance of legal aid has crossed the boundaries of the central government, and as a result, the Peking Women's Center was suffered more repressive interference. There are three reasons which explain this cross of line. First of all, organizing is always viewed as a threat to the regime. As described in a news report in *Newsweek*, "As with other groups, official opposition to gays occurs only when the government feels threatened by solidarity activities or organizing."

Second, for all kinds of organizing, legal aid lawyers have become a primary target of repression. According to Tony Saich, during Hu Jintao's administration, "A new target of this repression has been urban lawyers and activists who tried to defend local protestors in class action suits against the local government" (2007, 36).

Third, the nationwide media reports of these kinds of gatherings also elicit interference from the central authorities. Cai's research on public resistance identifies two factors that increase the likelihood of state intervention in public protests, namely, that a protest that involves casualties or that garners significant media exposure (2008, 169).

The media has always been strictly overseen, as Jonathan Hassid states, "…economic liberalization has not translated into much political freedom. Beijing has made clear that it will continue to exercise very tight control over the news media in the short and medium term" (2008, 147). Therefore, it is possible that the central authorities might feel threatened by nationwide news reports of the organizing activities of legal aid lawyers.

Based on my interviews with the founders of the three organizations I studied, all of them independently emphasized that challenging the regime is not one of their goals for organizing. This emphasis reveals their understanding of the boundaries of tolerance of the central government. As Guo Jianmei stated, "We do not want to challenge the socialist system, neither do we want to challenge the one-party system" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China. Nov.18, 2009). Moreover, this emphasis also illustrates a dilemma for their organizing efforts. This study has found that sometimes the organizers will restrict themselves from various ways of protesting which might lead the central authorities to feel threatened.

Furthermore, this kind of self-censorship also undermines their mobilization of more people. Teresa Wright presents a similar observation after comparing student movements in China and

Taiwan. "This suggests that protesters in illiberal contexts face a conundrum: narrow mobilization that is the ultimate outcome of state repression may be insufficient to propel real change, yet mobilization that includes groups which the regime finds threatening is likely to provoke repression" (2008, 53).

Anthony Spires' research on China's grassroots NGOs found the similar situation."It is also to the benefit of grassroots NGOs that many express no antistate, antiparty political agenda" (2011, 34. See also Keech-Marx 2008). However, based on my field research, I will argue that this kind of self-restriction helps an advocacy group to expand its political space for social organizing and for social changes. The survival of the organization is the first priority before the emergence of political liberalization.

In conclusion, based on interviews and field research, this study has found that the founders of these three organizations are aware of these limitations that have been set up by the central authorities. At the same time, these organizers have developed different strategies to balance their advocacy work and their relationship with the government. In continuing their advocacy work, these social groups have expanded their political space for social organizing.

3.4.2. Cooperative Relationships with Local Governments

Connections with the government has been recognized as an important factor when discussing social organizing in China (see for example Spires 2011). However, rather than emphasizing the connections with the central government, this research argues that building cooperative relationships with local governments is even more crucial for advocacy groups in expanding their political spaces because this cooperative relationship allows advocacy groups to get involved in and carry out public policy. This is important since it will win credibility for advocacy groups from the central government and from the society.

Even before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, local policy experiments to try out various ways to solve problems had been encouraged by the central leaders (Heilmann 2011). The term "experimental points" and "model experiences" are frequently applied by local governments when they announce an innovative policy.

In fact, the most important institutional reforms were carried out by single or several provinces or even sub-provinces before being implemented nationwide. The most significant example was the economic reform in 1978, which was first tried out in Shenzhen and was called

the Special Economic Zone.

As previously discussed, the launching of economic reform brought dynamic changes to China. One feature has been the decentralization of policy-making decisions. As Florini, Lai, and Tan state, "The state structure itself has become far more decentralized, allowing for local government initiative and transforming the dynamic between central authority in Beijing and local provincial and sub-provincial levels of party and government" (2012, 3).

By decentralizing the decision-making power on social issues, such as education, environmental protection, and city planning, the central government has retained the power to set the overall objectives, while at the same time being the arbitrator whenever there is a conflict of interest between ordinary people and the local governments. According to Florini, Lai, and Tan, "This style of reform has been called 'experimentation under hierarchy,' requiring a tricky balance between control and freedom" (2012, 5).

As a result of this policy, local governments are responsible for the welfare of local people, which has brought political opportunities for social groups. Based on interviews, this study has found a high degree of collaboration between local governments and both the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center.

Building working relationships with local governments by cooperating with local women's federations is the major strategy of the Maple Center. There are several significant examples. From 1992 to 2004, the Maple Center worked with the Tianjin Women's Federation to carry out an experimental project, called the Community Intervention into Family Problems, in a Tianjin municipal community.

In addition, the Maple Center cooperated with the Beijing Xuanwu District Women's Federation in 1998, to run the Ark Family Center, which offers psychological and social services to single-parent families. The Maple Center and Beijing Xuanwu District Women's Federation further developed this program in 2004, and expanded the services to providing group therapy for single mothers. Up to the year 2013, this expansion of services covers eight neighborhood committees in this district.

The Peking Women's Law Center also cooperates on its project through the channel of local women's federations. For example, the Peking Women's Law Center has worked with the Hunan Provincial Women's Federation for the design of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act in Hunan Province. Hunan was the first province in China that passed an act to prevent domestic

violence. Florini, Lai and Tan explained the intention of local governments to choose to cooperate with social groups, since local governments can "explore ways of harnessing non-state actors to deal with social issues and complement weakness in state-led approaches" (2012, 6).

The cooperation between local governments and social groups benefits both sides. For local governments, different cooperation projects may attract the central authority's attention to their work. For social groups, this cooperation provides them with freedom and a platform to practice their aim of social change. According to Cai, "In the case of China, despite the nondemocratic system, local governments, which are most commonly targeted by protesters, face constraints in dealing with popular resistance, which creates the possibility for protesters to achieve successful resistance" (2010, 186).

Hence, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language all have tried very hard to build working relationships with local governments. However, unlike the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, Common Language has not built up collaborative relationships with local governments. The stigma of homosexuality is one major reason. According to a staff member of one local women's federation who is a supporter of the lesbian movement, "I talked to several leaders of women's federations. Some of them said there was no single lesbian in their province. Some of them stated that they never met any lesbians. There was also one officer that said that lesbian issues did not qualify for help because lesbians depraved themselves" (interviewed by author, China. April. 17, 2013).

However, Common Language has not given up its efforts to build connections with local governments. One new strategy of Common Language that was observed is to build up relationships with local governments by working with women's groups in collaborative projects. Furthermore, this study has found that a personal connection is an important factor that affects the possibility of building a relationship with local governments. The founders of the Maple Center and the Peking Women Law Center, Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei, both worked for the government before they set up their organizations, and their experiences provided them with connections to governmental officers.

Wang Xingjuan was a member of the first group of female journalists. After 1949, Wang joined the *Xinhua Daily* (Chinese: Xīnhuá Rìbào). *Xinhua Daily* is owned by the Communist Party of China and was the first public newspaper published in the People's Republic of China. During her journalistic career, Wang got an exclusive opportunity to write a bibliography of Mao

Zedong's second wife, He Zizhen. Wang retired from the Beijing Publishing Group in 1988. As for Guo Jianmei, she previously worked at the Ministry of Justice, The All China Federation of Women, and The All China Association of Lawyers.

Compared to the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, the organizers of Common Language lack personal connections with either the party or local governments. This is why Common Language has tried for many years to build up relationships with local governments or local women's federations.

There is one recent development worth noting that might change the working relationship between social groups and local governments. In March 2011, Beijing municipality announced that the local government would purchase more than three hundred social services from social groups. Based on the social groups' experiences in Taiwan, this purchasing might enhance the relationship between local governments and social groups, and as a result, there might be more service provider groups and many fewer advocacy groups. The main reason behind this possible scenario is the lack of financial resources. This study will explain this more in the following section.

3.4.3. Pressure from the International Community

This study proposes a second factor that has influence on the relationship between social groups and the central authorities, namely, the pressure from the international community. Most importantly, this factor is also the answer to one of the major questions behind this study, that is, why have the central authorities not chosen to crush the three organizations?

Even though the three organizations I studied enjoy different degrees of nationwide renown, they are still considered small NGOs in terms of their human and financial resources. Most critically, all of them focus on advocacy work and from time to time their actions are viewed as dangerous and have attracted interference from the police department and the Politics and Law Commission.

This study argues that the pressure of the international community plays an important role in helping these three groups to maintain a certain degree of autonomy. Even though some news reports argue that the pressure from the international community is not a major concern of the Chinese government, this study finds contrary evidence.

According to my interviews with organizers, one of their common experiences is to be invited to have tea with a representative from the police department or the Politics and Law Commission after a visit from important figures from foreign countries. The government representatives are always curious about the conversation between the organizers and their foreign visitors.

In addition to the Maple Center's experience of being questioned as to why Hillary Clinton only asked to visit them, there are other examples that demonstrate the suspicious attitude of the government towards the connections between social groups and foreign groups. For example, the opening ceremony of the Beijing LGBT center had to be canceled after pressure from the police department, and this pressure was applied after the LGBTI center of Los Angeles, California, visited the Beijing LGBT center.

According to several of my interviewees, the more interest that Western society shows towards an organization, the more scrutiny the government will impose on the organization. One of major leaders of lesbian organizing in Beijing shared her observation that "When foreign media reported our activity or when foreigners participated in our activities, we were questioned by the police. The reason is simply that they think you are part of anti-government organizations. The government accuses them of holding the flag of lesbian activities while actually trying to challenge the authority of the government" (interviewed by author. Oct. 15, 2012).

In addition, based on observations of several organizers, the government increased its degree of scrutiny and interference after the 2008 Olympic Games. According to one organizer who has participated in the lesbian movement since the first wave of social organizing, "Our government cleans up any suspicious activities before the start of international events which are held in China; for example, the Yuanmingyuan artist village was cleaned up in 1995 before China hosted the Fourth UN Women's Conference. At that time (2008) the scrutiny lasted even after the Olympic Games were over. Our government thinks this is a way to present a better image of itself for the foreign media" (interviewed by author. Nov. 14, 2012).

Chen Dingding's (2009) research confirms that the concern of China's leaders involves the pressure from the international community. Chen points out that after the late 1970s, the Chinese leaders reconstructed the state's identity to that of a modern socialist state, and this redefinition of the state's identity has led to an increased willingness of Chinese leaders to abide by the norms of international human rights.

Daniel Lynch's study on the Chinese elites' responses to the norm of "democracy" reached a similar conclusion. "Democracy as a global norm does influence the Chinese discourse." Lynch's research explains the influence of global constitutive norm. "They (elites) cannot simply ignore democracy and pretend it to be completely irrelevant to Chinese conditions" (2007, 718). The elites that Lynch studies include Party officials and experts of governmental think tank. These elites pay attention to the international community and make suggestions based on the need of Chinese government.

The founders of the three organizations that I studied understand the government's attitude toward the international community. And therefore, since their establishment, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language have all worked very hard to win an international reputation. To cite a few examples, in 2007, Wang Xingjuan won the Global Women's Leadership Award from Vital Voice. In 2010 Guo Jianmei was awarded the Simone De Beauvoir Prize, and during the same year, she was named China's first anti-AIDS discrimination ambassador by the International Labor Organization. In 2011, Guo Jianmei was awarded the International Women of Courage Award by the United States Department of State. As for Common Language, the organization won the Netherland Mama Cash "She Changed the World" Award in 2008.

In conclusion, building connections with international communities has created both political opportunities and political constraint for the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Center, and Common Language. One the one hand, the organizers' connections with foreign groups or foreign political figures have led to interference from the government. On the other hand, these connections have created leverage for these three organizations to negotiate their political space with the government. This leverage includes participating in training programs, learning international norms in order to deepen their advocacy work. Based on field research, this study has concluded that despite increased repression and monitoring by the government, these three organizations have benefited from international recognition.

3.4.4. Funding from International Donors

One crucial factor for expanding political space for advocacy groups is support from international donors. Financial resource plays an important role in sustaining social groups' autonomy. In addition, a registered group has to pay maintenance fee to its *gua kao*(sponsor)

agency. Furthermore, a social group without NGO registration status is not allowed to hold public fund-raising activities, nor is it exempt from taxes, and local governments will only purchase services from a registered NGO. Therefore, financial resources from international donors have played an important role in maintaining the daily operations of advocacy groups in China.

Support from the Ford Foundation was the first financial resource that helped the establishment of the Peking Women's Law Center and it was a grant from the Global Foundation that gave the Maple Center a big hand in 1992 in setting up the first women's hotline in China. As for Common Language, international foundations have been the only financial resource for its advocacy work.

However, as previously discussed, because of perceived threats resulting from the Color Revolutions of Central Asia, the central authorities have squeezed the channels for international funding. The changing requirement for donations in foreign exchange is one example. Wang Xingjuan was interviewed by a Chinese newspaper, *Huaxia*, and she mentioned that after this requirement change, the sponsorship of US $100,000 from the Ford Foundation was returned and needed to be reapplied for.

Interviews with organizers also confirm the tougher situation in getting international funding. Guo Jianmei stated, "The central authorities categorize most international donors. I would use a metaphor here that the government marks each foreign foundation as red light, yellow light, and green light. The red light international foundations are believed to support the anti-government activities in Tibet and Xinjiang, and we (social groups) cannot accept money from these organizations. This categorization system is fluid, which means some green light foundations could become yellow light foundations, for example, the Ford Foundation" (interviewed by author. Beijing, China. July 8, 2011).

The Ford Foundation used to be an exceptional case. Obtaining approval from Deng Xiao-Ping in 1979, the Ford Foundation secured an unusual sponsorship from the Chinese Academy of Social Science, which is viewed as the highest intellectual governmental institution. Based on interviews, this study has found out not only that in recent years, the government holds a different opinion about the Ford Foundation, but that the Ford Foundation has also gradually shifted its policy in making grants. Recently it has focused more on poverty and social development in African countries, which has caused some women's groups in China to lose their

major financial support.

In fact, the background of international donors affects the relationships between social groups and local governments. One high-level officer of a local women's federation stated, "We know we cannot accept the money of some foundations'. Our government does allow us to accept it. We won't take it" (interviewed by author. April 17, 2013). Both organizers of the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center indicate that local women's federations ask the background of international sponsorships before considering collaborating on a project.

Furthermore, the organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center have experienced that projects were called off several times in the preparation stage because of the concerns of higher levels of local governments or local women federations regarding international sponsorships. One governmental officers points out that "the Peking Women's Law Center should not receive money from foreign donors which are viewed as a dangerous threat by our government. They (the Peking Women's Law Center) are creating their own trouble" (interviewed by author. Beijing, China. Aug. 18, 2011).

How to gain financial support from international donors, while at the same time, maintaining its relationship with both the central authorities and the local governments has become one important strategic question for each women's group in expanding its own political space. This study will further discuss their strategies in the following chapters.

3.5. Shifting Boundaries of the Central Authorities and the Changing State-Society Relationships

This research has found that political space cannot be assumed to exist before the formation of social groups. The Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language have shared experiences of revocation or failure of registration, cancellation of events, difficulty of fund raising, and constantly being invited to "have tea" with security departments.

However, each group has developed its own strategies to survive and to further expand its political space gradually. Most importantly, they carry on their advocacy work nationwide. I believe that under a repressive regime, these achievements are indeed confrontational in nature. Therefore, the aforementioned assumption of social movement theory should be reconsidered.

The real challenge for social groups is to figure out how much more the boundaries of the central government can be extended. A founder of a lesbian group outside Beijing who has been

paid visits by policemen several times since 2005 and still insists on lesbian organizing, stated, "Until now, I have not learned the boundaries of our government. And I have tried to understand the boundaries. Once when I was asked to have the 'tea talk' with the local government, I told them I would like to have more opportunities to communicate with them. The reason why I did so is because I want to learn their boundaries" (interviewed by author. April 22, 2011).

An academic expert who also participates in women's organizing shared her observations. "I think everyone knows there is a limit to what our government will tolerate in the activities of social groups. But I think most people imagine this limit as a narrow boundary. From my perspective, I think we need to try every possibility before we say that our government will not agree" (interviewed by author. Nov. 25, 2012).

This statement indicates not only the dynamic relationship between the governments and social groups, but also a movement formed by social groups to expand each possible boundary. Founders and organizers are always trying to find the boundaries of the central authorities. And learning from each interaction with the central authorities, they have tried to expand their own political space.

In other words, it is crucial to understand the reactions of the central government in order to develop strategies for the organizations' survival and sustainability. Based on field research, I have concluded that the Chinese government is a quite adaptive institution, and organizers have developed some strategies in communicating with the central government over the years.

There are four kinds of leverage that are commonly applied by the social groups: the regime's desire to retain its legitimacy; pressure from the international community; building cooperative relationship with local governments; and support from international donors, to counter the repressive interference of the central authorities. How the organizers grasp every political opportunity and develop varied strategies will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: Autonomy or Empowerment? Comparative Analysis of Organizational Strategies

In Chapter 3, I proposed the argument that there exist clear governmental boundaries for the advocacy work of social groups. However, these boundaries are not fixed, but can be shifted by strategically applying four sources of leverage: the regime's desire to maintain its legitimacy; cooperative relationships with local governments; pressure from the international community; and funding from international donors.

This chapter generalizes from my field observations of the similar struggles faced by the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language. These struggles includes failure to gain registration status, difficulties in building a relationship with the government; encountering political forces that marginalize self-mobilized groups, and facing the prohibition against confrontational movements.

For each struggle, my study has identified three to four strategies used by the activists to survive and to further expand their organizational political space. With respect to these strategies, the central question of this chapter is: what kinds of strategies have helped these three women's advocacy groups to survive and to expand their political space? And furthermore: what considerations did the organizers weigh in choosing their particular strategies? And what has been the impact of each chosen strategy? Only by answering these questions can we see the whole picture of this confrontational movement.

One significant finding is that the organization's developmental stage plays a decisive role in determining whether the activists will pick a confrontational or a cooperative strategy. My study has reached the conclusion that, in order to increase its organization's degree of empowerment, women's activists will choose a more cooperative strategy, while organizers who emphasize their organization's degree of autonomy will pick a more confrontational strategy.

In my analyses, an increase in the degree of empowerment is defined as including gaining more popular support, raising more funds, increasing recruitment, generating more attention from the media, and making connections with other social groups nationally and internationally.

As to the definition of degree of autonomy, my study borrows the idea of Jude Howell, that an organization is autonomous if it meets the following conditions: first, it is able to set its own goals, determine its own priorities, and decide its own structures and principles of organization;

second, it is able to appoint its own personnel and recruit its own members; and third, it relies primarily on its own sources of funding. (Jude Howell, 2000. p. 127)

By analyzing the repressive interference these three groups have faced as well as the activists' strategic responses, this chapter describes the confrontational nature of the advocacy movement of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language. This definition of the confrontational nature of an advocacy movement differs from Tarrow's definition of a confrontational movement, previously discussed in Chapter 1 as an intended direct disruptive confrontation of authority.

In Chapter 3, the severe intervention of and repression by the government that women's advocacy groups have encountered at every level of their organizational development was chronologically documented. By presenting the history of the activists' struggles, Chapter 3 provided evidence of the confrontational nature of these three women's groups, and this history will be further analyzed in this chapter.

My study proposes to apply the term "soft confrontation" to describe the daily survival strategies of women's advocacy groups   as well as their strategies to develop organizational advocacy work. As was earlier noted and analyzed in Chapter 3, these groups have also expanded the boundaries that the government set for their political space.

According to the school of political opportunity structure, changing political opportunities and constraints will trigger the incentives for contentious collective actions (Tarrow 2010, 6). My research borrows this idea of political opportunities and constraints but applies it in a different dimension. My study focuses on the resulting political opportunities or constraints that result from the activists' chosen strategies. Furthermore, the results of each chosen strategy can be double sided, creating both political opportunity and setting up constraints for the political space of advocacy work.

In other words, there is no political openness or constraint that will cause a specific result in the political space of an advocacy group. Rather, the result depends on the activists' reactions when faced with changing political circumstances. As James Mittleman points out, "Rather, democracy in China today is regarded as a way to resolve problems and to make adjustments in politics. Not easily amenable to an abstract theoretical model, the content of democracy in China is an ongoing negotiation while the regime strives for legitimacy and other actors seek political space" (2011, 174).

Studying the considerations of the activists for each chosen survival or confrontational strategy helps us to understand the dynamics of the state-social group relationship. Based on field research, this chapter is able to conclude that there is a causal relationship between political opportunity or constraint and the organizational degree of autonomy and empowerment of women's advocacy groups.

The main argument of this chapter is that if the degree of organizational empowerment is their major concern, activists will pick a cooperative strategy. However, if activists want to increase their organizational autonomy, a much more confrontational strategy will be used.

This chapter first presents the four main struggles and confrontational strategies of the activists of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language. For the struggle to gain registration status, the organizers' strategies were multiple and included going through the Party's internal channels to explain their situation as well as trying to register in other counties. Despite all their efforts, in the end, the organizers could only choose to register as a people-run non-enterprise unit (hereafter private unit).

Their second struggle was trying to build a relationship with the government. This struggle underscores the uniqueness of the dilemma of advocacy groups in an authoritarian regime. The dilemma is how to achieve a balance between being involved in the public policy area and maintaining a challenging attitude. This chapter concludes that for this struggle, the activists have relied on four strategies: figuring out the boundaries of the government, building up communication channels, submitting professional suggestions during the law-making process, and building a working relationship with the local government.

The third struggle was encountering political forces that aimed at marginalizing women's advocacy groups. Here the activists used three different strategies. First, the organizers solved the problem of the lack of economic and human resources by recruiting volunteers and by extending their connections in the society. Second, in order to ease governmental pressure on the organizers, the women's groups held programs to train the trainers. Their third confrontational strategy was to build up their groups' relationship with the media.

The fourth struggle of the women's advocacy groups was facing the prohibition of confrontation with the authorities. To break through this boundary, women activists first build alliances with other social groups. Second, the organizers empowered other grassroots groups to do advocacy work. And finally, women activists built up their own communities in order to

promote their goal of social change.

In summary, my study found out that every time women's activists tried to expand their political space for social change, they encountered repressive interference. Each struggle and challenge could have resulted in the dissolution of each organization. However, the survival of each women's advocacy group demonstrates both the success of the organizers' chosen strategies and the adaptive attitude of the central government. Furthermore, the similarities of the chosen strategies indicate that the boundaries of the central government have become clearer. Because the similarities indicate the effectiveness of strategies, and further confirm the boundaries.

Facing these severe challenges, these three women's groups did not choose to drop their advocacy work. Instead, the evidence has shown that the organizers learn from every disruptive force, and develop vibrant strategies, which are identified as "soft confrontation" in this study.

4.1. Struggle 1: Failure to Gain Registration Status

My study uses the term "degree of autonomy" to describe an organization's ability to independently decide its daily operation. In this context, failure to gain registration status has caused a significant backlash for the degree of autonomy of the three women's advocacy groups. In general, gaining registration is so important because it is recognition of legal status of social groups and means protection for an advocacy group in a repressive regime.

The Maple Center encountered this challenge in 1996. The Peking Women's Law Center twice suffered revocation of its registration status, first in 1996 and then in 2010. Finally, Common Language has never tried to register as an NGO, and has only recently registered as a private unit.

There are four significant results of a failure to gain NGO registration status. First, activists have experienced police inquiries regarding their legal status, including tax issues. Second, without registering as an NGO, social groups are not allowed to fundraise nor to receive governmental subsidies.

Third, a social group with registration status means its credibility is guaranteed by the government. This is especially important for advocacy groups in China. Being registered means an advocacy group can get protection from its sponsoring agency to carry out its agenda for social change.

As an example, the Peking Women's Law Center twice encountered challenges that led to

the revocation of its registration status. The first time was in October 1996, and the second time was on March 25, 2010, when Beijing University announced the end of its sponsorship of the Peking Women's Law Center.

The reason for the first revocation of the Peking Women's Law Center's registration status resulted from a decision of the founder, Guo Jianmei, that attracted the attention of the government. As a journalist, Guo Jianmei, decided to run the center's advertisement in almost every newspaper on March 8, 1996 in order to build up her organization's visibility. However, after this action, the law firm that provided the sponsorship for Guo Jianmei's organization got phone call from both the Beijing Legislative and Political Committee and the Justice Bureau, and as a result, stopped their affiliation with the Peking Women's Law Center. The second incident happened in 2010 and attracted attention from the central government.

After suffering the first cancellation of sponsorship, it took a long while and much effort before Guo Jianmei was able to gain sponsorship from Beijing University. However, Beijing University revoked their relationship after encountering governmental pressure. One organizer of the Peking Women's Law Center shared her understanding of this challenge. "Representatives of Beijing University asked to have a meeting with us. In the meeting, they asked us to stop our advocacy work. They said we can only maintain this affiliation if we focus only on research. We refused" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, July 9, 2011).

Guo Jianmei shared the sequences of this revocation. "Before this revocation, our center had just received a grant from National Legal Aid Foundation. The amount was not much, but this grant meant a lot for us. This grant was the first financial resource we got from the government. But ten days after the revocation, we got an official letter, saying that after research, they decided to withdraw this grant" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, July 8, 2011).

Guo continued. "The impact of revocation is international. Our center was invited to join a conference about legal aid practices. This conference was held in Singapore. The Chinese government also sent their representatives to participate in this conference. After the revocation, they told me that our center did not need to be there" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, July 8, 2011).

In other words, losing registration status also meant that the credibility of the Peking Women's Law Center was also weakened. It is especially true that in a repressive regime, most governmental institutions will be hesitant to work with an advocacy group that doesn't have

registration status, since most governmental institutions won't want to attract any additional attention from the central authorities.

Fourth, losing registration status also causes international institutions to be more cautious when working with an advocacy group, since most international institutions emphasize their priority of carrying out their mission in the repressive country. From the perspectives of international donors, the revocation of registration status is an critical signal referring that the government has concerns regarding one particular advocacy groups.

Each advocacy group has adopted different strategies for dealing with the issue of losing their registration status. For example, Wang Xingjuan, the founder of the Maple Center, pointed out the problem of losing registration status. "I think being unable to register as an NGO has caused a serious problem for our center. All levels of government have begun to purchase services from NGOs, and the first criterion for receiving governmental subsidies is possessing registration status."

The registration status of the Maple Center was revoked in 1996, after the attempted visit of the U.S. former first lady, Hillary Clinton, during the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in 1995, which was held in Beijing.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the China Academy of Management Science revoked its patronized relationship with the WRI (the predecessor of the Maple Center), and the WRI could no longer use the China Academy of Management Science in its title. Wang Xingjuan tried many ways to register as a not-for-profit organization. and stated, "I even asked my father to go to a village remote from Beijing to register. Because I was afraid governmental officers there would recognize me, therefore, I asked my father to do it for me. He successfully registered our organization However, this successful registration only lasted several days after a phone call from a higher authority ended it" (interviewed by author, Taipei, Taiwan, Sep. 10, 2010).

Wang Xingjuan had no other alternative but to register her organization as a people-run non-enterprise unit, and to change the title of this organization to the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center (MWPCC). During the interview, Wang explained the reasoning behind the choice of a new title. Wang recalls, "It was fall when I had tried every possibility to register my organization as a NGO. While I was feeling so upset, I looked around and saw the beauty of maple trees. Maple trees are full of vitality and this encouraged me a lot. I decided to name the organization the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center"

(interviewed by author, Taipei, Taiwan, Sep. 10, 2010).

4.1.1. Strategies to Solve the Problem of Losing Registration Status

As previously mentioned, activists have chosen different strategies in dealing with registration issues. Here are the explanations. Even when the results of the activists' strategy is the same, namely, registering as a private unit, Guo Jianmei and Wang Xingjuan have chosen quite different strategies when facing the crisis of losing their registration status.

One similarity of their strategies is to make use their personal connections. Both Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei worked for the government before they founded their organizations and therefore, they have maintained good connections with some officials in the central government.

However, Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei made use of different strategies in utilizing their connections. When the registration of the Maple Center was revoked in 1996, many representatives of the foreign media asked for interviews with Wang Xingjuan. Wang refused all of them because "I wanted to appeal within the system. I am a member of Communist Party of China, and I believed I could make the authorities understand our center was not a threat" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April. 25, 2011).

Wang Xingjuan approached the Party many times to explain the mission of her organization, with an emphasis on not challenging the regime's legitimacy. Wang's effort received a response from the government. "The Ministry of State Security received my letter. They made a phone call and informed me that the National Security Law does not forbid contact between citizens and citizens of foreign countries'. They said, 'Everything that you were doing was very good.' I informed the Beijing security chief about this conversation. He agreed to meet with me and also arranged a meeting for me with the Bureau of State Security. I thought the crisis was over. But it was not. The central authorities already had the impression that our center was politically questionable" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April. 25, 2011).

Applying personal connection is also one of main strategies for Guo Jianmei to deal with the registration crisis. When her organization was kicked out by a law firm, Guo Jianmei chose to use her own personal connections and successfully registered under the Law School of Beijing University. This strategy was similar to Wang Xingjuan's approach.

However, when the Peking Women's Law Center's patronized relationship was revoked in

2010, Guo Jianmei did not try to register as a NGO anymore; instead, she renamed the Peking Women's Law Center the Zhong Ze Women's Legal Aid Service Center, and registered as a private unit.

Most importantly, while Wang chose to maintain silence with the media; Guo Jianmei chose to speak out in front of the media. Facing the revocation of registration, the Peking Women's Law Center issued a statement and spread it widely. The statement: "Farewell, Beida! Statement by Guo Jianmei and Her team"[11] was written in Chinese and was translated into English, and was sent out to the e-mail lists of many international women's groups.

Guo Jianmei chose a much more confrontational strategy to resolve the registration issue. She explained her reasoning during our interview. "I do not think maintaining a registration status is the first priority for our center" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April. 26, 2011). On the contrary, Wang Xingjuan kept silent in front of media with the hope of regaining registration status.

As for Common Language, its organizers have not tried to register. According to one organizer, "I do not care if Common Language is registered or not. What I am concerned with is the task of Common Language, and what I can do here. Besides, we are not sure what kind of attitude the government has towards lesbian groups" (interviewed by author, Oct.15, 2012). Based on field observation, in addition to the unclear governmental attitude, lesbian groups in China are not eager to register because most international donors understand the special situation of LGBT groups, and do not require official registration in order to obtain grants.

4.2. Struggle 2. Trial and Failure: Building a relationship with the government

Trial and failure is the best term to describe the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language's efforts when they tried to build a relationship with the government. It is indeed a process of political struggle. However, under a repressive regime, maintaining a certain relationship with the government is crucial for self-mobilized groups in order to get involved in the policy-making process.

Charles Tilly once stated, "National regimes strongly shape available performances and repertoires through top-down controls over claim making mediated by political opportunity

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[11]

http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2010/06/farewell-beida-statement-by-guo-jianmei-and-her-team.html, accessed on May 5, 2013.

structure" (2008, 208). Based on field research, Tilly's statement is even more applicable for the situation in authoritarian regimes. One expert of women's issues, who has studied the behavior of social groups for more than two decades, shared her point of view during our interview. Of course, the government will foster and strengthen the capabilities of social groups, but the major premise is to make sure the Party is leading" (interviewed by author, Nov. 7, 2011).

One ministerial officer of All China Women's Federation (ACWF) has observed that, "I think there is one significant change of the relationship between social groups and the authorities. From my point of view, social groups spent most of their time in the past criticizing the government. Nowadays, social groups have learned the way to cooperate with the government in order to earn their credibility" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 18, 2009).

Based on field research, one major approach of these three groups is to grasp every political opportunity to build up their relationship with the governments. As was previously mentioned, it is difficult to tell if similar political opportunities will have the same influence on the political space of social groups.

For example, the attempted visit of the U.S. First Lady, Hillary Clinton, to the Maple Center in 1995 caused the Center's registration status to be revoked by the government. However, the visit of Hillary Clinton to the Peking Women's Law Center in 1998 brought nationwide attention. Building upon this attention, the Peking Women's Law Center received several critical lawsuits and made them into model examples of progress towards gender equity in China.

Nevertheless, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language all have figured out certain patterns of government reactions after so many years of struggle. For example, several activists have indicated the significance of international events, which are held in China.

As an example, a lesbian activist who has participated in the queer movement since the very beginning of queer activity in Beijing, pointed out that the central government cleans up the organizing sites whenever there may be international eyes watching. For example, the Summer Palace, which was a gathering place for artists and social discontents, was cleaned up before the 1995 Fourth Women's Conference. The government also took similar actions towards social groups before the 2008 Olympic Game.

As a result, women's advocacy groups have learned to stay low key whenever there will be

international attention. Hence, figuring out the pattern and the boundaries of the government is the first strategy for women's advocacy groups when they try to build up their relationship with the government.

Furthermore, the relationship with the central government also depends on how close an organizer is with the government. A leader of one women's group has stated, "We know how to play the government game" (interviewed by author, March 18, 2013). According to one organizer of the Peking Women's Law Center, most of the time, the connections of their leader, Guo Jianmei, helps their organization to get support from the government.

One leader of a lesbian group has good connections with the government, and she is very optimistic about the relationship between the government and the social groups. She says, "The government will finally loosen up its control over social groups because the government will understand that social groups have helped the society in many ways that the government has failed to." She adds, "The only matter is time" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011). Still, she agrees that the boundaries for not organizing any anti-governmental activity will remain.

4.2.1. Strategy 1. Figuring out the boundaries of the government

Based on my interviews with the founders of the three organizations that I studied, Wang Xingjuan from the Maple Center; Guo Jianmei from the Peking Women's Law Center, and Xu Bin from the Common Language, the boundaries which are set by the central government, are fluid and can be changed at any time in various directions. From their points of view, maintaining governmental legitimacy is the major factor that will decide the attitude of the central authorities toward social groups.

As a ministerial officer of ACWF shares, "The government has tried so many ways to maintain the stability of the society. If one social organization is viewed as political sensitive, it will be paid much attention by the government. When the society is harmony, there is less restriction. We can do anything we want. However, when the society is tense, the government becomes much sensitive. The government will prevent any occurrence of events and will be afraid of people's gathering on the street" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 16, 2011).

Therefore, it depends on each social group to figure out the attitude of the governments and

the way to interact with the governments. These three founders gave me different answers when asked: how will you describe the relationship between your organization and the central government? Wang Xingjuan thinks the central government does not trust them and believes that the Maple Center has some connection with international donors that might cause damage to the regime.

Guo Jianmei believes that the central government has the wrong idea about the Peking Women's Law Center. When Guo Jianmei was asked to have a tea chat with government officials[12], they advised her to "abolish sensitivity." Guo Jianmei pointed out that from the government's perspective, her organization is involved in multiple sensitive issues, namely, international donors, human rights law cases, and the promotion of reform of the legal system.

From Xu Bin's point of view, it is a little bit difficult to describe their relationship with the government. She adds that, "it is a grey area, and we are not sure what is the government perspective regarding queer organizations" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug.12, 2011). But Xu believes that the government has watched Common Language and pays attention to the nationwide lesbian movement. She has also experienced the appearance and questioning of policemen at her house.

Even though each group has different views about its relationship with the government, based on field research, most of interviewees agreed that it is crucial for an advocacy group to maintain some degree of relationship with both the central government and the local governments. It is crucial for following three reasons. First of all, maintaining good relationship helps advocacy group to get involved in the policy-making process.

Second, it helps organizers to attain their goals. Third, in the context of a repressive regime, maintaining a good relationship with the government decreases governmental obstacles when working with third parties. For example, the Peking Women's Law Center once had a project with GAP[13], USA. This project is about building up a model that helps foreign companies to support NGOs in China. During their cooperation, the New York Times published an interview with Guo Jianmei, in which Guo Jianmei made some criticism of the government.

Guo Jianmei recalled the reaction of GAP after reading this report. "The management level of GAP was so nervous. They asked their office in Beijing to talk to me. They told me that the

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[12] In China, when the police department invites organizers of social groups to have some talks, they use the term "having tea together."
[13] GAP, is an American multinational clothing retailer.

Peking Women's Law Center should not have any problem with the government. Otherwise, our tension with the government will cause problems for their business in China." Guo Jianmei further stated that "the Chinese enterprises are even more terrified of the government" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug.17, 2011).

This one example also shows the difficulties of NGOs in surviving in a repressive regime, and furthermore, how figuring out the boundaries of the government becomes crucial for their survival. However, these boundaries are vague. Here are three examples. First, as previously cited, the same attempted visit of Hillary Clinton caused the cancellation of the registration status of the Maple Center, but won the recognition from the government for the Peking Women's Law Center.

Second, the same is true of international funding. The central authorities categorize international foundations based on the government's evaluation of these foundations' level of threat toward the regime's legitimacy. For some foundations, those that are categorized as having a political agenda, social groups are not allowed to accept their funding. A governmental official told me, "We called it a red, yellow and green light system. A red light foundation is a dangerous one, and social groups can only accept funding from a green light foundations" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

However, this categorized system is not open to the public, and the Peking Women's Law Center experienced the exact opposite results when getting funding from the same international foundation. The funding from this one international foundation helped the Peking Women's Law Center to host a conference with one local government, but became the main reason for the cancellation of another collaborative work between the Center and another local government.

The third example is the vague attitude of the governments' response towards public gatherings. During my interviews, some organizers believe that the government is afraid to make a scene in public, because officials try to avoid angering the society. Therefore, these activists believe that the government won't use violence at public events. But, at the same time, some organizers believe that the government will interfere whenever there is a public gathering.

There are also some activists who believe that the governments' attitude depends on the judgment of officials about the degree of danger of particular activity. In general, most activists believe that there is no boundary of government's interference. In other words, the government will use any and all applicable force to intervene in a public gathering.

An organizer outside Beijing shared her experience. Her organization is based on one of major cities in China. She recalled, "We were planning to hold a flash mob activity to display our rainbow flag in one of the most crowed spots. However, the officer from the security department went to our volunteer's house and asked her to cancel this event." She then shared their discussion and strategy. "We thought our government was afraid of outdoor gatherings, and will stop these kinds of activity. Afterwards, we held most of activities indoors" (interviewed by author, April. 19, 2013).

Since the boundaries of government action are vague in every area, including funding, media reports, and public gatherings, advocacy groups have tried to learn as much as possible from each governmental intervention, and try to figure out the boundaries little by little. As Guo Jianmei states, "fumbling for fifteen years helps us develop some strategies" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April. 26, 2011).

Wang Xingjuan stated her fundamental strategy for negotiating with the government. "Even though the circumstances for survival was so difficult, I did not want to quit. From my point of view, if the central authorities found any wrong doings in us, they could ban the center. But, if they did not forbid the existence of our center, we would continue our work. In fact, I believe our work benefits the country" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug.15, 2011).

Wang Xingjuan's attitude is shared by many women's activists. Activists believe that the existence of their organizations indicate the tolerance of the central government. And for most advocacy groups, the organizers have dedicated themselves to their missions as long as the government does not ban their organizations. As Anthony Spires well put, "Vagueness and generalities are always safest, it seems" (2011, 29).

Unlike the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, Common Language has not yet built a communication channel with the government. Therefore, activists have tried very hard to figure out the boundaries of the government. Xu Bin shared her strategy. "We will try to get involved in different kind of laws which are related to queers. We will work with other groups, including women's groups, AIDS groups and other advocacy groups. By building coalitions with different groups, we can create opportunities for our perspectives to be heard" (interviewed by author, April. 16, 2013).

4.2.2. Strategy 2. Building up communication channels

When discussing their relationships with the government, one common conclusion of these three founders is the importance of establishing communication channels with the government. Instead of using confrontational strategies, these three founders believe that a communication strategy will increase their chances of getting involved in the policy-making process.

Not only the founders, but also the organizers who were interviewed all addressed the importance of being able to communicate with the government. However, both founders and organizers believe that building up communication channels with the government brings more symbolic than real benefits. Because, even though these actions will help them to make connections with both the central government and local governments, it still depends on political will of the governments to decide to what extent a social group can get involved in policy-making process.

For the founders and organizers, building up a communication relationship with the government won't guarantee their organizations' survival. Nor does it end intervention from the government. One organizer who has worked for the Peking Women's Law Center for more than ten years, pointed out that what the Peking Women's Law Center tries to get is some "lip support" from the government. She said that they could not imagine getting economic support from the government (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

Making as many connections as possible is the main approach of the three founders in building up communication channels with the government. This means the founders have spent a lot of energy expanding their connections with the society. Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei share this similar strategy. Guo Jianmei states her own perspective. "As an NGO's leader, we need to spend a lot of time building up connections, because our organizational work is lonely, marginalized, questioned, and without resources" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April. 26, 2011).

This strategy does help the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center building up their organizational capabilities. Since both of their organizations are well known in their fields, the two founders are often invited to participate in both international and national events.

Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei both state that meeting other people is an important task for their organizations and helps them to make connections with the government. Furthermore, the activists' efforts do not stop after meeting people. The most important task of the activists is

to transform these societal connections into support for their organizations.

As Guo Jianmei indicated, "there are some important figures who do not often participate in public activities, for example, the chairperson of Criminal Law Research Committee of China Law Society. However, he agreed to participate in our conference. The appearances of these important professional figures help us to build up our professional reputation in the society and with the government" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

Compared to the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, Common Language is a relatively young organization. Moreover, the queer issue is still viewed as sensitive in the society. In other words, Common Language has endured a double-marginalized status.

Thus, the only way for Xu Bin to build connections is through networking with women's organizations and other advocacy groups, which are much friendlier regarding queer issues. For example, Common Language applied to join a research project that was organized by the Anti-Domestic Violence Network.

Organizers and volunteers of Common Language studied the situation of lesbians where there was domestic violence. Several organizers of Common Language recalled, "When we presented our findings, some experts of domestic violence issues came to join us. They told us this is a new issue for them. They were not aware of the situation of lesbians in the past" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 9 & 12, 2011). Xu Bin added, "We told them stories, which helped them to understand the situation. We had good working relationship with these women experts. They respect us too. This is quite a different experience compared to other collaboration project" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

By working with other women's and advocacy groups, Common Language has created political space to get involved in the policy-making process. Based on interviews and analyses of secondary materials, this research also found that Common Language has increased its participation in various kinds of social activities since its transforming its organizational task in 2008, when it switched its focus from community organizing to advocacy work.

By allying with other women's groups, Common Language has been able to introduce the situation of queers to experts and activists. At the same time, women's groups have learned from the experiences of queers and deepened their perspectives on various lesbians' issues.

This research has found that the activists of these three women's advocacy groups all make their own lists of governmental institutions that they will try to make connections with. The

activists believe that some governmental institutions play an important roles affecting their advocacy work.

For example, for Common Language, making connections with ACWF is one of its major priorities. Xu Bin states, "One of our goals is to push ACWF to include lesbians into their various kinds of services. Compared to all other women's organization, ACWF reaches the largest population of women and their services are extensive. I do not think we can have a cooperative relationship with ACWF, but I do hope that by our efforts, we can awaken ACWF's staff to an awareness about situation of lesbians" (interviewed by author, April. 16, 2013).

4.2.3. Strategy 3. Submitting Professional Suggestions during the Law-Making Process

In China, when a new law is drafted, the government department that is in charge of the content of the new law, will ask for suggestions from the public. Even though their suggestions are rarely taken into consideration, both the Peking Women's Law Center and the Maple Center grasp every opportunity to submit their own opinions. According to one lawyer of the Peking Women's Law Center, one sixth of their suggestions will be taken into consideration by the government.

The Peking Women's Law Center and the Maple Center not only submit their suggestions to the lawmaking process, but also submit their own drafts of new laws. Women's activists will spend several years doing research and holding discussion groups on critical issues. After finalizing their suggestions, the organizers will sometimes submit them independently, and sometimes they will invite other organizations to jointly submit suggestions.

For example, after conducting two-years of research on sexual harassment, the Maple Center submitted their draft of "Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Act" in 2009. The Maple Center cooperated on this project with two other women's study centers, Zhejiang Women's Studies, and Women and Gender Study Center of Sun Yat-sen University.

Not only do they submit their suggestions to the relevant departments, but the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center also send copies of their suggestions to individual members of the National People's Congress to lobby on critical issues. Organizers of the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center share the same perspective regarding this strategy, saying, "By distributing our suggestions, we are hoping more important people will read our opinions" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011). And, "We are always trying to

make our voice heard as much as possible" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug.15, 2011).

As a relatively young organization, Common Language has not participated in the lawmaking process yet. However, Common Language uses other strategies to exert influence on public policy. For example, Common Language has tried to build connections with the ACWF and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Both institutions are GONGOs. The ACWF is the representative of women's voices in the central government and the CDC is the key organization for discussing health policies.

My analysis has found that the strategy of Common Language in building up connections with ACWF is to join the projects of other women's groups. Since many women's organizations have different working relationships with both ACWF and local women's federations, by working with women's groups, Common Language creates opportunities to introduce itself and lesbian issues to both ACWF and local women's federations.

As for building a relationship with the CDC, Common Language chose to grasp the opportunity to work with the CDC when the CDC had a research project about diseases and lesbians. This opportunity was created by Common Language's effort to research the lesbian health situation in 2005. A female professor noticed this report and asked Xu Bin to give a talk to her class. One Ph.D student was inspired by Xu's speech and decided to choose the topic of lesbian health issues as her dissertation, a topic which was sponsored by the CDC.

Xu Bin explained her idea about this cooperation. "This student came to seek Common Language's help. We agreed for two reasons. First, we wanted to be recognized by the CDC. Second, we also thought we should understand the health situation of the lesbian population." Xu Bin continued, "We became this project's sponsor. We introduced this graduate student to lesbian communities. In the end, she successfully gathered more than three hundred blood samples of lesbians" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

This cooperation created political opportunities for Common Language. As Xu Bin stated, "I was invited to talk about the lesbian health situation at the CDC. Furthermore, Common Language got the chance to talk about the 'Law of the People's Republic of China on Blood donation.' We always wanted to revise this law, because this law forbade homosexuals from making blood donations" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

The "Law of the People's Republic of China on Blood donation" was revised in 2012, and

since then, lesbians have been allowed to make blood donations.

In conclusion, this research found that the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language all emphasize the role of the law in making social changes. Therefore, the organizers have used various strategies to involve themselves the law-making process, and all three women's advocacy groups have successfully participated at different stages of the law-making process.

4.2.4. Strategy 4. Building a Working Relationship with Local Governments

Having connections has been viewed as an important factor in the context of the Chinese society. However, this research has found that it is even more significant for advocacy groups to build cooperative relations with local governments than with the central government.

For the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, working with the local government is a strategy that has brought them two benefits. First, this is an alternative way to build up their relationship with the government. Second, working with local government provides them a platform to carry out their ideal model for a better society.

My analysis has found out that working with local governments provide political opportunities for social groups to develop their social influence. For example, the Maple Center worked with the Tianjin city government to experiment with a zero-domestic violence community. My examination of this particular strategy has found that both the degree of autonomy and the degree of empowerment increased significantly when the Maple Center carried its collaboration project with Tianjin women's federation.

Even before the establishment of the People Republic of China, local policy experiments had been encouraged by the central leaders to try out various ways to solve problems (Heilmann 2011). The terms "experimental sites" and "model experiences" are frequently used by local governments when they announce an innovative policy. Thus, local governments are willing to try out new policies that are presented by social groups if the local officers trust the organizers.

Since Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei both worked for the central government before they left and established their own organizations, they have good connections with the local women's federations, especially Guo Jianmei, who worked for the ACWF in the past. Both of them approach leaders of local women's federations to try to get collaborative work with local governments.

However, there are risks involved for social groups that work with local governments. Sometimes, once the innovative policy successfully wins praise from the public, it is possible that the local government will end the collaborative relationship with social groups, and try to gain all the credit for itself. This is the situation that happened to the Maple Center. When the model of the zero-domestic violence community gained nationwide attention and praise, the Tianjin women's federation asked the Maple Center to leave. This model is still considered an important political achievement of Tianjin women's federation. As a result, the strategy of working with the Tianjin women's federation resulted in both political opportunity and political constraint for the Maple Center.

However, Wang Xingjuan still believes that collaborating with local governments will benefit her organization. From her point of view, even though her organization lost the control of its model in Tianjin, the success of this model won credibility for the Maple Center. Wang stated, "Tianjin is a municipality government, and yet, they chose to carry out a model which was designed by a small organization. This is of course an achievement" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

Unlike the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, building relationships with local governments is an extremely tough task for the Common Language. The main reason is people's perspective regarding homosexuality. Xu Bin recalls a conversation with a staff of one local women's federation, who suggested that homosexuality was viewed as a sin locally, and so it was not possible for them to help queers who are being abused by domestic violence. (interviewed by author, April 16, 2013).

Based on interviews, this study has concluded that organizers of Common Language have deployed two strategies to build up a working relationship with the local government, namely, by collaboration with other women's groups, and by empowering local lesbian groups. One example of working through women's groups is Common Language's participation in the anti-domestic violence alliance. Joining alliances of women groups help the Common Language to build connections outside the queer community. Moreover, it provides Common Language a channel to build relationships with both the central government and local governments.

Since 2008, when Common Language decided to focus on advocacy work, Common Language also began its preparation to empower local lesbian groups to participate in advocacy work. Since then, activists of Common Language have travelled to provinces and hold various

advocacy workshops, including "knowing CEDAW,"[14] and "how to work with the media." By empowering local lesbian groups, Common Language has created the political possibility that these groups will eventually get involved in the local policy-making processes.

As Xu Bin states her goal, "We hope Common Language can first build collaborative projects with the Beijing women's federation. If we have some successful experiences, we will introduce our experiences to lesbian groups in other provinces. After all, there are women's federations everywhere" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

4.3. Struggle 3. Political Forces to Marginalize Women's Advocacy Groups

Fighting against marginalization by the government is one of the major struggles for social groups. The major factors which will cause marginalization of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language are: lack of financial resources, lack of human resources, and loss of society's recognition.

If social groups don't have registration status, they have difficulty getting funding. When discussing this issue, an organizer of the Maple Center cites the government's current policy of subsidizing an NGO if this organization provides social services to people as an example of the importance of governmental recognition. She stated,

"One challenge of the Maple Center is that we are not registered. Therefore, according to the current regulations, the governments cannot purchase our services. This causes blocks in our development. In fact, both the government and society have recognized the work of the Maple Center. But without registration status, we cannot grow. I think it is very important to know how to play the game of the government" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

In other words, official registration status is the prerequisite for social groups to receive government's subsidies. However, both the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center had their registration status revoked by the government, while Common Language has never obtained official registration status as an NGO. James Mittelman explains the significance of registration status for social groups, "In other words, these organizations must be officially endorsed in order to receive tax exemption, sponsorship from domestic enterprises, and preferential treatment in governmental purchasing policy" (2011, 180).

Struggling for financial resources not only causes the founders to spend a lot of time

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[14] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, United Nations.

looking for financial resources, and thus leaves them less time for other organizational tasks, but it also makes other organizers worry about their own future. One senior organizer of Common Language, who has been an activist since the establishment of Common Language, admits that the lack of funding resources makes her worry about the sustainability of Common Language (interviewed by author, Feb. 8, 2011).

Revocation of registration status is not the only approach that political forces have used to marginalize women's advocacy groups. Based on my field research, losing office space, monitoring of phones, cancelation of events by the police, and questioning by the security department are just several examples of problems caused by political forces. All these marginalized forces threaten the survival of social groups. As one organizer of the Peking Women's Law Center stated, "When facing severe interference from the government, I would sometimes worry that our organization could not sustain itself and that my job would not be secure" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

The lack of funding resources not only makes a women's advocacy group struggle for its own survival, but also causes tension between women's advocacy groups. Gao Xiaoxian, the founder of Shaanxi Women Studies, describes the challenge of finding funding resources for the establishment of her organization, "The Ford (Foundation) replied quickly that as they had already funded a women's legal project in Beijing, they could not support another one in Xi'an. The Global Fund for Women replied in July 1995 and agreed to support us in establishing a women's hotline. As we did not have our own foreign currency bank account, this source of funds did not come through until April 1996" (Hsiung, Jaschok, Milwertz and Chan 2001, 200).

The Shaanxi Women Studies' experience is only one example of the problems that lacking financial resources can cause. Women's advocacy groups compete with each other. My study also found two other significant impacts caused by a lack of funding. First, sometimes the agenda of a women's advocacy group might be changed to follow the donors' agenda. Second, the lack of funding resources can also cause a lack of human resources.

4.3.1. Strategy 1. Encountering the Lack of Economic and Human Resources: Recruiting Volunteers and Extending Connections in the Society

Organizations without registration status not only face the challenge of lacking financial resources, but also face the difficulty of recruiting organizers. The causal relationship between

losing registration status and a lack of human resources can be explained as follows:

First, not having registration status causes a lack of funding resources, which then makes it difficult for a social group to recruit organizers. Moreover, with restricted financial resources, women's advocacy groups sometimes cannot recruit staffs who are willing to dedicate themselves. An organizer of the Maple Center, who gave up her own career and joined the Center, shared her observation. "I think many people are impetuous nowadays. They want to make big money quickly, and do not want to do hard work. It also happens here. Some staffs do not work hard, because they think they do not get great pay. They just do what been asked and won't put more effort" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

Second, not having registration status means a lack of recognition from the government, which then causes a social group to lose credibility with professionals. As a result, it becomes tougher for social groups to recruit talented people. Furthermore, even for some talented people would like to join NGOs, the lack of recognition also makes for questioning by their relatives. As one organizer of the Maple Center, who is in her 20s, stated, "My parents did not express their opinion regarding my work here. They are not against it, but they do not support it either" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

Based on field research, this study found that the three founders of the women's groups I studied have one similar "killing two birds with one stone" strategy to overcome the shortage of funding and human resources. These three groups all rely heavily on the women-power of volunteers of various professional backgrounds.

To attract volunteers of different backgrounds, the founders have to seize every opportunity to meet people and introduce their organizations. As Guo Jianmei stated, "A good leader of an organization should spend forty percent of her/his time making connections" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

As Florini, Lai and Tan state, "those networks have value well beyond the immediate goals they set out to accomplish. In a society with an abundance of social networks, people interact repeatedly and thus know that doing someone a good turn now may be repaid by that person in the future" (2012, 92).

Wang Xingjuan also shared her strategy. "Our center has a new development this year in that we established a department of public affairs. The establishment of this new department is to overcome the challenge of fund raising. In addition, we have a new director who was an

entreprentour. . I met her at a gathering of female entrepreneurs. I was invited to give a speech. She said my speech touched her heart, and made her decide to make contributions to our center. At first, she was on the board, and this year, our board members nominated her to be our director" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

In addition to attracting talented people by presenting herself at social events, Wang Xingjuan has another strategy, namely, inviting people to join the board, or to become an advisory committee member, which also helps her organizations to build up connections. Currently the chairperson of the Maple Center, Huang Hauming, is the secretary of a GONGO, China Association for NGO Cooperation.

An organizer, who has been a volunteer for the Maple Center for many years before she became a staff member, shared her evaluation of this invitation. "I think that Teacher Wang invited Huang to be our chairperson in the hope that Huang will bring his resources to the Maple Center. But, I do not observe chairperson Huang contributing anything here" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

Even though, Wang Xingjuan has tried hard to bring both human and economic resources to the Maple Center, there exist a risk that people with resources might not be passionate enough to make a contribution.

Therefore, the activists of these three women's advocacy groups use another strategy to make sure that their recruits are passionate towards their missions, namely, recruiting and training volunteers. These three groups have created platforms for volunteers to learn from their organizations. For example, the Peking Women's Law Center provides internship opportunities for law school students.

One of my interviewees, a lawyer, also interned at the Peking Women's Law Center before she joined the center. After this lawyer's graduation, she was ambitious to promote the transformation of the law field. But she soon found out that law firms are similar to the government and that these firms only follow the rule of money. She quit this position and joined the Peking Women's Law Center.

According to her, the training program at the Peking Women's Law Center is quite unique because law schools do not provide classes such as gender and law or legal aid. The learning process does not end after these volunteers understand the organization's issues and the organizers' skills. In fact, these three women's advocacy groups aim to empower their volunteers

to become organizers.

Xu Bin states that since 2011, Common Language has organized a steering committee to discuss the movement direction more deeply, and of the five members of this steering committee, four of them were volunteers before becoming organizers. The empowerment of volunteers is a crucial strategy to expand human resources for grassroots organizations.

Based on my interviews with the organizers of Common Language, there is one common reason that they chose to become organizers after volunteering, namely, that they have learned a lot from their volunteer experiences. For example, almost all of them never heard about gender issues or social movements before they joined Common Language. One organizer of Common Language stated, "When I conducted that research, I felt pressure and was tired. But I chose to stay at Common Language, because I felt that I have learned a lot" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

Comparing to other women's groups, Common Language is a young organization that is struggling for various resources. Recruiting volunteers has become one of their major strategies to overcome the challenge of a lack of resources. One significant achievement of these three women's advocacy groups is that their volunteers not only stay for a long time, but also introduce other friends to join the movement.

As a young organizer, who is at her 20s, told me, "I came to Common Language because of my ex-girlfriend. She hoped we could learn more about lesbian issues…After she went abroad to study, she recommended our junior female schoolmate to join Common Language…and I also ask my current girlfriend to volunteer here" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 9, 2011).

Volunteers of Common Language do not only invite their friends to join Common Language, they also go to other provinces to establish lesbian groups. During my field trips, I learned of two examples of this kind of expanding social influence among Common Language's volunteers. One of the volunteers set up a lesbian group at her graduate school. The other one finished her study in Beijing and went home to work, and established a lesbian group in her hometown.

In other words, once these volunteers have adopted the same beliefs as their grass-root organizations, many of them will dedicate their whole lives to promoting the organizational goals. Being empowered by grass-root groups has transformed the life experiences of volunteers in

many ways. Many volunteers of Common Language reported that they shared a unique life-altering process.

Xu Bin and one of the senior organizers of Common Language recalled that many volunteers have learned the way to come out to their families after volunteering at Common Language. Some volunteers will claim that interest in research is the major reason for them to join Common Language, and that they are not interested in organizing. Nevertheless, most of them have become active organizers for advocacy issues.

Furthermore, the life-altering experiences do not just happen to volunteers. This empowerment extends its influence toward friends and family members of the volunteers. As one organizer shared her experience, "I did not know any other lesbian before I joined Common Language. After I volunteered here, I decided to come out to my family. My parents used to discipline me strictly…They were shocked. But my parents learned to accept me. This New Year, my girlfriend also came home with me…Common Language just finished producing a booklet, and my father also helped us with the design" (interviewed by author, Oct. 12, 2011).

These human resources provide leverage for grass-root organizations to survive everyday struggles. As of this year, there have been more than two hundred and thirty volunteers at the Maple Center. There are six volunteers per day for the hotline. As for Common Language, there are more than forty volunteers and most of them are under thirty years old. There is one volunteer per day for the three-hour hotline.

4.3.2. Strategy 2. Dissolving Governmental Pressure on Organizers: Train the Trainer

Training organizers is crucial for social groups to build up their teams, especially when the government harasses organizers all the time. Almost every organizer who was interviewed mentions being questioned by the government individually or together with other colleagues. This kind of interference is described as "having tea together."

A leader of one of organizations that I studied described this kind of harassment to me. "They (the governments) know xxx and yyy are two of our major organizers, therefore, they invited them individually to have tea and talk. The national security department and the police department asked them to talk several times. They (the governmental officials) threatened that they would be not allowed to rent in Beijing. And the harassment did not end. Their parents were also visited by their local police. The local police asked if the parents knew what kind of work

their children were doing" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

She continued, "The visit of the police made their parents anxious. Their parents asked their daughters to quit. After all, both of them are the only children in their family. Furthermore, my colleague told me, the police said that if they wanted to stay at the center, they needed to document every activity of mine and report it to them." (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011). As a result, both these two organizers quit their jobs.

As Guo Jianmei, the founder of the Peking Women's Law Center, points out, the frequency of governmental talks, including talks with her colleagues and the family members of her colleagues, has caused her organization a lot of difficulty not only in sustaining their daily operation, but also in recruiting. Compared to other social groups, the harassment by the government causes especially severe problems for the Peking Women's Law Center.

This is so because, first of all, the Peking Women's Law Center is a legal aid organization and so its human resource requirement is restricted to those with a law degree. Second, most legal professionals can easily to find a decent job, and won't risk their own security to work for the Peking Women's Law Center.

Therefore, designing applicable training programs to build up the organizational beliefs of the organizers and volunteers has become an approach to fight back against political repressive forces. As one organizer of another women's legal aid center stated, "In the beginning, I did not plan to stay here for too long. After all, this is not my professional. But I was encouraged by my colleagues to learn new things, and I was awakened by our organization. I began to feel sympathy and passion towards women's issues. I am a woman too. In addition, I was interested in observing different social contradictions every day." (interviewed by author, China, April. 21, 2013).

The three women's advocacy groups all have well organized training programs. Moreover, gender issues and the idea of NGOs are two main themes of every training program. And most organizers revealed at our interviews that they had not learned about women' groups or issues before joining their organizations.

As of 2011, the Maple Center has trained sixteen training cohorts and more than five hundred hotline counselors. The Maple Center provides a series of training seminars for both their volunteer counselors and their organizers and has designed multi-level program classes and each level includes the topic of gender mainstreaming.

The organizers from the Peking Women's Law Center also noted that their organization continually holds training seminars for the staff, and the gender perspective is always an important topic. One lawyer talked about their training program. "From my point of view, we pay the most attention to a gender perspective. Therefore, we have many training seminars that focus on gender perspective. It is also a requirement of the lawyers at the Peking Women's Law Center to analyze law cases from a gender perspective" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

My study has concluded that training programs do improve the organizers and volunteers' understanding of gender issues as well as the idea of NGOs. Most organizers of these three groups admit that they had not heard about a gender perspective before joining the organizations. An organizer from the Maple Center stated, "What we have learned from the training programs was an eye-opening experience" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

And by participating in training programs, volunteers have a better idea about the aims and goals of NGOs. In addition, they have begun to understand the connection between their work and social change. A lawyer from the Peking Women's Law Center talked about the reason why she decided to stay at the center after finishing her intern training, "After doing an internship here, I found that my view has been widened. For the first time, I realize that there is a huge group of people who need our help, and that our justice and legislative systems are problematic. Moreover, I found that what we are doing can actually help people. I think this is very meaningful" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

As a lesbian group, Common Language has spent a lot of time in training its organizers and volunteers. Xu Bin explains this is because "most of them do not understand the concept of NGOs." Organizers also say that they had not heard about the queer movement before they joined Common Language (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

This is the reality in China. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the first known queer organizing can be traced back to 1995. However, this wave of queer organizing was dismissed after the central government crushed an event, the Queer Cultural Festival, and arrested two major organizers in 2001. Therefore, most lesbian organizers who were born after 1980 did not hear about any lesbian organizations when they were teenagers.

For Common Language, training the trainers is a key strategy in developing their organization, and this true not just for Common Language, but also for the whole lesbian

movement. Xu Bin stated that "rather than be concerned with finishing a project, we place more emphasis on the growth of our volunteers. Therefore, we decide whether or not to finish a project based on evaluating whether it will benefit our volunteers. The ultimate goal for working on a project is to train the volunteers and to build up their capabilities" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 2, 2011).

Common Language uses its projects as platforms to train its organizers and volunteers. Hence, Xu Bin and other organizers are open to suggestions from volunteers about the project because they believe that volunteers learn more from the process than the results of a single project.

A volunteer of Common Language, who is in her 20s, talked about her experience. "My girlfriend introduced me to volunteering here. After finishing the first project, I decided to stay because I felt I had grown from the project. Furthermore, I wanted to start an oral history project. It has always been my interest to do historical research on a lesbian group….I started the project, and I finished it. This project demanded a lot of hard work, and I insisted on finishing it. And I learned a lot from this project such as how to organize volunteers, how to communicate and how to get the results I wanted" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

Xu Bin further stressed that "by using this strategy, Common Language hopes that every volunteer who is trained by us can contribute to the nationwide lesbian movement. We hope to train every volunteer to become an organizer." Xu adds, "it does not matter if trained volunteers stay in Common Language or not." (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

4.3.3. Strategy 3. Raise Recognition of Issues and Organizations: Build up a Relationship with the Media

The loss of registration status and the lack of funding resources, as well as the cancellation of events all are results of repressive political forces which will further cause social groups to lose recognition from society. Using media power is a strategy employed by the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language to overcome these challenges. The first priority of this strategy is to build a relationship with the media.

The founder of the Maple Center, Wang Xingjuan, and the founder of the Peking Women's Law Center, Guo Jianmei worked for the government before they left and established their own organizations. Wang was the chief editor of Beijing Publisher Inc., and Guo was a news reporter

for the Juridical Newspaper. Both Wang and Guo have good connections with the media.

According to interviews with one organizer of the Maple Center, whose work is public relations, "communication with the media is not a difficult work since we already have a good relationship with the media." However, most of the time, the news is reported under the charity section and the length of the articles is usually short. But, she further pointed out, "If the Maple Center launches a ground-breaking service, it will immediately attract a lot of attention from the media." (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011). As an example, when the Maple Center launched a service to provide parental skills training programs for migrant workers, *China Daily* used one whole page to report this initiative.

The Peking Women's Law Center also has built a good relationship with the media. In addition to the personal connections between the founder and the media, the uniqueness of their law cases also attracts the media's attention. The Peking Women's Law Center has represented several noteworthy cases, and each case has gained them nationwide attention. One example is the Deng Yujiao incident[15] which attracted both domestic and international attention. And the representation of this case helped the Peking Women's Law Center to build up its professional reputation as a legal aid organization.

Besides attracting media attention for the recognition of their organizations, both Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei also use the media's influence to raise the society's attention to gender issues. This is a significant strategy to help them extend their influence nationwide. As Guo stated, "We knew that in the context of China, even if we could help several tens, or hundreds, or thousands of cases, the fundamental problems would still persist…We therefore developed three standards to guide our work. We handle cases of, first, exceptionally poor people whose rights have been violated and yet are unable to defend their rights; second, major

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[15] According to Wikipedia: "The **Deng Yujiao incident** (*Dèng Yùjiāo Shìjiàn*) occurred on 10 May 2009 at a hotel located in <u>Badong County</u>, <u>Hubei province</u>, in the <u>People's Republic of China</u>. Deng Yujiao, a 21-year-old female <u>pedicure</u> worker, tried to rebuff the advances of Deng Guida, director of the local township business promotions office, who had come to the hotel seeking sexual services. She allegedly stabbed her assailant several times trying to fight him off, resulting in his death. Badong County police subsequently arrested Deng Yujiao and charged her with <u>homicide</u> and refused to grant her bail. This case came to national prominence through internet forums and chatrooms, where netizens were enraged by her treatment. The case resonated with the public anger over the corruption and immorality of officials, and garnered over four million forum posts across the country. Chinese authorities attempted to play down the incident by limiting its presence on Chinese web portals, and a large number of discussion threads were censored. Following groundswell of public protests and online petitions, prosecutors dropped murder charges, granted her bail, and charged her with a lesser offense of "intentional assault". She was found guilty, but did not receive a sentence due to her mental state. The two surviving officials involved in the incident were sacked, also ostensibly in response to public pressure."
<u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deng_Yujiao_incident</u>, access on April, 07, 2012.

cases of serious abuses of women's rights, which usually have a widespread social impact and reaction; and finally, cases that are closely related to the reform, social transformation or economic transition of the country" (Hsiung, Jaschok, Milwertz and Chan 2001, 200).

During our conversation, Guo Jianmei cited several cases that failed to awaken the judges' awareness toward women's rights. The next step she took was to call the local media and to try to explain the significance of the case. Most of time, the cases she represented would be reported and would stimulate a fierce discussion among locals. Sometimes, the media reports would even change the opinion of the judges.

Guo Jianmei also mentions another way to use the power of the media as leverage. She states that sometimes she and other lawyers in the Peking Women's Law Center would invite media reporters to sit in on a trial. Guo believes that the presence of media reporters puts pressure on judges and might remind judges to avoid any bias in their rulings. A lawyer of the Peking Women's Law Center stated her experience in the courts, "Director Guo always reminds us how to protect ourselves. For example, Director Guo will suggest we invite the media to come with us. In fact, this helps our cases. Because the local people won't try to stop our investigations with the presence of the media" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

Xu Bin also shared her strategy of using media reporting as leverage to help her group's advocacy work. "When we held the art exhibition, I understood there existed risk that our event would be cancelled. I decided to use the language of the government to persuade local governments. I showed them the reports from last exhibition, and told them if *China Daily* reported our event, why would you choose to end this event" (interviewed by author, China, April 16, 2013).

Xu added, "I don't use any confrontational language. I choose to use their own language to make them understand that the society is changing and the government's attitude is changing too" (interviewed by author, China, April 16, 2013). Since the government's attitude toward queer organizing is vague, the supportive reporting of the media has become one major tool for gaining recognition from local governments.

However, whether or not to attract media attention is a dilemma for grass-root organizations. On the one hand, media reporting help them to establish an image and the credibility of their organizations with the public. On the other hand, media reports also attract governmental attention. My analysis has concluded that this is the reason why Common Language is very

careful about maintaining some distance between its organization and the media.

Xu Bin shared her observation. "From my point of view, there are several factors which will attract the government's attention, namely, media reports, public activities, and huge groups of people. And if there are some news reports appearing in the international media, the government will definitely pay you a visit. Therefore, we will make a detailed plan before we hold an event. For example, we won't let the media report our plan before the event is held, and we limit the number of participants. Furthermore, these participants need to be trustworthy. We will always visit the place where our event will be held several times during preparations" (interviewed by author, China, April 16, 2013).

Several organizers pointed out that the first priority for Common Language is to avoid the cancellation of an event because they believe establishing a public image of lesbians is a very important task for them. As He Xiaopei stated, "Until the early 1990s no homosexuals revealed his or her sexual orientation publicly to society or to the media" (2001, 41).

To avoid news reports which might lead to the cancellation of events, Common Language chooses not to contact the media until the day before the events take place. Moreover, the organizers of Common Language only contact a few news reporters who have been friendly to lesbian groups in the past. Even though their caution might result in less media coverage of an event, sometimes there will be reports and interviews following events.

In conclusion, the media play a crucial role in the agenda advocacy groups promoting social changes, especially in China, which has a vast territory and a large population. However, the media is controlled by the government. How to work with the media without attracting interference from either the central government or local governments is one of challenges for organizers.

4.4. Struggle 4. Public Confrontations with Authorities are Not Permitted

Public confrontation with the government is forbidden and it is the only matter of time before the leaders of a public confrontational movement will be taken away by the police. It is really tough to form a confrontational movement in China; therefore, many scholars argue that there is no social movement in China. But the fact is that these three women's advocacy groups have tried very hard to work for social change in an authoritarian regime, and their efforts should qualify as a social movement.

As Florini, Lai, and Tan state, "the space for associations that can serve as autonomous counterweights to state authority or pose challenges to the party's position through advocacy and criticism is extremely limited, although such associations do exit"(2012, 121). Indeed, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language all have used various strategies to actually confront and expand their restricted political space. Their confrontational movement is categorized by my study as "soft confrontation."

The confrontational movement of these three groups can be understood as follows. First of all, the three organizations aim for social change, not overthrowing the current regime. This point of view was stated several times during my interviews with organizers and volunteers. They all emphasized that their organizations won't join with any force to overthrow the current regime.

During an interview with a lawyer at the Peking Women's Law Center, she said, "admittedly, there are some legal aid lawyers who have their own political agendas. From this point of view, we can understand why the central government feels so nervous when a legal aid lawyer receives grants from international donors. However, our center is different from these legal aid lawyers. We do not have any political agenda regarding regime change" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2013).

Second, in order to promote social change, these three groups have chosen a "non-confrontational-on-the-surface" strategy. As Gao Xiaoxian points out, "It can be said, therefore, that 'cooperation' is the Association's strategy and the reason for its success. One advantage of cooperation is that it strengthens the power of popular women's organizations and mobilizes more resources; another advantage is that it can push and influence more institutions and organizations into concern for the development of women" (Hsiung, Jaschok, Milwertz and Chan 2001, 207).

Xu Bin also stated, "Regarding our relationship with the government, we do not choose to criticize directly, even though we will suggest some laws or requirements are unfair to the queer population. Our attitude is to seek communication with the government. We won't choose to point our fingers at the government because if we do so, the government will consider us to be an anti-government organization. The government would think Common Language is not a group for lesbian issues, but a group to overthrow the regime" (interviewed by author, China, April 16, 2013).

For these three groups, a non-confrontational strategy is the best way for them to survive and to develop their organizations. Nevertheless, they do not give up challenging the government regarding public policies. They have developed three strategies to sustain their advocacy work while fighting for daily survival. These strategies are: building alliances, empowering other grassroots groups to do advocacy work, and building the community.

4.4.1. Strategy 1. Build the alliance

As previously noted, women's activists have created political space for their organizations to advocate for social change. Building alliances is one strategy of the organizers for combating their marginalizing status. But unlike social organizing in democratic countries, building alliances is viewed as confrontational by an authoritarian regime.

There are three kinds of alliances which have been formed to promote social change. The first is an alliance with other groups that share the same concerns. For example, Guo Jianmei is the main leader of an alliance of legal aid lawyers in China, which is viewed as very dangerous by the government. And Xu Bin is the main organizer of an alliance of lesbian organizations across China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center have also collaborated to form an alliance together, the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of the China Law Society, which then became the leading force in promoting the passage of the Anti-Domestic Violence Act. Wang Xingjuan recalled the history of this formation can be traced back to 1995, when several women organizers formed an anti-domestic violence task force during the Fourth Women's Conference.

Wang Xingjuan discussed the reasons why she and Guo Jianmei wanted to call for a network on domestic violence issues. "Guo Jianmei and I worked as a team all the time. At that time, we thought many women's groups were working on domestic violence issues, but there was seldom cooperation among these groups. Therefore, we set up an alliance in 2001. In fact, we had prepared for this alliance since 1999. Both of us were the founders of the Anti Domestic Violence Network of the China Law Society. Later on, we invited Chen Mingxia (the first chairperson of Anti-Domestic Violence Network) to join us. She was the deputy chair of Mirage Law Committee of the China Law Society. We wanted to unite more people" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 25, 2011).

Second, the founders formed alliances with other groups that shared goals for a better

117

society. For example, before the Fourth Women's Conference, Wang Xingjuan, with another fifteen organizers, including government officials, representatives of international foundations, professors, and others, set up an alliance, the "Chinese Female Health Network." Even though health issues were not the major concern of the Maple Center, Wang believes that this network will benefit women's rights as a whole. This network is registered under the Department of Civil Affairs.

Women's activists have also built alliances across women's and lesbian groups. When He Xiaopei shared her experience in organizing the First National Women Tongzhi (Mandarin, means queer) Conference, she stated, "We invited all women NGO representatives… [The] All China Women's Federation, the East Meets West Feminist Translation Group, the Centre of Women's Law Studies and Legal Services, the Women's Hotline, and the Huaguang Women's College all participated" (2001, 54).

Based on He Xiaopei's statement and interviews with other participants, this research found that there was some communication and cooperation between women's organizers and lesbian organizers before 2001. However, lesbian organizing disappeared after the central government forced cancellation of the Queer Cultural Festival in 2001, and as a result, one main organizer left the country, and cooperation between women's organizers and lesbian organizers stopped.

As mentioned before, Common Language also emphasizes the importance of cooperation with women's groups and has worked with women's groups on various issues. For example, Common Language provided lectures for the Maple Center's training programs in 2008 to introduce issues of homosexuality to volunteer counselors. Also, Common Language has worked with the Peking Women's Law Center on several law issues regarding lesbian rights.

My study has found that Common Language has viewed cooperation with women's groups as a multi-functional strategy. First, it helps Common Language to make connections with some important experts who have participated in the governmental policy-making process, such as those involved with the research on lesbian domestic violence victims. Second, it provides Common Language with a chance to introduce the idea of homosexuality to scholars and governmental officials. Third, Common Language has been empowered by learning from the experiences of women's groups with the government.

For Common Language, building alliances is a major strategy to increase its political efficacy. It not only allies within nationwide lesbian communities, but also cooperates with gay

organizations. In 2008, Common Language along with other four lesbian and gay organizations set up the LGBT Center in Beijing for public education and conscious awareness. As Guo Yujie described in her article, "A History of Lesbian Organizing in China, "This was a new platform and also a new co-development model for collaboration between gay and lesbian organizations."[16]

Not only do the founders emphasize the importance of building alliances, the organizers also view it as a crucial capability for an NGO. From example, one leader from the Maple Center addressed her worries regarding the decrease of cooperation between the Maple Center and other women's organizations. She stated, "In my opinion, the Maple Center should increase its interaction with other organizations. You can benefit from these interactions with other organizations, by exchanging information and sharing resources" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

She added, "I think the reason why the Maple Center has less interaction with other organizations is because it is an organization which buries itself in work. The Maple Center focuses on the work of psychological counseling, and does not pay much attention to other issues. But now, the situation has improved" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

The third approach to build alliances is to seek cooperation with social groups abroad. Several organizers of lesbian groups which are in other parts of China point out that the founder of Common Language, Xu Bin, is the one who introduced them to the idea of making connections with lesbian organizations abroad. For example, an activist whose organization is in the middle of China, told me, "I was invited by Xu Bin to meet with other organizers of LGBTI groups all over Asia. I think there were almost twenty of us, who were recommended by Xu Bin" (interviewed by author, China, Aug. 18, 2011). She pointed out that networks with social groups abroad can help local lesbian groups to seize opportunities to learn about international advocacy experiences.

My research has found that building alliances has helped the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language to involve more activists into their agenda of bringing about social change. There are two dimensions to building alliances. For the purpose of capacity building, allying with other women's groups and queer groups helps organizers and

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[16] http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/userfiles/2010Autumn.pdf, my translation.

volunteers to deepen their thinking regarding gender and queer issues. For the purpose of expanding social influence, making connections with other social groups provides organizers with a chance to introduce gender and queer issues to other social groups that share their social justice values.

4.4.2. Strategy 2. Empower other Grassroots Groups to do Advocacy Work

The second strategy of the women's activists is to empower other grass-roots groups to begin advocacy work. The Maple Center is the first women's grass-root group in China that has developed a model for doing advocacy work, i.e. first doing research to better understand the whole picture of various issues. For its research, the organizers of the Maple Center will seek collaboration with local women groups and sometimes, they will work with local women's federations. Wang Xingjuan pointed out that these collaborations help local groups to understand the connections between local issues and social change.

Based on field research at a remote area far from Beijing, an organizer of the only women's legal service organization in the whole area told me, "I have worked here for more than eight years. The Maple Center was the first women's group that I learned about after working here because the Maple Center sent their newsletter to us. From these newsletters, I have learned more about women's issues. Our center also learns from Wang Xingjuan about how to conduct counseling and how to do research" (interviewed by author, China, April 20, 2013).

One lawyer of the Peking Women's Law Center mentioned that one advantage of their Center is the combination of legal aid services with the promotion of women's rights. From this lawyer's point of view, working on individual cases has given her organization leverage to advocate for legal reforms. Moreover, the legal reforms that the Peking Women's Law Center promotes are based on a gender perspective and the idea of gender mainstreaming. She said, "This combination presents the vision of our leader" (interviewed by author, Nov. 10, 2012).

Since the Peking Women's Law Center advocates for social change by presenting law cases, activists will collaborate with local communities and the local news media. Activists state that they feel women are empowered by this collaboration because this is the first time for them to understand the idea of rights. In other words, the Peking Women's Law Center's action has empowered women in a remote area.

Common Language's support of the advocacy work of grass-roots lesbian groups has had

some significant achievements. And most importantly, these efforts have also transformed Common Language's organizational focus. Based on our interviews, Xu Bin shared that her original development plan for Common Language was to put the most effort into the formation of a nationwide lesbian grassroots community.

This determination arose because of the lack of a nationwide lesbian community during that time period. Xu Bin told me that she originally planned to spend five years on this task. However, the formation of a nationwide lesbian community has been unexpectedly successful. And as a result, since 2008, three years after its establishment, Common Language has shifted its main direction toward advocacy work.

The main reason for this quickening is because Common Language has fostered two alliances to share its task of building queer communities in China. The first alliance was the establishment of the LGBT Center in Beijing in 2008. Common Language collaborated with other gay and lesbian organizations to set up this center for the queer community in Beijing. And the second factor was the establishment of Chinese LaLa Alliance, which aims to provide support for lesbian groups in every city and town.

Combing the efforts of the LGBT Center in Beijing and the Chinese LaLa Alliance, Common Language has designed and provided action plans for advocacy work for lesbian groups nationwide. One example was Common Language's support of many LGBTI groups to hold events for the May 17 "International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia."

The 517 Action plan created by Common Language was easy for any grassroots group to follow. Furthermore, this action plan was designed to need minimum financial help. Based on my interviews, I heard many stories of lesbian activists of how their participation in the 517 Action altered their life experiences. Several activists mentioned that they were afraid to hold advocacy events at the very beginning. However, they gained confidence through participating in the 517 public event.

Encouraging volunteers to participate in public events has been one strategy for Common Language to empower lesbian activists to join advocacy work. One interviewee stated that, she did not want to come out, neither did she want to hold any event in public. But the first time she joined an activity that was held by Common Language in a business area in Beijing and tried to show the pride of the gay community to everyone, she felt encouraged and empowered by walking with other lesbian friends. And since then, coming out and doing public education for

the society is no longer an issue for her (interviewed by author, Oct 10, 2011).

4.4.3. Strategy 3. Building a Community

The definition of building a community in this study means that grass-root organizations provide necessary support for the establishment of other similar-goal groups. The necessary support refers to funding resources, human resources, professional resources, and media resources. In addition to fostering other similar-goal groups, the crucial factor of building a community is to design action plans that work with each other.

Wang Xingjuan of the Maple Center and Guo Jianmei of the Peking Women's Law Center were on each other's board committees, as well as being on boards for other women's organizations. They also called for meetings of women's organizations to discuss current significant women's issues. Furthermore, they have given human resources to each other if they find that it will be in the best interest of both organizations.

Common Language has the same strategy. Each year, Common Language calls for volunteers. Common Language will divide volunteers into two groups. The group whose interest is in advocacy work will stay with Common Language, and they will introduce the other group of volunteers to other lesbian organizations in Beijing.

Several organizers of lesbian groups have addressed the role of Common Language in fostering lesbian groups in China. A leader of lesbian organizing said, "Xu Bin's return from the U.S. has had a huge influence on the formation of the Chinese lesbian community" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 16, 2011).

In fact, Xu Bin has tried many approaches to get in touch with lesbian communities all over China. One illustration is that Common Language has not only financially supported the nationwide spread of the lesbian magazine Les+ since 2005, but Xu Bin has also volunteered to help with the distribution of this magazine.

Les+ was founded by two lesbian couples. In a documentary file, the founder of Les+, Sam, stated that the reason why she wanted to create a lesbian magazine was that she could only learn about lesbian information from the internet at that time; however, the tone of most discussions on the internet was depressed and without a future. Therefore, she hopes that Les+ will spread the joyous part of lesbian life.

Moreover, Common Language does not support lesbian groups only by itself; instead, it

tries to invite as many groups as possible to join the effort to empower lesbian groups all over China. One example is the China Queer Film Festival Tour. Common Language and Les+ collaborated with several independent film directors to organize this project that began in 2008, and has held more than one hundred film events with local queer organizations in more than twenty cities.

As one film director, who is also the first open lesbian on TV stated, "This film tour was a direct challenge to the government, because homosexual images are forbidden in the media" (interviewed by author, Nov. 14, 2012).

According to her, the film tour's organizers in Beijing provided a small amount of funds for local queer organizations, and local groups were responsible for the travel expenses of the panelists and for organizing the events. Moreover, local organizers could decide what kind of event they wanted to hold, as well as if the event would be free to the public.

Several organizers shared that this organizing experience helped them to develop skills, and learn to communicate with the public. Sometimes, they also learned the way to deal with the police, since several of them had experienced a visit by the local police regarding their film-showing events.

In her statement after the revocation of her group's registration status, "Farewell, Beida!" Guo Jianmei and her team wrote, "In 2002, a legal aid collaboration group was established to enable more organizations and institutions to participate in the delivery of legal aid. In 2007, the Center founded the Public Interest Lawyers' Network for Women's Rights, and in 2009, the name was changed to China Public Interest Lawyers' Network. The Network currently comprises more than 300 brilliant lawyers from more than twenty provinces and cities, providing legal aid for thousands of poor and vulnerable people.

The statement continued, "I still remember the Network's launch ceremony on 15 March 2009 at the Centennial Lecture Hall at Peking University, where leaders from authorities such as the Ministry of Justice's Department of Legal Aid, the Center for Legal Assistance, the All-China Lawyers' Association and the Beijing Lawyers' Association turned up to show their support. The speech given by Professor Zhu Suli, Dean of Peking University Law Department remains vivid in my mind."

The effort of the Peking Women's Law Center to establish a nationwide community for legal aid work has shown significant achievement. However, based on interviews with Guo

Jianmei and her team, this effort also made the authorities suspicious if there was a hidden agenda, and the authorities asked Peking University to stop their affiliation with the Peking Women's Law Center.

In other words, building a community is a strategy that can result in both political opportunity and political constraint. How to use this strategy has become an important capability for activists who have been devoted to advocacy work. The campaign against domestic violence is an example that used this strategy successfully and has expanded its political space. This study will further analyze this strategy in the following chapter.

4.5. Conclusion: Raising Both Issues and Organizations' Visibility in the Public

Facing repressive interference from the central government, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have all developed some similar strategies to sustain their organizational survival and to further expand their political space for advocacy work. However, my research has found that social groups are not the only actors that make changes in this state-social group relation dynamic.

The central government has also changed its attitude toward certain social groups. In the past, only GONGOs were allowed to represent people's opinions. Recently, the central government has divided social groups into two categories, social groups for charity work and social group for social changes.

For the first kind of social group, the central government has loosened its restrictions, and beginning in 2011, the government has purchased services from this kind of social group. In contrast, there has been severe scrutiny and interference from the government towards the second kind of social group.

The three organizations that I have studied are categorized as the second kind of group. However, each group has chosen different strategies to deal with their marginalized status after being categorized as an advocacy group. For the Maple Center, regaining its registration status has become the first priority of its organizers.[17] As an organizer stated, "Without registration status, we (the Maple Center) are not qualified for governmental purchases" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 15, 2011).

Even though Wang Xingjuan stated that the Maple Center would continue its efforts in

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[17] Interviews with Wang Xinjuan, M2 and M3.

advocacy work, she also reaffirmed that "our advocacy work will be based on our services" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 18, 2009). As for the Peking Women's Law Center, Guo Jianmei stated, "Our work is unique in the way that we are always looking for government mistakes. We are always looking for the errors in the system. Our mission is not just to help several groups of people, but also to find out the major issues in women's equality and Chinese rule of law. In order to fulfill our goals, we always drip acid" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 17, 2009).

As for Common Language, the best strategy to challenge its marginalized status has been to make it visible. Therefore, Common Language organizes several public events each year. Organizers and volunteers wear T-shirts that have queer slogans or images on them. One organizer talked of her experience at a public event. "There was one lady who sells flowers on the street. When we conducted our activity, she told me, 'I never met any homosexuals, if any homosexuals showed up now, I would send her/him a flower.' Even before her sentence was finished, dozens of us rushed to her stall." (interviewed by author, Dec. 8, 2012).

Discussions of homosexuality do not exist between governmental institutions in China, and neither do many other gender issues. In the past, gender issues have been marginalized. The representatives from the ACWF denied the existence of domestic violence during the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Moreover, several interviewees mentioned a famous story that happened during this UN conference. In the Lesbian Issue Discussion Tent, a Western participant asked a Chinese volunteer if she knew any Chinese lesbians, and this volunteer replied that, "this phenomenon does not exist in China." (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 25, 2011).

By applying various strategies, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have fought back against the marginalizing forces of the state. Most importantly, the issues they are concerned about have been reported in the media, and their activities have attracted the young generation to participate. Since 1995, there has been the formation of more and more lesbian groups, and more women's groups focusing on advocacy work.

My study has concluded that these three women's advocacy groups have constructed a "soft confrontation" to advocate their issues. The founders and organizers are fighting for their survival and at the same time, they are expanding their political space for advocacy work.

Women's activists have learned from every backlash experience and developed their own organizing skills in raising the visibility of their organizations and issues in the public.

These successes have resulted from the organizers' confrontational beliefs and strategies. The efforts of women's activists not only increased their organizational degree of autonomy and empowerment, but have also expanded their organizational influence on the society. These three organizations have all contribute to create a new movement of rights awareness in China, which will have a significant impact upon the state-social group relationship.

In the next chapter, I will analyze the organizers' strategies in the campaign against domestic violence to demonstrate the organizers' strategic choices in every move of their organizational development. Most importantly, the next chapter will demonstrate the successful approach of women's activists in creating a public sphere for issues of domestic violence. How organizers expand their political space and why government officials are willing to include women's advocacy groups in the public policy area will be the two main questions for next chapter.

Chapter 5: Interactive Political Liberalization: The Strategies of Women's Advocacy Groups in the Campaign against Domestic Violence

The three women's advocacy groups presented in Chapter 4, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language, have continued to face four kinds of major struggles. Repressive government actions have imposed pressure to marginalize these three groups. My analyses have shown that activists have used various strategies to both fight back against this repressive interference, as well as to further expand their organizational political space.

The conclusion of my examination of the activists' strategies is that activists will choose a more cooperative strategy if the organization's priority is to increase the degree of its autonomy[18], but will choose a confrontational strategy if the organization's aim is to increase the degree of its empowerment[19]. Cooperative or confrontational, strategies may lead to political opportunity, political constraint or both. Therefore, activists have continually struggled with organizational sustainability and tried to expand organizational political space.

Despite the many challenges they face, the evidence presented in Chapter 4 has demonstrated the success of women activists in forming a confrontational movement and making their organizations and issues visible. In this chapter, I analyze the strategies of the three women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence in order to further elaborate the phenomenon of interactive political liberalization, which, I will argue, is the best description of the state-social group relationship in China.

In the campaign against domestic violence, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have chosen different strategies to expand their political space for advocacy work. The choice of different strategies reveals the organizers' considerations in moving their relationships with the central government forward. The Maple Center has chosen cooperative strategies, while the Peking Women's Law Center has chosen a much more confrontational strategy. As for Common Language, joining the campaign against domestic

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[18] For the definition of degree of autonomy, my study borrows the idea of Jude Howell, that an organization is autonomous if it meets the following conditions: first, it is able to set its own goals, determine its own priorities, and decide its own structures and principles of organization; second, it is able to appoint its own personnel and recruit its own members; third, it relies primarily on its own source of funding. (Howell 2000, 127)

[19] In my analyses, the degree of empowerment is defined as including gaining more popular support, raising more funds, increasing recruitment, generating attention from the media, and making connections with other social groups nationally and internationally.

violence has been a political opportunity to build up its organizational capabilities.

The organizers' strategies to expand their boundaries vis-a-vis the central authorities can be described as a process of interactive political liberalization. This research has concluded that organizers' expectations of possible reactions by the central government is one of the major reasons behind each chosen strategy. This also indicates that an adaptive government is crucial in the changing state-social group relationship. In addition to anticipation of government response, other reasons for each chosen strategy indicate the different stages of development of the three organizations.

For the Maple Center, maintaining steady financial resources in order to carry on their social service and advocacy work was the most significant factor when considering their relationship with the central authorities. For the Peking Women's Law Center, the campaign against domestic violence was considered to be a moderate issue compared to other social justice issues that their organizers work on. Therefore, the main goal for these organizers has been to point out as many flaws in the legal system as possible in order extend their challenge for social reform.

As a relatively young organization, Common Language developed quite a different strategy from the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center. It joined the campaign against domestic violence to order to train their volunteers and to build up their connections with other women's groups.

In the campaign against domestic violence, my analyses have identified five major actors who played a role affecting each chosen strategy: the central authorities, the organizers, the local governments, the international community, and the media. Facing challenges from the governance system, organizers choose to ally with different actors in order to transform these challenges into political opportunities. But sometimes, organizers may choose a strategy that accidentally leads to political constraint instead.

The main purpose of comparing the strategies of activists in the campaign against domestic violence is to further explain the idea of interactive political liberalization. There are two aspects to the best explanation. First, the campaign against domestic violence has achieved significant progress in expanding the participation of women activists in the public policy field, and is a good example that demonstrates the adaptive interaction between the central government and women's advocacy groups. All of the previously mentioned five actors have had an influence on

this major expansion of the influence of women's groups.

The second aspect is that both activists and some governmental officials have been empowered by their participation in the campaign against domestic violence, and have learned a lot about gender issues and social organizing. My field research has observed the formation of networks and trust between activists and governmental officials that can make a contribution to the process of interactive political liberalization.

This chapter will first briefly present the development of the campaign against domestic violence, and as my analysis points out, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 created the main political opportunity for this campaign. This political opportunity bridged the gap between the international community and Chinese women's groups. Since then, Western terms, such as domestic violence, gender equity, and NGOs, as well as related resources have been introduced and provided to Chinese women's groups.

This is followed by a chronological analysis of the chosen strategy of each organization with the main focus on the resulting political opportunity or constraint. My examination has found that there are some strategies that create both political opportunities and political constraints.

Furthermore, my analyses in this section have verified the hypothesis of Chapter 4 that there exists a causal mechanism between the choice of a cooperative strategy or a confrontational strategy and the state-social group relationship. The strategies of the three women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence confirms my argument that a cooperative strategy will result in an increase in the degree of autonomy, while a confrontational strategy will lead to an increase in the degree of empowerment.

In addition, this research demonstrates the success of the campaign against domestic violence in breaking down the public/private distinction on issues of domestic violence. And finally, at the end of this chapter, a comparative analysis will be made between the strategies of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language to further illustrate the process of interactive political liberalization. My examination has identified two main factors that affect the available strategies of activists, that is, the organizations' developmental stage and the activists' anticipation of the government's response.

5.1. The Development of the Campaign against Domestic Violence

The cultural background and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 (the 1995 UN Women's conference)are two major factors that have affected the campaign against domestic violence. The cultural background as used in this chapter to refer to the influence of Confucianism has created a political constraint for the campaign against domestic violence, while the 1995 UN conference provided a political opportunity for the formation of this campaign.

There is an impression that Marxists pay a lot of attention to issues of gender equality. There are two famous figures behind this impression. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels argued that oppressing women is a way for men to ensure their control of ownership of private property.

In China, the most famous words on gender equality are from Mao Zedong when he said, "Women hold up half the sky." In fact, the first law enacted by the new People's Republic of China was the Marriage Law (Judd 2002, 3). As a result, China has been viewed as a socialist country that has had a tradition of valuing women as workers.

However, Confucianism still influences people to view domestic violence as a family matter. Even though the official state policy since 1949 has been supportive of women's rights, the patriarchal system continues to structure ordinary lives. As Margaret Woo well put it, "all Chinese women must face the common challenge of gender inequality" (2002, 311).

Women in rural area suffer the most when living in patrilocal communities. As Ellen Judd describes it, "Such communities have been markedly resistant to change that would give women rights in marriage, divorce, or child custody…and also resistant to women's fully equal participation in the economic and political life of the communities" (2002, 5).

In other words, one can conclude that Chinese women share with one another oppression based on the role of gender. This oppression is rooted in the deep influence of Confucianism, which has formatted each individual's role in a family. According to Confucian Analects, Chapter 11, Book XII: Yen Yûan,

The duke Ching of Ch'î, asked Confucius about government.

Confucius replied, "There is government when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son."

"Good!" said the duke: "if, indeed, the prince be not prince, the minister not minister, the father

not father, and the son not son, although I have my revenue, can I enjoy it?" (*Confucian Analects*)

The above article indicates that good governance is reached when each individual performs his own proper duties. In other words, a wife has her own duty to obey. One of the Four Books, The Great Learning (*Dà Xué*), which is believed to have been written by the students and followers of Confucius, stated, "Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families."

The influences of these doctrines are rooted in Chinese culture and people's daily lives. Family matters have been considered private and "maintaining" a good family has become a standard of judgment. It is also because of patriarchal dogma that incidents of domestic violence have been viewed as a private matter. There is popular Chinese idiom, "jia chou bu wai yang," which means that family scandal should be kept inside the home.

1992: The First Public Discussion about Domestic Violence

It was not until 1992 that the first news reports about domestic violence appearing in the media. A female lawyer, Pi, Xiaoming wrote "A White Paper on Domestic Violence." After several failed attempts, the magazine *Chinese Women* finally agreed to publish "A White Paper on Domestic Violence." During the same year, the Maple Center set up the first women's hotline, and began to receive inquires about domestic violence issues.

As previously mentioned, before the 1995 UN Fourth Women's Conference, domestic violence was not considered as a type of violence against women.[20] When the National People's Congress issued the *Funu Quanli Baozhang Fa* (Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women) on October 1, 1992, neither the idea of domestic violence, nor a protective order to keep abuser from the victim was included.

It has been the efforts of women's groups, both national and international, which have raised awareness of the severity of this problem, and as a result, there has been some progress on this issue. But, the 1995 UN Women's Conference first created the political opportunity for women's groups to learn about, and to build the campaign against domestic violence.

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[20] http://big5.xinyu.gov.cn/content/2008/11/01/51910.htm, 2007/07/31, accessed on 2009/08/01, my translation.

5.1.1 The Political Opportunity for the Campaign against Domestic Violence: the 1995 UN Women's Conference

Most researchers agree on the important role of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women on the development of the organizing of Chinese women (See for example Judd 2002). The Women's Conference and the accompanying Non-Governmental Organization Forum introduced this Western term "non-governmental organizing"[21] to Chinese society. At the same time, it also brought the attention of international donors to women's groups in China.

Most importantly, this Women's Conference raised governmental awareness about women's issues. According to Margaret Woo, the 1992 Law of the PRC on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women was enacted "in anticipation of the 1995 UN World Conference on Women," to serve "as what might be called 'posterboard' legislation" (2002, 315).

Moreover, it was not until this women's conference, when the Chinese government agreed to recognize "The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action," (Hereafter, BPFA) which was passed at the conclusion of the conference, that the issue of domestic violence was brought to the attention of the government and the media. Preventing violence against women is one of twelve agendas of the BPFA.

In fact, based on interviews and field observations, this research has found that the 1995 UN women's conference created a political opportunity for activists to organize against domestic violence, not only by awakening governmental attention to this issue, but also by bringing in resources from the international community. The Ford Foundation is among many international donors that have shifted their sponsorships to women's groups, and it has played an important role in the campaign against domestic violence.

5.1.1.2. The Formation of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network

The most crucial development for women's organizing to fight domestic violence has been the formation of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of the China Law Society (hereafter Anti-Domestic Violence Network). In 1998, the Ford Foundation sponsored four activists, including the founder of the Maple Center, Wang Xingjuan, to attend a conference in India. This

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[21] This statement does not indicate that the social organizing did not exist before the 1995 UN conference. Instead, this statement emphasized that the term "NGO", like many other Western terms regarding social organizing and gender issues, was introduced to Chinese women's groups on this conference.

conference called together representatives from women's NGOs in Asia to discuss gender violence. Before their trip, the Ford Foundation reminded these four participants that they would be expected to work on this issue after returning home.

According to two of the main founders of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, Chen Mingxia and Ge Yongli, they had discussed possible work to fight gender violence during the conference period. In fact, they decided to focus on domestic violence issues, and the Anti-Domestic Violence Network was established in June, 2000.[22] Both of two founders of my case studies, Wang Xingjuan of the Maple Center and Guo Jianmei of the Peking Women's Law Center, were also founders of this network.

Wang Xingjuan, who is in her 80s and has fought for women's rights for more than twenty years, recalled the reason that she and Guo Jianmei initiated the formation of the Network, "Guo Jianmei and I have often teamed up together. At that time, we found that many organizations worked on domestic violence issues. But they lacked cooperative work with each other. Therefore, we suggested we formed an alliance. We invited Chen Mingxia (who later became the founder of the Network) to join us because we knew the Network would need someone to help with registration and we want to unite more people to join this campaign against domestic violence" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 25, 2011).

Wang Xingjuan explained further about the cooperation between women's groups that: "we have been working together on domestic violence issues since the 1995 UN women's conference. Guo Jianmei, Xie Lihua (the founder of Rural Women), and I formed a task force on domestic violence issues. We included the contributions of NGOs and the government…In fact, it is NGOs which work on domestic violence issues" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 25, 2011).

The formation of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network also relied on financial support from the international community, including UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), and Oxfam Novib (the Dutch Organisation for International Development Co-operation).

5.1.2 The Success of the Campaign against Domestic Violence

There is some research that discusses the factors that lead to the success of the campaign

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[22] Growing Stronger Along with the Network for Combating Domestic Violence, p.8.

against domestic violence. Lu Zhang indicates the important role of the 1995 UN women's conference, and Samantha Keech-Marx argues that the success of the campaign has come from the strategy of women's groups in framing their argument to resonate with the discourse of the state. Keech-Marx concludes that "these women's organizations are legitimizing their activities in order to effectively engage with the state to bring about reform" (2008, 176).

Based on interviews and field observations, this research has come to a different conclusion. Although the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and its effort to "enlist the support of powerful officials and deputies to the National People's Congress to lobby on their behalf" (Keech-Marx 2008, 180) do play an important role in the success of the campaign against violence, the three women's groups that I studied have also used a variety of strategies to challenge and confront the practices of the central authorities, including the judicial system and police departments. Most importantly, these three organizations have all used the same strategy, namely, challenging the traditional view of domestic violence as a private family matter.

Even though the government's attention to domestic violence issues was awakened during the 1995 UN women's conference, the culture of viewing domestic violence incidents as dirty laundry prevented the society from raising awareness of this issue. It was only after the formation of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network that collaboration between women's groups started to undo this patriarchal phenomenon.

After the formation of the Network, organizers set up fifteen task forces. With only two to three paid staffers, the Network has gathered more than fifty organizations to share the work load. Each task force has applied various strategies to awaken the public's awareness of domestic violence issues, as well as to lobby for changes in the law.

In addition to the women's groups using familiar strategies, including writing media releases for legislative suggestions, submitting reports to governmental institutions, hosting public education events, and cooperating with local governments to practice intervention approach upon domestic violence incidents, the Network also launched a new initiative to bring the issue to people's attention.

Here is one example. The TV soap opera, "Do Not Talk to Strangers" (Bùyào hé mòshēng rén shuōhuà), which was on the air on January 1st, 2001, showed many families nationwide the severe damage caused by domestic violence. Many of my interviewees mentioned that they were not aware of domestic violence issues until they saw this TV soap opera.

Based on interviews with a long term participant of the Network, Feng Yuan, several members of the network participated in the production of this drama series. Feng Yuan was the founder and served as the director of the Network for three terms.   As she stated, "The collective efforts of the Network have made significant progress in the campaign against domestic violence" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

One sign of progress is the revision of family law. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress announced on April 28, 2001 that domestic violence was prohibited and that the victims of domestic violence would be granted a divorce. However, there is no punishment for violation of this rule and there is lack of definition of domestic violence (Zhou 2006).

5.1.2.1. One of the Successes: Awakening ACWF's Attention to Issues of Domestic Violence

Another sign of progress is the participation of the All China Women's Federation (ACWF), which is a GONGO and is the mass organization for women, in the fight against domestic violence. Women groups and the Anti-Domestic Violence Network have long tried to recruit ACWF's participation in the campaign against domestic violence by using different strategies. For example, women's organizations invited high-ranking officers of ACWF to be advisors to their task forces, and organized several training programs on domestic violence issues with local women's federations.

A director of a provincial women's federation shared her learning experiences about the issue of domestic violence, "Of course I heard about the issue of domestic violence because I have some legal background. But I learned the whole picture about domestic violence incidents when I participated in the training program provided by the Anti-Domestic Violence Network" (interviewed by author, China, April 18, 2013). After joining this training program, this director has designed more training programs that invite experts on women's issues to talk to leaders of local governments in her province.

In 2008, during a news interview, a department director of ACWF stated that ACWF will make a concerted effort to prevent domestic violence, and in addition to public education, ACWF will also begin the law-making process of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (ACWF Website). In April 2009, ACWF released a survey showing that 30 percent of the 27 billion families in China suffer from domestic violence (*Xinhua Net* 2009). During this news release, ACWF made promises to try to prevent domestic violence incidents.

As previously mentioned, in addition to legislative progress, the campaign against domestic violence also has participated in the implementation of domestic violence prevention work with the cooperation of local governments. As of April 28, 2013, there were 28 provinces that passed domestic violence prevention acts (*Ido* 2013). According to a news report in 2013, there were ten district courts that were chosen as experimental courts that can issue orders of protection to victims of domestic violence (*Sina News* 2013).

5.1.2.2. One of the Successes: The Milestone Moment of the Campaign against Domestic Violence

The first significant event in the law-making process occurred in 2003. In March 2003, the "Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Law", was submitted through 30 national people's representatives to the National People's Congress (NPC). The legislative lobby gained additional momentum in 2012 when the NPC announced its decision to include an anti-domestic violence law on its legislative agenda.

Even though progress in the campaign against domestic violence has made significant changes politically and culturally, there still exist even more challenges for women's groups. Although both the police department and the justice system have joined the effort to prevent domestic violence, the situation has not improved much. According to a representative from the police department, this is because domestic violence is not illegal under criminal law (*the Huanghekou Government* 2007). In other words, the violator will not be punished by the law.

In conclusion, women's groups were awakened to the severity of domestic violence during the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Lu 2008, 70. See also Huang 2010). Since then, women's groups have made significant progress in forcing the state to recognize the issue of domestic violence. Most importantly, the progress of women's groups in their legislative lobby marked a unique moment in the history of China's legislation because this was the first national legal proposition prepared by nongovernmental organizations, and thus, represented a new relationship between the state and social groups.

In the following sections, the strategies used to break down the public/private division, as well as the provision of institutionalized social services that were traditionally viewed as family matters in China will be analyzed. This research will also make use of discussions of political opportunity and constraints to analyze the different strategies chosen by each case study.

A comparison of the chosen strategies of the three women's groups that I have studied will be used to further examine the dynamic shifts of the state-social group relationship. After revealing which factors support public advocacy, and which factors help women's groups to participate in this legislative process, this chapter will then present the confrontational approach of the three organizations in challenging the boundaries of political space which is set by the central authorities.

5.2. The Difference of Strategies Used and Their Results in Shaping Relationships with the Government

The main finding of this research is that organizers' chosen strategy will result in political opportunity or constraint, and this will affect the dynamics of their relationship with the central authorities. However, there is no causal mechanism to indicate what kind of strategy will lead to political opportunity or to constraint.

Instead, the chosen strategy combined with the actions of four driving forces will determine if social groups can expand their political space for social organizing. These four driving forces are: the central authorities, local governments, the media, and the international community.

Over all, the Maple Center has chosen a more cooperative strategy, which leads to an increase in the degree of autonomy, while the Peking Women's Law Center has chosen a more confrontational strategy and has enjoyed a higher degree of empowerment. This research argues that the choice of strategy is affected by both the anticipation of governmental responses and the different development stages of each organization.

In the campaign against domestic violence, both the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center were founding members of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, and were the leading organizations that prepared the 2003 legal proposition that was presented to the Nation People's Congress. The Maple Center's main focus has been on social services and advocacy while the Peking Women's Law Center works on legal reform based on a gender perspective.

Compared to these two groups, Common Language is a relatively young organization, and is a leading force of the lesbian movement in China. Therefore, the main focus of Common Language is to grasp every opportunity to build up its organizational capability. As a result, Common Language chose to join the Anti-Domestic Violence Network in 2006 and has brought the attention of women's groups to the situation of lesbian victims in domestic violence

incidents.

In short, there are two kinds of domestic violence among lesbian population. The first kind of domestic violence is between the members of a lesbian couple. The second kind of domestic violence is caused when a family member disapproved the lesbian's sexual identity.

In this section, the history of each of the three women's advocacy groups that I have studied work on issues of domestic violence will first be briefly introduced. The organizers' strategies in awakening the government and the society to the issues of domestic violence will be evaluated chronologically, with emphasis on the resulting political opportunity or constraint of each chosen strategy.

In this chapter, I will focus on the position that resulted from the chosen strategy of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language in the campaign against domestic violence. In the following section, the changing relationship between each advocacy group and the state will be analyzed.

5.2.1. Analyses of the Maple Center's Chosen Strategy and its Results

Based on interviews and field research, this study has concluded that the Maple Center used dynamic and cooperative strategies to interact with the four driving forces in the campaign against domestic violence to shift the boundaries of its political spaces, namely, submitting expert suggestions to the central authorities; cooperating with local women's federations; attending training programs hosted by international communities, and working with the media. As a result of these efforts, the Maple Center has increased its degree of empowerment in my state-social group relationship.

5.2.1.1 Background of the Maple Center's Involvement in the Campaign against Domestic Violence

Since the first women's hotline was set up in 1992, there have been inquires about domestic violence incidents. According to interviews with Wang Xingjuan, from 1992 and up to the year 2011, the Maple Center received 2,600 phone calls regarding domestic violence. However, the Maple Center did not set up a task force to address issues of domestic violence. And because the whole society viewed domestic violence as a family matter, governmental institutions had not yet paid attention to the issues of domestic violence.

Wang Xingjuan recalled that it was a phone call one night in 1994 that awakened her to the serious situation of victims of domestic violence. Wang got a phone call from a staff of one government unit who asked if the Maple Center could shelter a woman who just ran away from her family and visited the unit to complain about her husband's physical abuse.

"The Maple Center failed to give a hand to this woman." Wang Xingjuan talked in a repentant tone (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 18, 2009). In fact, during that period of time, there were no shelters for domestic violence victims in all of China. This failure pushed Wang to start her work on domestic violence issues. The Maple Center began its task to fight against domestic violence by conducting research to learn about the various situations of domestic violence.

Moreover, the Maple Center has applied dynamic strategies in interacting with the four driving forces in shifting the state-social group relationship, namely, the central authorities, the local women's federation, the media, and the international community. This research has concluded the following six major strategies of the Maple Center.

5.2.1.2. Six Major Strategies

From 1994 to 2012, there were six major strategies that the Maple Center used. First, organizers conducted research based on the findings of the women's hotline, and presented research reports to raise awareness about the issue of domestic violence. Second, organizers constructed service models based on their research findings and carried out these models by cooperating with local women's federations.

Third, organizers submitted their legal suggestions to the central authorities, including the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, on behalf of the Maple Center. Fourth, organizers worked with the media to raise society's interest in domestic violence issues. Fifth, organizers built up their organizational capabilities by participating in training programs on domestic violence issues provided by international communities, and at the same time, sought financial support from international donors for their tasks in preventing domestic violence.

The sixth and very important strategy of the Maple Center was to build alliances with other women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence. In addition to the example that both the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center set as leading forces in the establishment

of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, I learned, during field research in a remote area of China, about the Maple Center's effort in incubating other women's groups.

An activist there who had not heard about women's groups before she became a volunteer in a women's group, talked about the Maple Center's effort. "We are far away from Beijing, and did not have enough resources to attend meetings in Beijing. I remembered that I had learned about all kinds of women's issues from the Maple Center's newsletters. The Maple Center sent its newsletter periodically. I also learned about the idea of casework from its newsletter. And now I teach at the Department of Social Work." (interviewed by author, China, April. 21, 2013).

In addition, the Maple Center, along with the Peking Women's Law Center, China Women's University, and Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family formed the "Chinese against Domestic Violence Task Force," in 2000 to prepare for their participation in the activities of Beijing+5, which was an UN conference that reviewed the progress made after the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

On March 8, 2004, the Maple Center ran its first hotline for preventing domestic violence. For this service, the Maple Center worked with the Peking Women's Law Center, the legal department of ACWF, and the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Society, to provide necessary assistance for victims of domestic violence.

These strategies have resulted in both political opportunities and constraints for the Maple Center to negotiate its boundaries of political space that were set up by the central authorities. This research will analyze several significant strategies and results in detail in the following sections.

5.2.1.3. Creating Political Opportunity through a Chosen Strategy

There are five events that can be viewed as political opportunities for expanding political space for the Maple Center. These five events happened in the years 2001, 2004, and 2012. We can observe the increase in the organizational degree of autonomy and the degree of empowerment.

The first political opportunity was created by the Maple Center in 2001, when the Maple Center successfully hosted a three-day training program for marital and family counselors in Beijing Normal University. There were more than one hundred and ten representatives from seventeen provinces joining this training program. Most of them were counselors of hotlines that

were set up by local governments.

This training program introduced the idea of "family therapy" to the practice of hotline counseling. Hosting this event helped the Maple Center to build its reputation as an experienced marital and family counseling organization. However, one point worth noting is that this political opportunity was created by the Maple Center's previous effort. Since 1997, when the Maple Center received funding from the British Embassy, it has hosted several nationwide training programs for hotline counselors. And it is based on these efforts that the Maple Center successfully invited counselors from seventeen provinces in 2001.

The second political opportunity in 2001 was related to a TV soap opera, "Don't Respond to Strangers (Búyào Hé Mòshēngrén Shuōhuà)." Based on my field research, many interviewees who work for women's and lesbian NGOs, pointed out that it was only after the broadcast of this hit TV program that they learned the term "domestic violence."

The hotline of the Maple Center appeared at the end of each episode, and an interviewee of women activists in the remote area commented, "Of course the Maple Center has some degree of social influence nationwide. While most people had not heard the term 'domestic violence,' the Maple Center's hotline number was shown at the end of 'Don't Respond to Strangers.' Based on this fact, I would say Wang Xingjuan is an icon in this field" (interviewed by author, China, April. 19, 2013).

Two events that created new political opportunities happened in 2004. Five committee members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference visited the Maple Center in March 2, 2004. This visit advanced the legislative process after the submission of a legal proposition to the National People's Congress (NPC) in 2003. These five members submitted Motion Number 4072, a "suggestion for preventing domestic violence" to the NPC, after listening to a presentation by the Maple Center regarding hotline counseling on domestic violence issues.

On March 25, 2004, the honorary chairperson of All China Women's Federation, Peiyun Peng, visited the Maple Center, and gave high praise to the work of the Maple Center. This recognition helped the Maple Center to promote its work in preventing domestic violence. Another visit by Peiyun Peng from October 12 to 14, 2004 to the cooperative project between the Maple Center and the Tianjin Women's Federation to create a "zero domestic violence community" was reported by the newspaper *Chinese Women*, a government newspaper. This

report marked further recognition from the central authorities that was crucial in the Maple Center work with local governments nationwide.

Another example is the collaboration on a conference about domestic violence and women's mental health hosted by the Maple Center and the newspaper, *Chinese Women*. By working with the government media, the Maple Center not only again gained recognition from the central authorities, but also brought people's attention to the Maple Center's work on domestic violence issues.

The fourth event that created political opportunity occurred in September, 2012. This was a domestic violence incident involving a public figure, the founder of "Crazy English,"[23] Li Yang. This incident brought people's attention to the issue of domestic violence nationwide (*The New Yorker* 2011). A lot of media reported this incident, and when interviewed by *China Daily*, Li Yang said, "I hit her (his wife) sometimes but I never thought she would make it public since it's not a Chinese tradition to expose family conflicts to outsiders" (2011).

Kim Lee, the wife of Li Yang posted photos of her injuries on her micro blog. But it was the action of the organizers in the campaign against domestic violence that brought the attention of the public and the media to this incident. The Maple Center offered both individual and marital counseling. Li Yang only showed up once for the marital counseling. Wang Xingjuan was interviewed by the national and international media and an introduction to the Maple Center was also included in most news reports. This was yet another opportunity that won the Maple Center a nationwide reputation.

These five events created two mainly political opportunities for the Maple Center. First, the Maple Center won recognition from the central authorities, and this has helped it to do advocacy work without obtaining registration status as a social group. At the same time, by gaining attention from the media, the Maple Center has gradually established its reputation in society, which is a challenge considering the population and the size of the state.

5.2.1.4. Strategies Can Impact Both Sides of Results

Sometimes the chosen strategies of organizers lead not only to political opportunities, but also to constraints on the boundaries of political space for advocacy work. This can be seen

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[23] Crazy English (pinyin: Fēngkuáng Yīngyǔ) is a brand name related to a non-traditional method of learning English in mainland China conceived by Li Yang. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crazy_English, accessed on June 1, 2014.

clearly from two examples from the Maple Center's experience. The first setting was becoming one of the host organizations of the NGO forum in the 1995 UN women's conference, which led to both an increase of degree of empowerment in 1995 and a decrease in autonomy in 1996.

The second example was a cooperative project with Tianjin Women's Federation, in 2001. Although this project provided an opportunity for the Maple Center to increase its degree of empowerment, Tianjing Women's Federation's decision to end this project in 2006 also caused a decrease in its degree of autonomy in 2006.

The first example is the strategy chosen by the Maple Center to try very hard to win the chance to host a parallel NGO workshop during the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. According to Wang Xingjuan, the major reason that the Maple Center won this opportunity to host a parallel NGO workshop on domestic violence during the 1995 UN Women's Conference was because of the Maple Center's efforts in researching the seriousness of domestic violence incidents. The Maple Center's efforts gained the attention of the international women's groups, and it was agreed to allow the Maple Center to be the host of the workshop.

This workshop gained a lot of attention and support from the international movement community as well as from representatives of several foreign countries. In other words, hosting this workshop created the political opportunity for the Maple Center to attract more support for its work on domestic violence and also to help the Maple Center in establishing its reputation as an expert regarding these issues.

However, at the same time, this hosting opportunity also caused constraints from the ACWF. As Wang Xingjuan recalled, representatives from ACWF refused to attend this workshop and accused the Maple Center of damaging the image of the country. Officers of ACWF told Wang Xingjuan and representatives of international women's groups, "There are no domestic violence incidents in China" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 18, 2009). To be clear, this incident led to the political constraint since ACWF began to question the Maple Center's intention and to suspect if the Center attacked the regime on purpose.

The second strategy chosen by the Maple Center that resulted in both a good and bad impact was when the Maple Center chose to work with the Tianjin Women's Federation to carry out an experimental project in 2001. The project's title is, "The Community Intervention into Family Problems in a Tianjin Municipal Community." For this project, the Maple Center developed

three programs, a "Women's Hotline", "Half-Sky Homeland" and "Women's Legal Service Station" to serve local women.

Based on the interviews, Wang Xingjuan is very proud of this project. It was called "Half-sky Homeland," which was taken from Mao Zedong's famous words that "women hold up half the sky." This project aims at decreasing the number of domestic violence incidents. All the project details, including the women's hotline and women's legal service station, are based on the Maple Center's research and service experiences.

This cooperative project with Tianjin Women's Federation gave the Maple Center a chance to carry out a model for preventing incidents of domestic violence.
It also created a political opportunity for the Maple Center to both implement its ideal model for preventing domestic violence in the community and to build up its reputation of its capability in involving public policy nationwide.

However, this collaboration also caused political constraints for the Maple Center. In February 2006, Tianjin Women's Federation decided to end its collaboration with the Maple Center, and to continue this project by itself. In 2007, Tianjin Women's Federation decided to implement the same model that was designed by the Maple Center in every community in Tianjin. During the opening ceremony of the citywide "Half-sky Homeland," the chairperson of ACWF, Xiulian Gu, praised this project as "the outstanding product of the women's federations' service."

This collaboration project resulted in political constraint, too, because, in this last statement, Xiulian Gu obviously refused to acknowledge the role of the Maple Center in initiating and designing the project. The organizers of the Maple Center did not choose to release a clarification statement, so after 2007, whenever a news report has mentioned the "Half-Sky Homeland," it is presented as a project of Tianjin Women's Federation.

During our interviews, Wang Xingjuan shared her evaluation about this project, "You can observe our mission of influencing the lives of others by contributing our own lives, from the practice of the Tianjin project. Tianjin is a municipal city and yet, they were willing to carry out our project citywide" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April. 26, 2011).

In other words, even though the leading role of the Maple Center in this collaboration project was erased by the governmental interference, Wang Xingjuan still felt satisfied since the Center gained the chance to carry out its ideal model for domestic violence victims.

5.2.1.5. Evaluation of the Maple Center's Strategies: Advocating for Policy Positions and Cooperating with the Government

In addition to its advocacy work, the Maple Center chose another strategy that was different from that of the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language, namely, providing social services for victims of domestic violence. This strategy effectively helps the Maple Center to increase its degree of empowerment, because, providing social services for people in need was welcomed by the central authorities. However, now it is too soon to evaluate this strategy's impact upon the degree of autonomy.

According to Kang Xiaoguang, and Han Heng, "For an authoritative government, a social organization has "double properties": On one hand, it is a challenge for it represents one of the most powerful carriers of collective behavior; on the other hand, it is an auxiliary power as well for social organizations offer public goods, which belongs to part of the governmental obligations" (2011, 100).

The founders and organizers of the Maple Center have chosen the strategy of being a part of the auxiliary mechanism of the central authorities in providing public goods since the establishment of their organizations. However, based on interviews and field observations, this research found that the Maple Center also adopted the strategy of advocacy work after the revocation of its registration status and its participation in the 1995 UN women's conference.

The Maple Center's development strategies have been discussed in Chapter 4. Regarding the issue of domestic violence, the Maple Center adopted a similar path in choosing its strategies. First, founders and organizers established a hotline and provided counseling. And after participating the training program that was hosted by international women's groups, the Maple Center decided to join the advocacy campaign based on its experience in counseling.

From 1988 to 2013, the Maple Center's strategies in the campaign against domestic violence created five political opportunities for increasing its degree of autonomy and empowerment, and two strategies that resulted in both political opportunity and political constraints.

As the first women's NGO in China that has been struggling for more than twenty years, the first priority of the Maple Center is now to be able to register with the government and to offer social services that the government would purchase. There is one major reason behind these

decisions, namely, the sustainability of the Maple Center.

Now in her 80s, Wang Xingjuan who worked for more than 25 years at the Maple Center, has stepped down from any official position, and has been trying to find a sustainable way for the Maple Center to survive. Being recognized by the government could ensure the Maple Center's legitimacy and its source of funding.

As discussed in the Chapter 4, registration could provide a protection from sponsor agency for advocacy group. Based on interviews with Wang Xingjuan, regaining registration also means the state admits its mistake in revoking the Maple Center's registration status in 1996. It is too early to evaluate the possible results of this strategy.

However, Wang Xingjuan and organizers of the Maple Center have carved out a certain political space for their work. As one interviewee from a remote area of China said, "Wang Xingjuan has had a great influence upon me. Her life experiences have taught me that as an activist, I cannot yield to fate" (interviewed by author, China, April. 21, 2013).

5.2.2 An Analysis of the Peking Women's Law Center's Chosen Strategy and its Results

Based on interviews and field research, this study has concluded that the Peking Women's Law Center has taken advocacy as its major strategy in the campaign against domestic violence. Furthermore, the Peking Women's Law Center's advocacy strategy has one unique characteristic, that of representing victims in lawsuits that challenge the prevailing culture, ideas and practices.

One point worth noting is that, in the campaign against domestic violence, the major political constraint that the Peking Women's Law Center has encountered has been from local governments, instead of from the central authorities. The obvious reason is, that the strategy of representing symbolic cases puts most pressure on the local governments.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the Peking Women's Law Center shifted its movement's approach in 2002, and has chosen to represent cases that are considered representative of serious social problems. Cases of domestic violence are no exception. Also during the lawsuits of representative cases, the lawyers of the Peking Women's Law Center have tried to set up pioneering models for the legal system in China.

Citing one case of domestic violence as an example, in 2001, a woman in Mongolia killed her husband after being abused by him for a long time. This was a typical "answering violence with violence" case, which was prevalent in China. However, in this instance, this woman was

sentenced to death.

The lawyer from the Peking Women's Law Center, Liu Wei, represented the woman during the appeals trial. Liu used the theory of "battered women syndrome," which was introduced to the court for the first time. Liu's argument convinced the judge, and her client's sentence was changed to the death penalty with a reprieve.

My analyses of activists' strategies have found several interesting results. First, since comparing to the Maple Center and Common Language, the activists of the Peking Women's Law Center have chosen more confrontational strategies, the Center endures much more severe monitor from the central government and thus the organizational degree of autonomy has been steady low.

Second, the confrontational strategies have led to the increase of organizational degree of empowerment. There is only one exception. The organizational degree of empowerment was decreased significantly in 2001 when the founder, Guo Jianmei suffered too much pressure and had to take a leave for a period of time.

5.2.2.1. Background Introduction of the Peking Women's Law Center's Role in the Campaign against Domestic Violence

According to interviews with the founder, Guo Jianmei, although the Peking Women's Law Center did not receive any inquiries about getting legal help for problems of domestic violence before 1998, since its establishment in December, 1995, the founders and organizers have paid attention to domestic violence issues. Guo Jianmei, who is in her 50s, and appears energetic all the time, stated that "the main reason that we have paid attention to issues of domestic violence was because of our participation in the 1995 UN women's conference" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Nov. 18, 2009).

The Peking Women's Law Center held its first conference focused on issues of domestic violence in August, 1996. Since the establishment of the Peking Women's Law Center, providing legal advice has been its major strategy in reaching out to grass-root people. But it was not until 1998 that the first inquiry regarding getting legal help for victims of domestic violence appeared.

When Guo Jianmei was interviewed by *China Daily* on March 8, 2012, she mentioned that "the center has recorded roughly 1,000 domestic violence cases" since December 1995, and

"almost thirty percent were the result of a man becoming upset over the question of virginity." For these one thousand victims, the Peking Women's Law Center chose to provide legal advice for all and to represent several significant cases.

The reason that the Peking Women's Law Center has only represented several significant victims of domestic violence is because the Peking Women's Law Center uses its representation as a chance to introduce new theories in identifying victims and in judging the fairness of sentences given to abusers. This has been the major strategy of the Peking Women's Law Center in the campaign against domestic violence.

In addition to representing several symbolic cases, the Peking Women's Law Center also joined the effort to form an Anti-Domestic Violence Network and led one of the task forces on legal reform. In other words, activists' strategy is to select the cases that can make the biggest impact in law policy and national values.

5.2.2.2. Creating Political Opportunities by its Choice of Strategies

Seeking the reform of the legal system has been the major task for organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center. There are four events that were significant in creating political opportunities for the Peking Women's Law Center, namely, the discussion platform in 1998, the formation of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network in 2003, the Tong Shenshen incident in 2009, and the Li Yang incident in 2012. As a result, the organizational degree of its empowerment was increased.

The last two incidents are examples of the Peking Women's Law Center's strategy of doing advocacy work by representing symbolic cases in the legal system. The founders and lawyers adopted the same philosophy in the campaign against domestic violence. Unexpectedly, compared to other advocacy work, this strategy has created more political opportunities than constraints for the Peking Women's Law Center in expanding its political space.

In addition to representing symbolic cases, the Peking Women's Law Center has also made efforts to building alliances between women's groups, which have also created political opportunities for the Peking Women's Law Center. Representing symbolic cases and building alliances have been the two major strategies that helped the Peking Women's Law Center to create political opportunity in expanding its political space for advocacy work. This research will discuss the strategy of building alliances first, which has resulted in the first two political

opportunities.

Since its establishment, building alliances between groups with the same interests has been one of two major strategies of the Peking Women's Law Center. As a result, the Peking Women's Law Center has hosted meetings periodically for women's groups and experts. Regarding the issue of domestic violence, the founders and organizers have adopted a similar strategy. Building alliances created the first political opportunity for the Peking Women's Law Center in 1998, which has led to the increase of the organizational degree of empowerment.

As previously mentioned, there were four activists who were sponsored by the Ford Foundation to attend a training program in India. After this trip, these four activists all participated in one of the periodic gatherings of the Peking Women's Law Center. The idea of and the approach to forming an alliance to fight against domestic violence were initiated at this gathering, and resulted in the formation of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of the China Law Society.[24]

In other words, the gathering arranged by the Peking Women's Law Center successfully provided a platform for collaboration between women's groups and feminist experts in the legal system. The strategy of building an alliance between women's groups and feminist experts also helped the Peking Women's Law Center to establish its role as one of leading forces in the campaign against domestic violence.

Another political opportunity was created in 2003 when the Anti-Domestic Violence Network successfully submitted its legal proposition to the NPC. The founders and organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center realized the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving participation in the law-making process on issues of domestic violence. In 2004, the Peking Women's Law Center re-organized its work into three task forces, namely, domestic violence, female labor rights, and women's property rights.

5.2.2.3. The Impact of Reorganization

Two lawyers from the Peking Women's Law Center pointed out that this reorganization has played an important role in the campaign against domestic violence (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011). Since members of the legal system, including judges, lawyers,

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[24] Statement of the founder of Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Society, Chen Mingxia, http://1000peacewomen-china.org/html/?type=detail&id=20

prosecutors, forensic workers, and other law enforcement officers, are crucial in the proactive intervention in domestic violence incidents, and the Peking Women's Law Center is the only women's group comprised of a group of lawyers and experts in the legal system, the concentration of the Peking Women's Law Center's efforts has contributed to gradually creating more effective prevention and control measures in the fight against domestic violence.

For example, the Peking Women's Law Center provides training sessions for members of the legal system to increase their member's sensitivity towards victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, the Peking Women's Law Center held these training programs with the collaboration of local women's federations in order to recruit help in the enforcement of monitoring practices of the existing laws on domestic violence.

As one director of a local women's federation told me, "When Guo Jianmei held a training program for our legal system, I helped her to invite all the leaders of the public security organs, procuratorial organs and people's courts" (interviewed by author, China, April. 17, 2013).

Representing symbolic cases has also created political opportunities for the Peking Women's Law Center. Lawyers from the Peking Women's Law Center have introduced the western idea of protecting victims of domestic violence into Chinese courts (*People. cn*), while at the same time they have used symbolic cases to bring the seriousness and severity of domestic violence as well as the work of the Peking Women's Law Center to people's attention. The Tong Shenshen incident is one example of this process.[25]

Tong Shenshen suffered domestic violence even before her marriage to her abusive husband. She sought police help and even successfully managed to run away from home. However, she was still beaten to death by her husband, and her husband was only sentenced to six years and six months at the first trial.

Most media reports were angry about the sentence the abuser received and even the newspaper of the juridical system published a special report on this incident, and indicated that reluctance to enforce existing policies was the major cause of this tragedy (see for example *East Day* 2010). A lawyer of the Peking Women's Law Center represented this case. During my

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[25] Tong Shen-Shen, 26 years old, was beaten to death by her husband. Before her death incident, she and her family reported domestic violence incidents eight times within several months. But the polices cannot give much help. Tong Shen-Shen also tried to escape and lived by herself, but cannot saved her own life. Her husband stated in the court that he cannot remember how many kicks he made, and he just kept kicking her during the last domestic violence incident. However, the court only prosecuted him an abusive crime and the judge only sentenced him six years and six months.

interview with her, she recalled that, the Peking Women's Law Center also used this case to awaken judges and experts to the insufficient protection that the legal system offers victims.

Another symbolic case is the Li Yang incident, which was previously mentioned in the discussion of the Maple Center's strategy. Regarding this notorious case, the Peking Women's Law Center chose to work with the Maple Center and introduced legal and counseling procedures for domestic violence victims and to the whole society (*Hexun* 2011). This action was reported widely by the news media and therefore, helped victims of domestic violence understand the complexity of the legal system.

5.2.2.4. Evaluation of the Peking Women's Law Center's Strategies: Persistently Challenging the Legal System

There are two major strategies the Peking Women's Law Center uses when participating in the campaign against domestic violence, namely, building alliances between women's groups and promoting reform of the legal system by representing symbolic cases. This latter strategy has also led founders and organizers to another strategy, the submission of suggestions by experts to the related central authorities regarding the law-making process on domestic violence.

To expand the political space for social organizing, the Peking Women's Law Center has put effort into empowering other women's groups. In addition to joining the effort in establishing the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, and to providing a platform for women's groups to discuss issues of domestic violence, the Peking Women's Law Center has also contributed to building the capabilities other groups.

An activist from a remote area in China emphasized this effort. "Guo Jianmei helped us. The thing that benefited us most was that she introduced international resources to domestic women's groups. As you know, we are far away from the center, and therefore, resources are scarce. Guo Jianmei helped me to learn where to find international foundations that share similar missions as our center" (interviewed by author, China, April. 20, 2013).

5.2.2.5. Significant Changes Brought by Chosen Strategies

The second strategy is to promote reform within the legal system. According to Guo Jianmei, the Peking Women's Law Center was the only organization that chose to concentrate on lawsuits about incidents of domestic violence. Since its establishment, the Peking Women's Law

Center has represented more than 200 cases in courts. This unique strategy has brought two significant changes. First of all, according to lawyers from the Peking Women's Law Center, more and more marginalized women are willing to seek the help from the Peking Women's Law Center.

This observation corresponds to the observation of Margaret Woo, "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the assertion of rights to privacy by ordinary Chinese citizens is increasing…Where the courts can be a site in which problems are named and solutions determined, women's litigation presents a potentially important 'bottom up' route by which public rights are determined and articulated" (2002, 328).

The second significant change in the Peking Women's Law Center's unique strategy is that this strategy helped the founders and organizers to create opportunities to work with local governments. Teaming up with local governments helps women's groups to reach out to marginalized women. An activist from a remote area of China addressed the importance of working with local women's federations, "We chose to work with women's federations because their unit exits at the lowest level of governance organs. There exists a contact person of the women's federation in each village" (interviewed by author, China, April. 21, 2013).

Local governments choose to include women's groups in their tasks in order to establish their own reputation for good governance or in order to avoid possible criticism. As one director of local women's federation stated, "These (women's) groups are doing the women's federations' jobs. Hence I always tell my staff that we need to learn from women's groups" (interviewed by author, China, April. 21, 2013).

Specifically, the reason that local governments have sought collaboration with the Peking Women's Law Center is because officials try to avoid having any notorious cases from happening in their ruling area, like Tong Shenshen's case which might give them a bad reputation. In addition, working with local women's federation also helps the Peking Women's Law Center to build up its reputation of capably becoming involved in public policies.

The strategy of representing symbolic cases also has also led the Peking Women's Law Center to choose to adopt another strategy, namely, submitting suggestions for new laws that relate to the plans of the central authorities. In fact, this strategy has become possible because of reforms that were adopted by the National People's Congress. In other words, the reforms of the NPC created a political opportunity for social groups to participate in the law-making process.

According to Michael Dowdle, "In the early 1990s, the CLA adapted its public-input procedures to this aspect of its operations and began exhibiting greater aggressiveness in this review…After the NPC began publicizing its receptiveness to public input in its legislative drafting processes, other political actors in China began employing and publicizing similar procedural devices in an attempt to overcome their own legitimacy problems" (2002, 332).

Compared to the strategy of representing symbolic cases, submitting expert suggestions has been much more welcomed by the central authorities. Thus, this strategy has also helped the Peking Women's Law Center to build its professional reputation among governing institutions. This can be observed from the increasing number of invitations for the Peking Women's Law Center to attend law-reviewing conferences, especially on the issue of domestic violence.

In conclusion, the strategies of the Peking Women's Law Center in the campaign against domestic violence have successfully created political opportunities for its political space in advocacy work. More significantly, contrary to its involvement on other issues, the Peking Women's Law Center has experienced less repressive interference from the central authorities regarding its chosen strategies.

According to Guo Jianmei, the reason for the different governmental attitude is that, from the point of view of the central authorities, issues of domestic violence challenge people's ideas of family matters as opposed to arguing for political or government changes. In other words, the campaign against domestic violence is not viewed as a threat to regime's legitimacy (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

Furthermore, since the central authorities agreed to work to prevent violence against women after acknowledging the conclusions of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Peking Women's Law Center's criticisms of the legal system and existing laws has gained a lot of ground.

5.2.3. Analysis of Common Language's Chosen Strategies and Their Results

Based on interviews and field research, this study has concluded that Common Language has successfully created additional political opportunities for itself by participating in the campaign against domestic violence.

As a relatively young organization, and as a lesbian organization which confronts both pressures from the government and the society, Common Language's participation in the

campaign against domestic violence has helped its organizers to build alliances with other women's groups, while at the same time, enabling Common Language to bring the attention of women's groups to the situation of lesbians. Common Language has simultaneously used three strategies in its campaign against domestic violence, namely, alliance building, bringing attention to lesbians' rights, and volunteer training.

In addition, joining the campaign against domestic violence has provided its organizers and volunteers with the opportunity to be trained to conduct advocacy work. Common Language joined the campaign against domestic violence in 2007, and its three chosen strategies have helped Common Language to increase both its organizational degree of autonomy and degree of empowerment.

5.2.3.1. Background Introduction of Common Language's Role in the Campaign against Domestic Violence

One of the most important and specific strategies of Common Language has been to combine the strongest interests of volunteers with its efforts at expanding the organization's political space. Citing its project of researching lesbian health issues in 2005 as an example, the initial idea of volunteers was to understand the lifestyle of lesbians in Beijing. During that period of time, Common Language had just been established, and volunteers were eager to learn more about other lesbians.

As recalled by one of the funding organizers of Common Language, the first task for this initiative was to seek funding. The group found possible funding with an AIDS research institute. As a result, the organizers decided to combine the volunteers' interest in learning about the lifestyle of other lesbians with its aim of organizational capacity building, and applied these goals to the project of researching lesbian health issues in Beijing.

Their research into violent incidents among lesbian couples was also launched for similar reasons. After the establishment of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, this network developed a strategy to get more organizations involved in the campaign against domestic violence, namely, giving grant funding to other organizations which would work on this issue. Common Language applied for this funding in 2007, and asked to conduct research into incidents of domestic violence among lesbians.

To work on this project, Common Language set up a website to recruit interviewees for its

investigation of incidents of domestic violence among the lesbian population, while at the same time introducing on its website legal actions that have been used to prevent and punish acts of domestic violence in Taiwan, the United States and Canada. In other words, Common Language introduced legislative policies and processes on issues of domestic violence to the lesbian population.

There is also another strategy worth noting regarding this project. According to the founder, Xu Bin, and other organizers, the project aimed at awakening the awareness of women's activists towards the situation of lesbians. Xu Bin, who is at her 30s and has influenced many lesbian organizers in China, stated, "In China, the campaign against domestic violence is organized by social groups. However, most experts of domestic violence issues are not familiar with queer issues. There are only a few individuals within this campaign who will demonstrate their personal support toward lesbian situations" (interviewed by author, China, April. 16, 2013).

Xu Bin further emphasized the role of participating in the campaign against domestic violence. "I think this project (the research on lesbian victims of domestic violence) is an important task. This is the first time that we have had the chance to discuss a common issue with other women's groups. Furthermore, we can include lesbian situations in all discussions. These experts are willing to listen since they are concerned about violence against women" (interviewed by author, China, April. 16, 2013).

Based on interviews with organizers of lesbian groups and women's groups, most organizers indicated that they were not familiar with the issues of each other's campaigns. In other words, many organizers of women's groups have not discussed issues related to the queer population, while, many young activists of lesbian groups have not paid attention to gender issues. This research will examine more about Common Language's strategy of building up a communication bridge between women's groups and lesbian groups in the following section.

5.2.3.2. Creating Political Opportunities through Their Chosen Strategies

Joining the campaign against domestic violence created significant political opportunities for Common Language. First, it provided Common Language with an opportunity to build alliances with women's groups. Second, the investigation into incidents of domestic violence

among the lesbian population attracted the media's attention.[26]

In 2007, Common Language obtained funding from the Anti-Domestic Violence Network to do an investigation into incidents of domestic violence in the lesbian population. To begin cooperation with women's groups, Common Language hosted a meeting inviting the media, international foundations, and experts and organizers from the fields of gender issues, legal rights and the queer movements.

During this gathering, Common Language invited He Xiaopei to introduce background information about lesbian lives and the queer movement in China. He Xiaopei has participated in the lesbian organizing since 90s, the younger generation of lesbian organizers often call her the "qián bèi" (antecessor). Common Language also reported its research on lesbian health issues that it had conducted in 2005. Thus, Common Language's efforts brought the attention of women's groups to the status of lesbians in China.

According to my interviews with Xu Bin and two other organizers of Common Language, after this meeting, several women activists and feminist experts accepted Common Language's invitation to be consultants on its research into the situation of lesbian victims of domestic violence and these experts also made efforts to contribute to Common Language's project.

As Xu Bin stated, "Several experts on domestic violence issues gave us a great deal of support in our work. In addition to being our consultants, they also introduced other experts to participate in our research project. For example, they were invited to train our volunteers on how to conduct research and how to conduct interviews" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

Xu Bin emphasized Common Language's strategy: "The experts who were introduced by other experts had not heard about lesbian issues before. By providing a training program for our volunteers, these experts learned more about the situation of lesbians, and were friendly to lesbian groups" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

By participating in the projects of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, Common Language expanded its political space for advocacy work by making connections with women's groups. Another significant political opportunity resulted from making connections with women's groups was Common Language's efforts to build up its relationship with local

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[26] For example, *Legal Daily*. 2011. "The First Report on Lesbian Domestic Violence Incidents in China." (my translation). January 11, 2010, accessed on 2012/08/30
http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/zmbm/content/2010-01/07/content_2018321.htm?node=7569.

women's federations.

According to Xu Bin, "Compared to male gay groups, the lesbian population with AIDS is much smaller. Therefore, there is no government organ that will communicate with us directly. ACWF is the only government mechanism that Common Language can be related to (because lesbians should be included in the women's population). We have tried very hard to build our connections with local women's federations, and it was not until we joined the Anti-Domestic Violence Network that we had made significant progress" (interviewed by author, China, April 16, 2013).

Another organizer of Common Language shared Xu Bin's point of view: "Compared to other government organs, ACWF is not powerful. However, it is still a part of the governing system, and therefore, it has channels for working within the government system. Citing the Domestic Violence Prevention Act as an example, it was ACWF that pushed this act to be included into the government law-making process" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011).

This statement also reveals organizers' evaluation in considering Common Language's relationship with ACWF. In addition to building connections with women's groups and local women's federations, there is a third political opportunity that was created by Common Language's research into incidents domestic violence among lesbians, namely, that the findings of this research also brought media attention to the status of the lesbian population.

One example is the January 11, 2010 news report of *Legal Daily* that covered several important findings of Common Language's investigation, and also interviewed Xu Bin and the formal director of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network. Most importantly, the reporter indicated that incidents of domestic violence among the lesbian population was neglected, even by the staff of ACWF, which was the major organization set up by the state to be in charge of preventing domestic violence. Therefore, the report argued, incidents of lesbian domestic violence deserve the attention of the government when drafting the Domestic Violence Prevention Act.

There were similar news reports that were also welcomed by the lesbian community, because these kinds of news reports represented recognition of the lesbian population. Furthermore, the organizers of Common Language hoped that the mention of ACWF in the news would awaken ACWF to the lesbian population. The organizers of Common Language

mentioned that, based on their discussions with some of the staff of ACWF, they believed that lesbian issues are viewed as a sensitive topic. As one organizer stated, "I believe that the staff of ACWF would like to avoid having a connection with lesbian organizations" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 9, 2011).

5.2.3.3. Evaluations of Common Language's Strategies: Confront Double Marginalized Status

As a lesbian organization that fights for both lesbian rights and recognition from the society, Common Language has encountered pressure from the governance system and a stigmatized attitude from the society. However, Common Language, established in 2005, is a relatively young organization. In addition to building up its own organizational capabilities as a lesbian group, Common Language also needs to build up its working relationship with women's groups.

Moreover, compared to the founders of the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, namely, Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei, Common Language's founder, Xu Bin has less connection with both the central authorities and the whole society. Therefore, Common Language has chosen quite different strategies from the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center in its campaign against domestic violence.

Because, unlike the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, that view the formation of the campaign against domestic violence as one of their significant approaches to influencing the decision-making process of the central authorities, Common Language has taken its participation in the campaign against domestic violence as an opportunity to build up its own capabilities and expand its connections with the whole society.

The three major strategies used by Common Language in its participation in the campaign against domestic violence were alliance building; volunteer training; and bringing the attention of the media and women's groups to the issue of lesbian rights. Based on interviews and field research, this study has concluded that these three strategies have successfully created political opportunities for expanding political space for Common Language. My analyses have also observed a steady increase in the degree of empowerment of Common Language.

Their major achievements included the following: training volunteers to become activists; bringing the media's attention to lesbian groups; awakening other lesbian groups to the issue of domestic violence and advocacy work; and building relationships with women's groups,

women's experts, and local women's federations.

Several senior women's activists and experts joined the advisory board of Common Language's research project on lesbian domestic violence issues. Several of them even become supporters of many of Common Language's events. For example, Guo Jianmei and Li Yin from the Peking Women's Law Center participated in several of Common Language's activities.

In addition, by conducting research on domestic violence in the lesbian community, Common Language recruited and trained a group of volunteers with organizational skills. Common Language set up its first decision-making board in 2011, and out of the five members of this board, there are two members who joined Common Language because of their research project.

As to evaluating the achievements of Common Language's strategies in the campaign against violence, this research has concluded that even though Common Language was not able to get the draft of the Domestic Violence Act to include domestic violence in homosexual couples, Common Language's strategy brought the attention of some experts to the issue of lesbian victims of domestic violence.

For example, one organizer of Common Language, who has participated in the campaign against domestic violence and has volunteered since she was a college student, stated, "The expert recommendations of Anti-Domestic Violence Network did include homosexual couples into the definition of domestic violence." This organizer continued, "Law-making is only a part of the effort in preventing domestic violence; social services are crucial too. I also hope we can gain the attention of the police and officers of women's federations regarding lesbian victims of domestic violence" (interviewed by author, Oct. 15, 2012).

According to Xu Bin, "Common Language will continue our efforts in mobilizing ordinary people to the campaign against domestic violence, and at the same time, we will try to make more legislative representatives aware of the existence of the lesbian population." Xu Bin continued, "As an advocacy group, Common Language hopes to communicate with the central government regarding public policies" (interviewed by author, China, April 23, 2011).

Even though Common Language has created some political opportunity in the campaign against domestic violence, its double marginalized status has not improved much. Since queer issues are generally neglected by society, working on the campaign against domestic violence is only the first step to bringing the public's attention to the situation of lesbians.

In addition, the governmental staff also shares stereotypes and prejudices towards the queer population, and as a result, compared to other social groups, Common Language has encountered more challenges in building connections with the government. In other words, gaining inclusion in the policy-making process remains one of major tasks for Common Language.

5.3. Creating Public Sphere for the Campaign Against Domestic Violence: Changes in the Court

In this section, the achievement of the efforts of women's groups in breaking down the public/private distinction on issues of domestic violence will be presented, with the focus on changes in the legal system in China. Based on interviews, field research, and an examination of secondary materials, this research has found that women's groups have successfully created a public sphere for domestic violence issues.

The joint efforts of women's groups in the campaign against domestic violence not only help each organization to gain political space for advocacy work, but also break down the distinction between public and private matters, as society has long viewed domestic violence as a private family issue.

There have been two significant achievements of this campaign, which can be considered evidence of creating a new public sphere for discussing issues of domestic violence. These achievements are changes in the legal system and the drafting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act as part of the government agenda.

Based on field research, I found that the legal system has been the conservative representation of the whole society when discussing women's issues. And any breakthrough in the legal system could be considered a major achievement. This is why the effort of the Peking Women's Law Center has been significant in promoting gender equality in China. Furthermore, this is why most researchers have agreed that the Anti-Domestic Violence Network has made successful achievement.

The law-making process of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act is now in its final stage before being submitted by the government to the People's Congress. This submission is evidence of the central authorities' recognition of domestic violence issues. In addition to gaining the recognition of the central authorities, the efforts of women's groups have also raised the awareness of the legal system.

One of major changes can be observed in the courts. In the past, although the issue of domestic violence was sometimes mentioned during a divorce trial, the domestic violence incident wasn't treated as evidence or a critical factor in the lawsuit.

According to a report from Chen Ming, an associate researcher of the China Institute of Applied Jurisprudence of the Supreme People's Court of China, among all the divorce lawsuits in the Basic People's Court[27] from 2001 to 2007, fewer than 10% of divorce trials recognized incidents of domestic violence. Moreover, as Chen points out, there were Basic People's Courts that have never recognized any domestic violence incident.

During my several discussions with Chen Ming, I could imagine how difficult it has been to awaken the attention of the legal system (interviewed by author, April 27; Aug. 14; Dec. 7, 2011). Chen Ming who has dedicated her life and career to victims of domestic violence, learned about domestic violence issues when she studied for her master's degree in Canada. She has worked in the legal system, and she is the one who introduced the idea of "battered victim syndrome" to Chinese society and to the legal system.

When Chen Ming came back to China and began her work to fight against domestic violence, she could find barely any support in the juridical system. There are several crucial challenges. The first challenge of awakening the legal system's attention towards issues of domestic violence is people's attitudes towards gender issues. Even though China hosted the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, most people are not aware of gender issues. The prevalence of domestic violence incidents is significant evidence of this problem.

The ignorance of gender perspectives also affects the attitude of law enforcement agents, including police officers, lawyers, prosecutors, and judges. More importantly, the legal education system does not include any training in gender issues.

One lawyer of the Peking Women's Law Center who graduated from Beijing University pointed out that there is no class about gender issues in any law school. It was not until her internship at the Peking Women's Law Center that she began to realize that domestic violence should not be treated only as a family matter. This ignorance about gender issues among law

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[27] A basic people's court (Chinese: *Jīcéng Rénmín Fǎyuàn*) is a lowest level court in the Courts of General Jurisdiction in the People's Republic of China. According to the Organic Law of the People's Courts of the People's Republic of China, the basic people's courts are set up at the district level and are responsible to judge lawsuits at the local level.

scholars has generated damage to women's rights.

This lawyer has been fighting for women's rights in the legal system. During our interview, I could always feel her sympathy towards marginalized women. However, she sometimes expressed her sense of powerlessness when facing backlash within the legal system. She cited the issue of domestic violence as an example.

The Peking Women's Law Center organized a discussion panel about the *Tong Shen-Shen* incident. When she phoned a leading law scholar to invite him to join this panel, she could tell from his response that he did not think domestic violence was a worthy issue to be discussed, and he eventually suggested she find someone else.

This lawyer indicated that most experts in the government share the same view with this scholar when discussing gender issues. As a result, the central authorities do not pay enough attention to women's rights. This lawyer believes people are influenced by traditional thinking to view domestic violence as just an issue between the members of a couple.

She shared her experiences in courts, where on several occasions, when a husband admitted his physical abuse towards his wife, the judge still refused to include domestic violence as one of the causes of the divorce. She remembered one case when the judge kept asking her to explain why the husband could have beaten his wife to death, since the husband looked "so in love with his wife?"(Judge's words) (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

Guo Jianmei also pointed out that, based on her observations, there are only three law experts nationwide who can discuss law issues from a gender perspective. The ignorance of gender issues by law enforcement agents is so prevalent that one director of a local women's federation, who is in charge of its law-making process, stated that, "I did not support the enactment of any legal documents for preventing domestic violence because I believed this action was useless. From my point of view, I would rather spend time educating our prosecutors and judges about gender issues" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

The above mentioned quotations are only several examples that demonstrate how difficult it is when women's organizations try to create a public sphere for domestic violence issues and try to promote the transformation of the legal system. However, even though there are so few law experts who pay attention to women's rights, the Peking Women's Law Center along with other women's groups still try both to make experts aware of gender issues, and to join in the fight against domestic violence with these few experts.

Chen Ming is one of these experts who has played an important role in changing the whole legal system in its dealing with incidents of domestic violence. In an interview with a female judge, she stated, "On domestic violence issues, we (the judges) are all Chen Ming's students" (interviewed by author, Dec. 7, 2011). Beginning in 2008 and up to 2013, ten of the Basic People's Courts have voluntarily joined the effort of the China Institute of Applied Jurisprudence of the Supreme People's Court of China, and have applied the Trial Guide for Cases that Involve Domestic Violence and Marriage to strongly intervene in incidents of domestic violence.

At the end of 2011, the number of Basic People's Courts that applied to be experimental courts for domestic violence trials was more than one hundred, and there have been more than 200 protective orders issued. Chen Ming analyzed media reports and discussions on the Internet from 2010 to September 2011. She concluded that the efforts of experimental courts to combat domestic violence have gained attention and praise from the society, and these efforts have not resulted in any criticism.

In addition to Chen Ming's efforts, the Anti-Domestic Violence Network also works very hard with the legal system. Before the end of its affiliation in 2011, the Network was under the China Law Society, which is a CONGO that represents people in the legal system. The Network and women's groups have held a series of training programs for police officers, prosecutors, and judges.

The Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center also held training programs on issues of domestic violence for law enforcement agents. Both organizations chose to work with local women's federations to host these training programs. As a director of a local women's federation in a remote area of China stated, "I helped the Peking Women's Law Center to host the training programs for law enforcement agents and asked all the leaders of the legal system to participate in these training workshops" (interviewed by author, China, April 17, 2013).

As a social group that promotes gender issues and needs to be recognized in the legal system, the Peking Women's Law Center does more than hosting training programs. The lawyers of the Peking Women's Law Center are also trainers whenever they represent a legal case. As a lawyer of the Peking Women's Law Center pointed out, the lawyers of the Peking Women's Law Center grasp every opportunity to introduce a gender perspective to law enforcement agents when representing legal cases that involve domestic violence issues. In other words, the Peking Women's Law Center views the court as a platform to educate law enforcement.

In fact, trying to awaken the awareness of as many people as possible to the issues of domestic violence has been one of women's groups' major strategies in the campaign against domestic violence. Training programs, panel discussions, and conferences are only some examples of this effort at public education.

Chen Ming also puts a lot of effort into introducing the ideal legal management of issues of domestic violence to all level of judges. Combining her dedication with the efforts of some women's groups, significant progress in reforming the legal system vis-a-vis the issue of domestic violence has been made. There are now fewer law enforcement agents who view domestic violence as family matter, and there are more lawyers and judges who recognize the existence of domestic violence.

5.4. Comparing Different Strategies in Raising Awareness about Domestic Violence Issues

The campaign against domestic violence has achieved several significant changes including the creation of a public sphere for discussion of issues of domestic violence; changing people's perspective regarding domestic violence incidents, and establishing new institutions with local governments to provide services for victims.

However, each achievement has been a process of negotiation with the central authorities. In the campaign against domestic violence, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have chosen different strategies to expand their political space. Because of their different stages of organizational development, and because of organizers' anticipation of governments' response, the Maple Center has chosen a more cooperative strategy, while the Peking Women's Law Center has used a more confrontational strategy.

As a relatively young organization, Common Language took the opportunity of joining the campaign against domestic violence to build up its connection with women's groups. This approach was the first step for Common Language to introduce lesbian issues to women's groups, and at the same time, an opportunity to learn about strategies for negotiating with the central authorities from several women's groups.

One can observe changes in the various groups' relationships with the central authorities as a result of their chosen strategies. Compared to other women's issues, the campaign against domestic violence has made significant progress in shifting the traditional discourse and creating public space for domestic violence issues. The success of getting the Domestic Violence

Prevention Act to be included in the law-making process of the central government is one piece of evidence that demonstrates the existence of a public sphere for issues of domestic violence.

There is other significant evidence that shows the transformation of cultures regarding incidents of domestic violence. For example, there have been more media reports that ask the government to pay closer attention to the seriousness of the issue of domestic violence, and there have been more public advertisements that ask people to stand up to stop incidents of domestic violence.

Furthermore, the efforts of women's groups have led to collaboration with local governments in establishing new institutions for victims of domestic violence. The Maple Center's collaboration project with Tianjin Women's Federation in 2001, "Half-Sky Homeland," is one example. This project aimed to promote a community model that prevents incidents of domestic violence. Even though the Maple Center was forced to leave this project in 2006, the Tianjin Municipality has continued using the Maple Center's model.

In conclusion, this research has found significant results from the efforts of women's groups to create a public sphere for the discussions of issues of domestic violence. Keech-Marx shares a similar observation, "What is clear is that Chinese popular women's groups are actively engaging with the state, and are achieving significant gains to the benefit of China's women" (2008, 199).

Based on discussions with women activists, this research has concluded the following reasons for this successful movement. First is the hosting of the 1995 UN women's conference. Feng Yuan, the chairperson of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network pointed out that because of this women's conference, the international communities, central government and the media began to pay attention to domestic violence issues in China. As Lu Zhang stated, "Domestic violence remained a culturally and politically prohibited topic until the hosting of the Beijing Conference in China" (2009).

Based on our interviews, Guo Jianmei added three more reasons. First, the central authorities do not view the campaign against domestic violence as a threat to regime legitimacy. Second, many families have personally experienced incidents of domestic violence. Along with the elevation of women's economic status, more and more women have started to stand up for their own rights. Third, compared to other women's rights issues, the campaign against domestic violence has gained more support among women's groups (interviewed by author, Beijing, China,

Aug. 17, 2011).

Based on field observation and material evaluation, this research reached the conclusion that it has been the efforts of women's groups that have awakened people's awareness to the issue of domestic violence. In other word, the hosting of the 1995 UN women's conference brought the concept of domestic violence to some governmental officers and women's activists. But for most of society, the idea of domestic violence as a social problem remained unknown until the year 2000.

Several organizers of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language stated that they had never heard about issues of domestic violence before they joined their organizations. Some organizers indicated that watching the TV soap opera "Do Not Talk to Strangers" (Bùyào hé mòshēng rén shuōhuà) was the first time that they learned about the issue of domestic violence. According to one organizer from the Peking Women's Law Center, Chinese society had never been aware of the issue of domestic violence until the year 2000, when this popular TV soap opera about an abused wife was on the air.

However, these organizers who only learned about the issue of domestic violence after joining their organizations also share the belief that nowadays, most people in China have heard about the issue of domestic violence. From the point of view of this research, the effort of women's groups to work with the media has made a significant contribution to this awareness.

There are several examples of their efforts. First, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language all have networked with journalists to provide them with information about the laws and policies on domestic violence. At the same time, women's and lesbian groups have assisted the media in reporting about the seriousness of several domestic violence incidents, by providing expert perspective and some case details.

In addition, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language all host or participate in training programs which were designed to help media reporters learn more about gender issues and to learn appropriate ways to report on incidents of domestic violence. In other words, organizers of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language all view the media as an important channel for public education, and have designed various approaches to awaken media's attention toward issues of domestic violence.

5.4.1. Chosen Strategies Reflect Different Stage of Organizational Development

Although a number of strategies are shared by these three organizations, the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have each adopted different strategies in their campaigns against domestic violence. The Maple Center's strategies have been more cooperative with the governance system, while the Peking Women's Law Center adopted some more confrontational strategies to seek reform in the legal system.

Based on interviews and field research, this study has concluded that there are two main reasons why each strategy was chosen. The first reason is to choose a strategy that will help the organization to develop its organizational capability, and the second is to choose a strategy that will create political opportunity for advocacy work.

For example, Common Language chose to conduct research about domestic violence among the lesbian population. This strategy helped Common Language to train its volunteers. Also, by inviting experts to organize the advisory board of this research, Common Language began to build its connections with women's groups.

These chosen strategies reflect the fact that, compared to the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, Common Language is a relatively young organization which lacks resources. While analyzing women's organizing in Beijing between 1995 and 2001, Cecilia Milwertz observed a similar strategy. "One of the principal modes of action employed by the new organizations is based on utilizing personal networks that cut across institutions regardless of their structural links to the party-state" (2002, 7).

Citing Common Language as an example, and comparing it to most women's groups in Beijing, the founder and organizers have less personal connection with the central government. As a result, Common Language has developed one unique strategy to overcome this challenge, and this strategy did contribute to the development of its organizational capabilities. First of all, by training volunteers, Common Language was able to form its executive committee in 2008. Then, by working with women's groups, Common Language also began to build up its connections with local women's federations. As a result, both its degree of autonomy and degree of empowerment have increased steadily.

As for the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center, their organizers have chosen strategies based on their expectation of maximizing their political space for organizing. The organizers have chosen both cooperative and confrontational strategies in their campaign against

domestic violence. The cooperative strategies include holding collaborative projects with the local governments, and hosting training programs for government officials and law enforcement agents.

There are also examples of activists' "soft" confrontational strategies, including holding press conferences for victims of domestic violence, organizing gatherings and conferences on the issue of domestic violence, and making accusations to the media about the government's irresponsible actions on incidents of the domestic violence.

5.4.2. Choosing Strategies with the Anticipation of the Government's Reaction

Why did some women's groups choose to act cooperatively and confrontationally at the same time? Based on interviews and field research, this study has found that organizers will choose strategies based on their predications of possible reactions of the governments. Moreover, these concerns of the organizers have been built on their past experiences interacting with the central authorities.

It is because the central authorities have positioned each self-organizing group in a different category that the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center, and Common Language have build different strategies to respond to the interference from the central authorities. According to Kang Xiaoguang, and Han Heng, "Facing social organizations with a different degree of power for challenging or ability for launching collective behavior, the government selects different control method…The government takes different actions for controlling social organizations in line with the properties of the goods they offer" (2011, 101).

Even though the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center have both used cooperative and confrontational actions in their campaigns against domestic violence, their major emphasis has been different. Based on field research and interviews, this research has concluded that in the campaign against domestic violence, the Maple Center chose a more cooperative strategy, for example, providing counseling services for victims of domestic violence and building up a new mechanism to serve victims with the help of the local governments.

The Peking Women's Law Center chose a more confrontational strategy, including representing symbolic victims of domestic violence, and holding press conferences to make accusations about the damage caused by incidents of domestic violence . For the organizers of the Peking Women's Law Center, representing symbolic cases of domestic violence not only has

helped them to build their reputation as an advocacy group, but has also helped them to be invited as experts in the law-making process.

The organizers' reasons behind each chosen strategy indicate organizer's evaluation of possible reactions from the central government. For example, from the point of view of the Maple Center's organizers, providing social services for victims of domestic violence has made the Maple Center eligible to be listed on the governmental subsidy list, while, at the same time, providing social services has allowed them to collect additional information about the seriousness of domestic violence.

In other words, the organizers have learned from their previous experiences regarding the boundaries of the central authorities. The organizers anticipated possible results of their actions, and made plans to expand their political space accordingly. Citing the submission of a draft proposal in 2003 as an example, the campaign against domestic violence which was led by the Network, learned about the open channel of NPC before the organizers decided to put in the effort required for their submission.

The law-making process of NPC has evolved during these years. According to Michael Dowdle, "Since the mid-1980s, the National People's Congress (NPC) has played a key role in catalyzing the development of normative notions of political citizenship in China" (2002, 330). "This fragmentation of the NPC's institutional structure provides emergent social interests with a greater variety of potential points-of-entry into the NPC political decision-making process" (2002, 341-342).

This is the reason why women's organizations made a great effort to partner with 30 national people's representatives, and successfully submitted the "Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Law" to the National People's Congress. Only with the passage of a law that clarifies its commitment to define domestic violence as a criminal action, can units of law enforcement really combat domestic violence.

5.5. Interactive Political Liberalization: Changes of the Society and the Governance System

This successful submission of the draft law represented the break up of the distinction between public and private spheres, which had viewed domestic violence as a family matter for a long time. In addition to their efforts to create a new public sphere for issues of domestic violence, there was another important contribution made by the campaign against domestic

violence, namely, the awakening of the awareness of rights.

Based on the observations of the Peking Women's Law Center's lawyers, the number of domestic violence victims who have sought legal help increased dramatically after 2002, and 2002 was also the year that lawyers experienced the most requests for help since the establishment of the Peking Women's Law Center in 1995.

The increasing number of women who seek legal advice demonstrates the transformation of the idea of rights, and this achievement of women's groups may also have contributed to the formation of civil society in China. History has shown that Chinese people are used to obeying rulers. According to Kevin J. O'Brian,

"There is little evidence that villagers consider rights to be inherent, natural, or inalienable; nor do most claimants break with the common Chinese practice of viewing rights as granted by the state mainly for societal purposes rather than to protect an individual's autonomous being" (2001, 426).

Therefore, it was impossible for victims of domestic violence to claim their own rights, especially when most of society viewed domestic violence as a dishonorable family matter. Based on the Peking Women's Law Center's lawyers' observations, more and more victims are willing to reveal the "dirty laundry" of their households and to fight for their rights, which demonstrates a new movement of rights awareness.

Meanwhile, the situation of the lesbian population is much more unveiled than women's population. In addition to awakening the media's awareness, Common Language also has successfully built its connection with women's groups, and lawyers of the Peking Women's Law Center began to represent lesbians in the courts. In other words, more and more people have learned about lesbian victims of domestic violence incidents. Furthermore, lawyers of the Peking Women's Law Center are willing to provide legal services for these victims.

Most importantly, in addition to the transformation of the whole society, the strategies of each group have also affected their own development. Common Language chose to join the campaign against domestic violence as a strategy to build the recognition of lesbian groups in society and by participating in this campaign, both its degree of autonomy and empowerment has increased.

Organizers of Common Language continue to fight for the lesbian population to be included in the protection of victims that is provided by the government. Whether their efforts will be

successful is a crucial element in the evaluation of their chosen strategies. As for the Maple Center, their cooperative strategy has been its major strategy. The next question for the Maple Center is whether under a cooperative strategy, they will decrease their degree of autonomy in exchange for a gain in their degree of empowerment.

The Peking Women's Law Center has chosen a much more confrontational strategy, and as a result, organizers also face the most interference from the government. To balance government interference, the Peking Women's Law Center has chosen to team up with the media. It is worth questioning whether the media will continue their support if the government intervenes in the media.

In conclusion, this research shares a senior women's activist's evaluation of the contributions of the Maple Center. The Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language in the campaign against domestic violence. This women's activist is one of the founders and a three-term director of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network. She stated, "The Maple Center provided the fundamental research data for the campaign against domestic violence. Its analyses of one hundred cases provide a better understanding of domestic violence incidents. The Maple Center's research benefits both prevention work and policy advocacy to move forward" (interviewed by author, China, March 18, 2013).

"The Peking Women's Law Center plays a critical role in reforming the legal system. Without the understanding of domestic violence issues and without the gender perspectives, law enforcement could cause more harm to abused victims. As to the role of Common Language, it is Common Language's report on lesbian domestic violence victims that fulfills our shortage in prevention work. And at the same time, Common Language's research provides most people in China with the first opportunity to learn more about sexual minorities" (interviewed by author, China, March 18, 2013).

In other words, each organization has chosen its unique strategy based on its organizational development stage and their anticipation of governmental response. Based on field research, the Peking Women's Law Center, which picked a more confrontational strategy, has increased its degree of autonomy, while the Maple Center, which chose a more cooperative strategy, has increased its degree of empowerment. And Common Language as a relatively young organization has taken the opportunity of joining the campaign against domestic violence to increase both its degree of autonomy and degree of empowerment.

In addition to the changes of social groups, another dimension worth noting is to evaluate changes of the governance system. In this chapter, I have conclude the following changes of the governance system toward issues of domestic violence, namely, local governments' cooperative projects with women's groups to fight against domestic violence; ACWF's attention to issues of domestic violence; NPC's willingness to include Anti-Domestic Violence Act into the law-making process, and most importantly, changes in the legal system.

These changes of the state-social group relation point out the expansion of governmental boundaries for social organizing, and also demonstrate a public sphere for issues of domestic violence. Moreover, these changes indicate that an adaptive governance system could result in political liberalization, when the issue does not threat the regime's legitimacy.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

"Chinese NGOs grow in crevices; wherever there is even a hint of fertile ground, out pops a social group."

<div align="right">Wang Xingjuan, the Founder of the Maple Center</div>

The second wave of women's organizing appeared in China after it hosted the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, a time when the regime's legitimacy was buttressed by rapid economic growth.[28] Lacking confrontational experience, women's groups have developed their advocacy ability with the international community's support and through each of their interactions with the repressive state.

In this dissertation, I have examined three women's groups and seen their organizers' similar strategies in facing interference from the central government as well as their different strategies in working against domestic violence. No matter whether organizers choose a similar with or different strategy from each other, the chosen strategy represents the organizers' effort to expand their political space. These strategies support my argument that Chinese women's advocacy groups are forming a confrontational movement. This argument differs from current social movement theory that has been examining Chinese NGOs.

The school of social movement theory rests on the connections between confrontational performance and the existence of social movement, and suggests that the term "state corporatism" is the best fit in describing the relationship between the central government and social groups in China.

In line with recent analyses of social groups in China, the evidence presented in this dissertation acts as a corrective to these views, cautioning that we should not assume that all advocacy groups are working toward challenging the regime's legitimacy. I have also argued that the evolution of both the organizers' strategies and the government's response demonstrates the emergence of interactive political liberalization.[29]

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[28] In this dissertation, the first wave of women's organizing appeared in the 1980s, when women's studied centers formed in several colleges.

[29] This dissertation borrows Linz and Stepan's (1996) definitions of liberalization, that : "In a non-democratic setting, *liberalization* may entail a mix of policy and social changes, such as less censorship of the media, somewhat greater space for the organization of autonomous working-class activities, the introduction of some legal safeguards for individuals such as habeas corpus, the releasing of most political prisoners, the return of exiles, perhaps

At the macro level, the strategies of women's advocacy groups' in expanding their political space can be regarded as a "soft" confrontational challenge toward the authoritarian regime. In Chapter 3, we have seen in the case of women's advocacy groups in China that political space for social change did not exist. It is created and expanded by women's advocacy groups.

The next question we asked was why some strategies successfully expanded organizational political space, while others failed. Only by answering the central puzzle of Chapter 3, can we begin to examine the driving forces in expanding governmental boundaries. In that chapter, I identified and analyzed the four factors that can be leveraged by organizers. They are: ensuring the regime's legitimacy, cooperative relationships with local governments, pressure from the international community, and funding from international donors.

At the macro level, it is well known that in China, social groups are under strict control. Much less is known about the organizers' confrontational strategies. In this dissertation, I have conducted two comparisons in order to demonstrate the multiple strategies of women's advocacy groups for both survival and social reform purposes.

First, in Chapter 4, I have summarized the four struggles that are shared by the women's groups, despite the differences in their missions, organizational capabilities, and societal and governmental connections. This comparison illustrates the similarities of the organizers' chosen strategies.

The four meso and micro types of repressive interference are expressed as: revoking an NGO's registration status, exclusive policy-making process, marginalizing self-mobilized groups, and oppression to any possible confrontational movement. For each challenge, the organizers have developed three to four strategies to fight back.

After a thorough exploration, the evidence of Chapter 4 shows that the three women's advocacy groups have successfully expanded their political space and have raised their public visibility. More importantly, the social groups are not the only actors that make changes. The central government also adjusts its governance approach. This is the reason why I have introduced the idea of "interactive political liberalization" to describe the interactions between advocacy groups and the central government.

The current success of the campaign against domestic violence in the public policy area

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measures for improving the distribution of income, and most important, the toleration of opposition." (Linz and Stepan 1996 : 3).

strengthens this argument. The inclusion of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act in the agenda of National People's Congress was the result of negotiations between women's advocacy groups and the central government.

Because of this success, the second comparison of my dissertation focuses on the different advocacy strategies of the three women's groups in the same campaign against domestic violence. Indeed, as Andrew Mertha (2009) has observed, NGOs in China have increasingly shaped policy outcomes in China. The evidence in Chapter 5 shows the shifting attitude of society, local governments, governmental officials in the central government, and the All China Women's Federation.

The main focus of Chapter 5 was to explain the factors that led to the organizers' choice of different strategies. If providing social services gained the most political space, why don't all three women's groups devote their efforts to it? Only by answering this question, can we maximize our understanding of the organizers' strategic movement.

In Chapter 5, I identified two main factors that swayed the organizers' choice of strategies in promoting the same agenda, namely, the stage of their group's organizational development and the organizers' anticipation of governmental response. On the one hand, as demonstrated in that chapter, providing social services helped women's groups to build their working relation with local governments and move one step closer to being included in the local governance system.

On the other hand, providing social services gives the government greater access to learning about the internal operations of women's groups, and thus, organizers will need to expend greater effort to maintain their organization's independence.

A main finding of Chapter 5 is that organizers face the dilemma of losing their degree of autonomy or decreasing their degree of empowerment. Although my research observed several strategies that led to increases of both autonomy and empowerment, the win-win situation rarely happened, and organizers often struggled to balance their organizational autonomy and empowerment.

Overall, the three women's groups that I studied achieved their goals in the campaign against domestic violence. All three groups have further developed their relationships with local governments, which can be viewed as leverage in negotiating with the central government. Most significantly, organizers have successfully created a public sphere for domestic violence issues.

In conclusion, my dissertation argues that the key to explaining possible political changes is to look more closely at the interaction between advocacy groups and the central government. When neither political space nor confrontational tactics are available for women's activists, both the survival of their organizations as well as their success in achieving their goals depend mainly on their chosen strategies.

This argument does not negate the crucial and decisive role of the state. My findings show, rather, that both the state and women's advocacy groups are adaptive and strategically learn from each other. I propose that the confrontational movement of women's advocacy groups and the central government's adaptive governance are emblematic of interactive political liberalization in contemporary China.

Interactive Political Liberalization

The traditional view of the state-social group relationship as a "state corporatism"[30] model does not reflect the whole picture of the advocacy movement of women's groups. The successful expansion of the political space of women's groups and the adaptive governance of the central government indicate a possible beginning of the interactive political liberalization process.

The main supporting evidence of this contention lies in the increased participation of women's groups in the public policy area. As Charles Tilly stated, "The fundamental processes promoting democratization in all times and places… consist of increasing integration of trust networks into public politics" (2007, 23).

The interactions between women's groups and the central government is similar to Tilly's description of Renshou's case that 'A famous series of struggles in Renshou, Sichuan, during 1992 and 1993 incorporated a mobilization—repression—bargaining cycle of this sort'" (2007, 144).

I have designed the following two-by-two matrix to demonstrate the dynamics and the fluidity of the relationship between the central government and the three organizations that I have studied, the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center (the Maple Center); the Peking University Women's Law Studies & Legal Aid Center (the Peking Women's Law Center), and Common Language, a lesbian/gay rights advocacy group.

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[30] "(I)n which the state allows hierarchically ordered and controlled associations to play limited roles as a way to reconcile large numbers of divergent interests." (Florini, Lai, and Tan 2012, 95. See also Unger 2008).

There are at least four types of relationships. They are described as shown in the following matrix. To be clear, instead of pointing the exact position of each women's advocacy group, the main purpose of this matrix is to show the dynamic relationships. In other words, the spots on the matrix should not be measured.

Figure 6.1. The Interactive Political Liberalization Matrix

Year: 2012
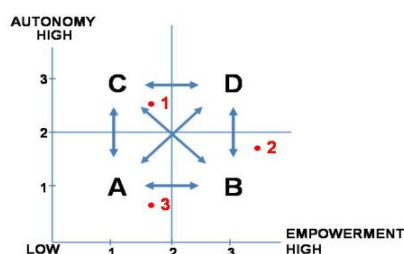
Indicators:
Autonomy/ Institutionalized Independence:
0: women's groups are forbidden by the state
1: women's groups are controlled by the state and carry out state policy
2: women's groups are monitored by the state but enjoy some degree of autonomy[31]
3: women's groups are institutionalized and enjoy full independence

Empowerment
0: women's groups do not have any influence in the policy-making process
1: women's groups bring key issues to the public domain
2: women's groups participate in the policy-making process
3: women's groups have nationwide influence

Cell A represents a group of women's organizations which enjoy little autonomy and are not involved much in public policy. Cell B refers to women's groups that also are monitored by

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[31] This research project applies Howell's definition of autonomous to define the degree of autonomy. According to Howell, an organization is autonomous if it meets the following conditions: first, it is able to set its own goals, determine its own priorities, and decide its own structures and principles of organization; second, it is able to appoint its own personnel and recruit its own members; third, it relies primarily on its own source of funding. (Jude Howell, 2000. p. 127)

the government. However, these groups manage to get involved in public policy. Cell C represents embedded groups. The government aligns itself with these women's groups, and at the same time, these organizations participate in the policy-making process. Cell D describes a situation where social groups enjoy a great deal of autonomy and also have influence on the policy-making process. Women's groups in this matrix are mobile and shift their positions according to their changing relationship with the state.

Based on my field research, I position the relationship between these three organizations and the state in the year 2012 in this matrix. Number *1* is represented by the Maple Center; number *2* by the Peking Women's Law Center, and number 3 by Common Language. All three organizations began their journey from area A. This research project aims to analyze what factors are the driving forces behind each critical move by applying the concept of political opportunity[32] and political constraint.

The hypothesis of this research project is that facing similar governmental interference, women's groups that can transfer interference into political opportunity in order to develop their organizational capabilities[33] will expand their political space.

My research has found that each chosen strategy may result in changes in organizational autonomy or organizational empowerment. For example, an organizer's strategy may cause a decrease in the degree of organizational autonomy, while, at the same time, leading to an increase in the degree of organizational empowerment. I drew the following figures to explain this dynamic.

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[32] This research applies Jack Goldstone and Charles Tilly's definition of political opportunity as "the [perceived] probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome" (Goldstone and Charles Tilly 2001, 182).

[33] In this research, capability-building is defined as including gaining more popular support, raising more funds, increasing recruitment, generating attention from the media, and making connections with other social groups and funders nationally and internationally.

Figure 6.2. The Dynamic Relationship between the Central Government and Three Women's Advocacy Groups
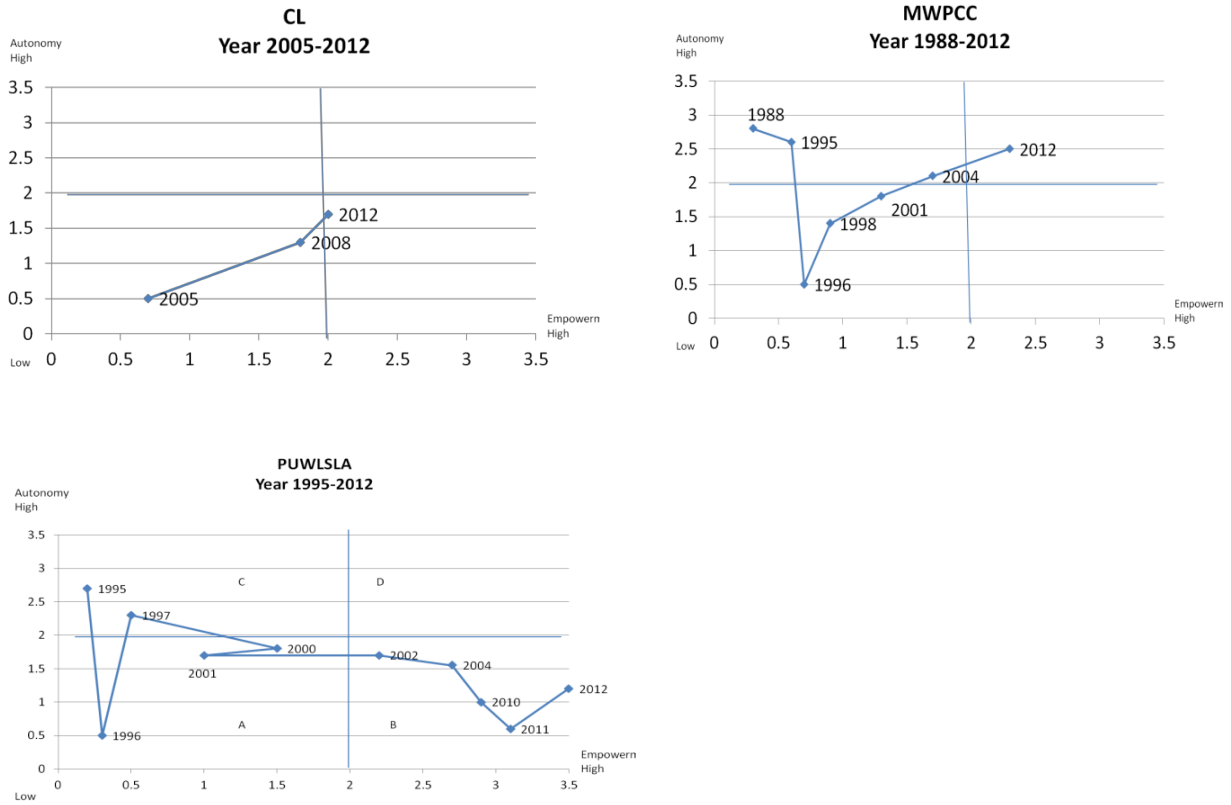
Indicators:

Autonomy/ Institutionalized Independence:
0: women's groups are forbidden by the state
1: women's groups are controlled by the state and carry out state policy
2: women's groups are monitored by the state but enjoy some degree of autonomy
3: women's groups are institutionalized and enjoy full independence

Empowerment
0: women's groups do not have any influence in the policy-making process
1: women's groups bring key issues to the public domain
2: women's groups participate in the policy-making process
3: women's groups have nationwide influence

The curvy trajectory indicates the struggle of women's advocacy groups. The increases in the degree of autonomy or the degree of empowerment reflect the successful expansion of political space. This expansion is evident in three aspects: achieving inclusion in the public policy area, building a national reputation, and strengthening the organizers' belief in their advocacy efforts.

My analyses show that these three aspects should catalyze the process of interactive political liberalization politically, culturally and organizationally. First, the flexibility of the government in the public policy area reflects the ways in which women's advocacy groups creatively negotiate political power. In Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, I showed that participating in the public policy area is significantly correlated with organizational capability.

In fact, this flexibility benefits both sides. The central government has relied on the role of social groups in fulfilling societal needs. In addition, the strategies analyzed in Chapter 4 reveal that social groups can play a symbolic function for the central government in polishing its international reputation. The crucial challenge for women's advocacy groups has been how to use this political opportunity to expand their political space while sustaining organizational autonomy.

The second expansion is cultural. Multidimensional strategies that were discussed in Chapter 5 have successfully constructed a public sphere for issues of domestic violence. The prevailing cultural pattern of viewing domestic violence as a family matter has been altered by women's advocacy groups. More importantly, the public education that was delivered by women's groups has had a big impact on the younger generation's beliefs. My analyses in Chapter 5 demonstrate that the younger generation appears to be more confrontational in challenging the patriarchal society.

Third, this expansion has an organizational dimension. Activists have attained greater confidence in continuing their advocacy work. This confidence is evident by different attitudes of organizers toward advocacy groups in two ways. First, activists have become more willing to hold public protest events. As my interviews with organizers in Chapter 4 show, most organizers are hesitant to challenge the government on the street since they have been taught to keep their distance from politics. However, this attitude is changing.

Second, activists have shifted their emphasis of advocacy work from results to process. For example, most interviewees from the campaign against domestic violence indicate that they

won't push for the passage of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. Instead, they believe that including this act in the National People's Congress' agenda has provided opportunity for them to continue public education, which will promote long-term social change.

No matter whether the expansion is political, cultural or organizational, this expansion is associated with the process of interactive political liberalization, and most importantly, it involves and depends on the adaptive attitude of the central government. As I noted in my analyses, the strategies of the organizers have shaped officials' attitudes toward gender politics, and have contributed to the adaptive governance system of the central government.

The basic point here is that as supporting resources enable women's advocacy groups to develop new strategies, so new opportunities for state actors to refine their methods of governance have also been developed. This is an ongoing process of interactions between organizers and state actors. The adaptive nature of the contemporary Chinese government has created a greater sphere for advocacy groups to generate social changes.

In addition, after years of public education, the awareness of their rights is rooted in the younger generation of organizers. The growing sense of movement identity discussed in Chapter 4 suggests that the younger generation is increasingly willing to join advocacy groups for social change. As long as these conditions remain, the expansion of social groups' political space will continue.

But as my analysis also shows, the central government learns from the interaction with advocacy groups and adjusts their tactics. The central government's inclusion of advocacy groups in public policy discussions is partially a reaction against this expansion. In the short-term, this is a one-stone-for-two-birds tactic. Including advocacy groups in the public policy area will not only fulfill social needs but will also sustain the regime's legitimacy. How to maintain organizational independence has become a major challenge for women's activists

Achieving Inclusion in the Public Policy Area

In addition to the analysis in Chapter 5, the evidence in Chapter 3 reveals a vibrant expansion of women's groups in the public policy area. In an authoritarian regime, this expansion signals the political will to include women's advocacy groups in the governing system. Furthermore, this expansion is created by women's advocacy groups' initiative action. The adaptive actions of the central government and women's activists have made up the interactive

political liberalization.

Andrew Mertha points out that along with marginalized officials and the media, organizers of social groups that were excluded from the public policy process, "have successfully entered the political process precisely by adopting strategies necessary to work within the structural and procedural constraints of the fragmented authoritarianism framework" (2009, 996).

The expansion of the public policy area has new features significant enough to merit inclusion for their contribution to the process of interactive political liberalization. The first new feature is the construction of platforms for advocacy groups to carry out their vision, as I discussed in Chapter 4. The second feature is the sphere for public education.

A female professor who has participated in women's organizing for many years discussed one similarity of these three groups' participation in the public policy area, "Instead of results, these three groups emphasize the policy making process. I have observed that they utilize the process as public educational channels to convey their ideas" (interviewed by author, Nov. 25, 2012). By working with local governments, gender ideas have become visible in people's daily lives.

The third feature is the empowerment of the organizers in negotiating with state actors. All three women's advocacy groups have been involved in the public policy area both locally and nationally, although their roles are different in each case. Most of the time, organizers provide their expertise in the policy-making process, but sometimes, organizers join the effort or act as consultants in implementation.

As I addressed in Chapter 4, the organizers decide on their strategies based on their anticipation of governmental responses as well as on the stage of their organization's development. There is one similarity of these organizers with the first wave of women's organizing, namely, the organizers' connection with the state.

As a female professor who has participated in women's organizing for years stated, "Compared to other social groups, the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center have better relationships with the central government. After all, they were inside the central government." This female professor explained her observation that, "Both Wang Xingjuan and Guo Jianmei have good connections with All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). They are often invited by ACWF to participate in all kinds of conferences and panel discussions. Sometimes, their organizations will be chosen by ACWF to be introduced to foreigners"

(interviewed by author, Nov. 7, 2011).

However, for the younger generation of women's organizations, participating in the public policy making process will be their first opportunity to learn the game rules of the government.

The fourth feature of this expansion is the acquisition of resources for building up a confrontational movement. As my analysis in Chapter 4 has shown, these women's advocacy groups have stressed to overcome their lack of resources is one of the major struggles of, and participating in the public policy area helps them to obtain the resources to build up their movements.

A female professor who also works for the governmental think tank stresses that, "They (Guo Jianmei and Wang Xingjuan) are very smart to work with the system. They choose to cooperate with the local women's federations and introduce gender perspectives to local officials. This is a smart move, because you will know how to use the system's resources" (interviewed by author, Nov. 25, 2012).

The participation of women's advocacy groups in the public policy area reflects a profound political transformation. New interactions between women's groups and the government afford new channels for the organizers to develop their political skills. As I have discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, organizers have gradually chosen political strategies in responding to repressive interference.

Building up the National Reputation of the Three Groups

The second evidence of the expansion of women's advocacy groups in their political space lies in the successful construction of a national reputation. China is the most populated country and this feature along with the scrutiny and control over social groups makes it extremely difficult for women's groups to be recognized nationwide.

However, with the strategic involvement of international and media resources, several women's advocacy groups have enjoyed a nationwide reputation. I present two examples in this section. The first one involves recognition from the central governance system.

A ministerial officer of ACWF indicated that there are some NGOs which have more social influence than ACWF. She cited the Peking Women's Law Center as an example. She told me that she believes a woman would seek the help of the Peking Women's Law Center rather than ACWF's help when facing a situation involving a lawsuit.

This official also points out that nowadays, when there are foreign visitors, ACWF will provide introductions for them to visit some grass-root women's groups, including my two cases, namely, the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center. A female professor who also works for a governmental think tank agrees with this official's observation that, "our society has recognized the work of the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 13, 2011).

The second evidence for the construction of an organizational reputation lies in the organization's international recognition. As I have documented in Chapter 3, the founder of the Peking Women's Law Center, Guo Jianmei and the founder of the Maple Center, Wang Xingjuan, have received numerous international awards praising their accomplishments. The awards that were reported domestically helped Guo Jianmei and Wang Xingjuan build up their professional reputations.

However, there has always been a backlash for receiving international awards. Some awards cross government boundaries. A female professor who also works for the government explains the logic, "When Guo Jianmei accepted the 'Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award' from the U.S. government, she touched two sensitive issues. First, what does 'Women of Courage' mean? Does it imply that our government is terrible and that only a woman with much courage can challenge the government? Second, why did you accept an award from Hillary Clinton?" (interviewed by author, Nov. 25, 2012).

Compared with women's groups, lesbian organizing manifests a different trajectory. As I discussed in Chapter 3, lesbian organizing appeared during the hosting of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. However, this first wave of organizing was dissolved by the repressive forces of the central government in 2001. Even when lesbian organizing was active in Beijing during this period of time, the society was used to associating the term homosexuality to the male gay population.

My analysis of the Common Language's development has shown that it took three years of effort by Common language to build the nationwide lesbian community and to support the establishment of other lesbian groups before organizers could focus on advocacy work in 2008. The analysis in Chapter 3 explained that by successfully reconstructing the political identity of lesbian groups, Common Language became the leading force in the new wave of lesbian organizing. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 5, by allying with women's groups, Common

Language has gradually built up its reputation within the local governance system.

Strengthening the Organizers' Belief in Organizational Advocacy Efforts

The third aspect of the expansion is the significant changes in organizers of women's advocacy groups. An important feature of a confrontational movement is its ability to recruit and to keep organizers. The organizers' commitment to advocacy work is the vehicle of social change, especially in a repressive regime.

James Scott has used public transcripts and hidden transcripts to describe the resistance of subordinate groups. My analyses in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 observed the increase in the organizers' belief in their advocacy efforts, and, as a result, the gradual resistance in both public transcripts and hidden transcripts. The shifting attitude of organizers both reflects and leads larger trends of women's organizing.

I will cite the development of Common Language's advocacy event as an example here since their double marginalized status makes it hard for the LGBTI population to join public events. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, it took Common Language two years to build up its organizational capability before organizers started their outreach activities in 2007.

When Common Language held its first public event that challenged the society and the state, most participants were hesitant and cautious. The documentary director of this event recalled, "They were afraid and they didn't want to be filmed. (Talk with a smile) Most of them were trying to cover their faces as much as possible."

However, as the director stated, this younger generation was empowered by this public event and by the solidarity of going out together. Many of them joined the next event and did not refuse to be seen in front of the camera. As I have discussed in Chapter 4, training the trainer has been one of the major strategies to confront repressive forces. The efforts of women's advocacy groups have achieved two significant changes.

First, there are more young women who are willing to choose a job in an NGO. A ministerial officer of ACWF said that currently, the younger generation would rather choose a NGO job than a governmental job in Beijing. She points out two reasons behind this change. First, the younger generation feels that working for an NGO could make a difference for the society. Second, working for an NGO gives them a higher degree of social status within their own community.

Her observation is verified by several of my interviews. The young generation of activists of these three organizations provided the same answer without prior consultation with each other that they would rather choose a NGO job than working for the government. They expressed the opinion that a sense of achievement is the reason why they want to be involved with NGOs.

This is a unique phenomenon among the younger generation. One organizer of the Maple Center, who joined the NGO after her retirement from an enterprise states that, compared to working for a company, she has to work three-times harder in a women's NGO; however, she also gains three-times the empowerment. A volunteer from the Common Language also indicated that she believes society can be changed through their efforts. As a ministerial officer of ACWF states, "These three groups have all established their power of influence in their communities" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 16, 2011).

Most significantly, as I noted in chapter 4 and 5, it requires strategic effort to build up the organizers' belief in organizational advocacy work since advocacy work is considered a potential challenge to the regime's legitimacy. I observed that the three organizations have gradually adjusted their attitude and strategy in advocacy work in order to strengthen their organizers' confidence in advocacy work.

Citing Common Language as an example, organizers have shared with me that their first priority for one public event was to avoid being cancelled by the government. There were two major considerations. First, holding a public event would be an important training experience for their organizers and volunteers. Second, a cancellation would reaffirm the scrutiny and control of the security department, which could affect the organizers' confidence in the work of NGOs.

In fact, the three founders have adjusted their advocacy strategies over the years. A women's movement leader shared her observation that, "As a lawyer, Gua Jianmie used to pick more confrontational approach. Her attitude remains the same, however, currently; the Peking Women's Law Center does more cooperative work with the government" (interviewed by author, March 18, 2013).

"The Maple Center has moved from another direction," she continued, "and its members are more willing to express a confrontational point of view. I think Common Language has shifted their focus to advocacy work. They did not emphasize it (advocacy) in the past" (interviewed by author, March 18, 2013). My research in Chapter 3 has concluded that these adjustments have created political opportunity for their advocacy work. A major achievement in this respect is the

expansion of their political space.

Furthermore, a new trend of women's organizing has been observed, namely the recent confrontational nature of advocacy work. As an organizer who has participated in women's organizing since the 1980s points out, "Recently, the voice of civil society which challenges or criticizes the authorities has grown louder" (interviewed by author, July 16, 2012). How this new trend affects the relationship between social groups and the state will be an interesting question for further analysis.

Challenges Ahead

Women's advocacy groups have shaped state politics and have expanded their political space for advocacy work. Furthermore, their advocacy work has contributed to the rise of a grassroots movement that raises challenges on gender issues. These achievements are significant considering the political culture of China.

As Chinese scholars who research civil society stated, "Civil society and the public sphere in modern China did not exist as the opposite of the state, but got involved in complex and interdependent interactions with the state.... Chinese society did not have a tradition of being independent, and society had no intention to break away from the state" (Yu and Zhou 2012, 112 & 115).

In such a system, it is dependent on organizers beliefs and strategies to carry forward their mission for social change. My analyses in Chapter 3, 4, and 5 have shown the vivid movement of the Maple Center, the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language in creating political opportunities for the expansion of their political space whenever organizers encounter repressive interference.

A point worth noting is that the government also adopts different strategies to control social groups. I have found that the central government will loosen its tight control if social organizations can help to provide public goods or do only charity work. Chinese scholars, including Kang Xiaoguang, argued that "the new administrative strategy could eliminate challenging forces and satisfy social needs. But due to such a strategy, it was impossible for a civil society to develop" (Yu and Zhou 2012, 117).

Here is one example of new administrative strategies. In 2011, Beijing's municipal government announced that social organizations that provide social services could apply directly

to the civil affairs department for registration. Guangdong Province made a similar announcement on July 1, 2012, stating that social organizations can apply directly to the civil affairs department for registration.

However, compared to the loosening up of control of charity groups, the central government in fact maintains severe scrutiny of advocacy groups. Several organizers have observed that the central government has increased its degree of scrutiny and interference after the 2008 Olympic Games. And the situation has been more severe for advocacy groups since the establishment of Xi's administration.

In addition to facing the gradually adjusted governance tactics, women's advocacy groups also are wrestling with two internal challenges, namely, the sustainable development of their organizations and the decline of international donors. The possibility of continuing the expansion of organizational political space will heavily hinge on the organizers' ability to overcome these two challenges.

The first challenge for organizers is the recent trend of the withdrawal of international donors. The rapid development of the Chinese economy along with the Western recession have driven international donors to reconsider their support for charity and social justice in China. Based on my interviews with women's activists, there has been a significant cut of international funding.

For example, the Ford Foundation has been one of the major supporters of women's groups in Beijing. However, after the economic crisis in 2008, the Ford Foundation cut the number of grantee groups from eleven to six, and also reduced the number of staff members in their Beijing office.

The challenge of funding resources is severe. For the three organizations that I have studied, finding economic resources has been their founders' major task since their establishment. Even after forming a board committee, the board members still cannot help much with fund raising since it is difficult for NGOs to gain financial support from the society. The experience of Wang Xingjuan, the founder of the Maple Center, is a noteworthy example that demonstrates this severity.

Wang Xingjuan is in her 80s, and has chosen to step down from the position as the director of the organizer. She is entitled to the position of honorable chairperson. However, when I interviewed her in 2012, she mentioned that she is still responsible for obtaining the financial

resources for the Maple Center. As my analyses in Chapters 3 and 4 indicate, the founders of the three women's organizations have been swamped with the task of finding financial resources, which leaves them less time to focus on advocacy work.

The second serious challenge to the three organizations that I have studied is whether the organizers can construct their organizations for sustainable development. There are two major aspects, namely, the institutionalization of their organizations, and the lack of number two leaders. For most women's groups in China, the organizers formed their groups without concrete knowledge about the way to construct a NGO.

Several leaders of women's groups have received training in organizational construction from international donors. However, the Western idea of building up an organization does not fit well into Chinese culture. Here is one example. The Maple Center set up its board committee twenty years after its establishment, while the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language have chosen not to establish board committees[34].

Instead, both the Peking Women's Law Center and Common Language formed advisory committees. My interviews with the founders of these two organizations indicated that leaders believe setting up an advisory committee[35] will be more helpful for them since they will need comrades to discuss advocacy strategies with them, while not adding too much burden on other activists' shoulders with fundraising issues.

Based on my field observation, I argue that Chinese NGOs have faced quite unique challenges compared to NGOs within a democratic system. Therefore, it is not useful to apply the Western idea of functional NGOs or to use the definition of a confrontational movement to judge the efforts of Chinese advocacy groups. Different types of regimes have a significant influence on the political space of advocacy groups. However, lacking discussions on organizational construction will result in the second question regarding the organizational sustainability, namely, the succession issue.

The founders of the three women's groups that I have studied are all very charismatic, energetic and well-connected. Each of them is the leading figure of their own field. However, the lack of number two leaders will be a challenge to the sustainability of their organization. One

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[34] Both the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center set up their board committee by the encouraging of the Ford Foundation. The board committee will meet regularly and provide help with organizational operations.
[35] Different from the board committee, the advisory committee won't meet together. Members of the advisory committee will be consulted occasionally by organizers.

women activist shared her observation regarding the succession issue, "She (one of the founders) views her organization as her own child. Which mother will give up her child?" (interviewed by author, March 18, 2013).

There have been several examples that some staff members established similar organizations after they leave. Both the Maple Center and the Peking Women's Law Center share this experience. The founder of the Maple Center, Wang Xingjuan, calls this situation a duplicated organization. This is based on her experience where an organizer set up a similar organization and tried to get other organizers to join this new organization.

Wang thinks this issue has resulted from the problem of a lack of mature organizers in the Maple Center. An organizer indicated that the one who formed a similar organization was the second in command of Wang Xingjuan; "She thought she could not be the leader if she stayed in the Maple Center" (interviewed by author, March 18, 2013). Lacking a second in command leader is not a unique situation to the Maple Center. Based on my field research, most women's organizations share this worry.

The hosting of UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 created a great political opportunity for the emergence of the second wave of women's organizing. The founders of these newly formed groups were energetic and full of ambitions. However, for most of them, this was the first time they worked in an NGO, and they did not have experience organizing a social group.

The growth of the number of women's NGOs has been stagnant. Compared to other NGOs, for example the bloom of AIDS and environmental protection NGOs, the increase in the number of women's NGOs has been extremely slow. Wang Xingjung indicates that the main problem is funding. Women's issues are too marginalized and international donors are not interested in supporting women's organizations. Based on my field research, I would argue that the lack of a training plan for a successor is another cause of this problem.

I have observed the high turnover rate of organizers of women's groups. The salary is not the major reason for this high turnover rate since most organizers choose to work for NGOs in the first place. Based on my interviews with organizers, the lack of the possibility of a future promotion in their careers is the main factor that leads them to leave. However, because of the tension with the organizations' founders caused by their leaving, most organizers did not continue to work in the NGO field. As a result, there is a lack of mature organizers to form new

women's groups.

Evolution of Women's Organizing

This study has argued that Western idea of social movements is not applicable to evaluate the expansion of confrontational women's advocacy groups in China. Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of the state-society relation's dynamic requires attention to the evolution of women's advocacy groups and their confrontational strategies. After all, a change in the relationship between the state and social groups is one noteworthy criterion to predict future political possibilities.

Even though my field research has observed several challenges of women's organizing, the more exciting fact is the evolution of women's advocacy groups. In addition to these three pieces of evidence of the expansion of women's advocacy groups, I also have observed two significant developments of women's advocacy groups. The first one is the increase number of women's advocacy groups. Even though the number of women's groups has not increased much, there are more and more women's organizations that have shifted their focus toward advocacy work. The Maple Center is one good example.

More Women's Advocacy Groups and Changes of Bureaucrats

As I analyzed in Chapter 3, the Maple Center was set up for research purposes. Organizers provide counseling services in order to better understand women's situations and to further form recommendations on women's issues. However, after being a service-oriented group for several years, the organizers noted the importance of advocacy work. As Florini, Lai and Tan state, "Service providers often morph into advocates and rights defenders" (2012, 121).

In a repressive regime, it takes more time and effort for a social group to begin its advocacy work. Organizers have to build up their own supporting allies before they can take a more confrontational strategy. As a lesbian group without many comrades, Common Language took three years to build up a nationwide lesbian community before the organizers shifted their focus toward advocacy work.

The growth of women's advocacy groups has also contributed to the expansion of women's groups into the public policy area. More women's groups focus on advocacy work and have allied with each other to create increased pressure on the governance system to include women's

voices. As I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, women's advocacy groups used the strategy of working with local governments in order to negotiate more space involving public policy.

My analyses have also found significant changes among bureaucrats. There are more and more officials within all levels of government willing to work with women's advocacy groups. These cooperative relations are formed by two major reasons. First, some officials have learned from past experiences that collaborating with women's advocacy groups would benefit their working performances. Second, and more importantly, there are some officials have identified as feminists and are willing to work with women's advocacy groups in any kind of formation.

An Emergence of a Young Generation of Activists

Second, there has been an emergence of a young generation of activists. As I noted in Chapter 4, young generation activists have been awakened by rights consciousness and thus pay much more attention to their citizenship rights.

One organizer of the Peking Women's Law Center states her observation,
"I found that women become more and more aware of their own rights. There are several reasons behind the increasing sense of rights. In general, there are more and more people who receive education, and when people do not need to worry about food and cloth, they will pay attention to issues of rights. Moreover, advances of internet technology and the promotion of rule of law also contribute to people's awareness of their rights" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, April 26, 2011).

Furthermore, my study has also found that there is a shift in attitude between younger generations toward advocating their civil rights. A senior activist of Common Language has observed the growth of volunteers who state that the main force driving them to volunteer at Common Language is advocacy work. She tells about one example,
"One volunteer recently joined our organization. Mostly, her work was in charge of fund raising parties. She felt bored about her work until she participated in queer film festival. She was on behalf of Common Language to help the preparation of this festival, and as always, this festival was cancelled by the police department at the last minute. Our volunteer was so excited about this experience (the cancellation of the event). She felt this is revolutionary work, and this is the reason why she wants to volunteer for lesbian organizing" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 16, 2011).

Xu Bin and this senior activist analyze that there are several reasons behind this phenomenon. First, in general, younger generation is more aware of rights issues. Second, the internet has become a platform to let people learn how to express their own opinions (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 12, 2011). One organizer of the Peking Women's Law Center shares these observations that, "I found that there is more and more younger generation who is interested in women's issues, and who is much aware of his or her own right" (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2011).

In addition, changes in the political circumstance also have nurtured the increase awareness of one's own right. In 1990, the Administrative Litigation Act was passed, and this milestone law grants citizens' right to sue governmental institutions (Florini, Lai and Tan 2012, 18). Along with the reform of National People's Conference and the establishment of letter-and-visit system, there exist some channels for ordinary people to voice for their own rights.

However, in a repressive regime, the question if above mentioned mechanisms are functional lies on people's awareness of rights. Social groups have become one of important facilitators to awaken people's awareness. This is the reason why all these three groups have worked so hard to nurture other groups.

A lawyer of the Peking Women's Law Center stated that she believes the internship program of her center, which has continued for more than fifteen years, has provided a platform for young generation to learn about gender issues and civil rights (interviewed by author, Beijing, China, July 8, 2011). The more knowledge these young activists have learned, the more determination they will grow in promoting gender equality.

A senior activist of Common Language also shares the same observation that the younger generation has learned more about the idea of sexual identity, and as a result, they are more willing to reveal their sexual identity to the public and to volunteer at the Common Language.

Most importantly, recently, there is a new wave of women's organizing which has emphasized on intended confrontational movement. A group of younger activists called themselves lesbian feminist activists. Since their first gathering in 2012, they have organized several public protests that attracted both the domestic and international media.

Here are two examples. They occupied male restrooms to demonstrate the problem of the lack of a sufficient number of women's restrooms. And they protested on the subway against incidents of sexual harassment. The protest against sexual harassment was held in several cities,

and several activists even protested in the nude. Based on my interviews with several activists, they all stated that they are just fighting for their nature rights.

Most of them attended the annual training camps that were co-hosted by Common Language and lesbian organizations in Taiwan, Hong Kong and New York. However, the major effort of this annual training camp is to build up a nationwide lesbian community and to provide support for lesbian groups in second-tier and third-tier cities. Confrontational strategies or action plans were not included. Therefore, these young activists who plan to do advocacy work turned to working with several women's activists who have tried to initiate a more confrontational movement.

The evolution of women's advocacy groups and their expansion of political space manifest the incipient yet confrontational character in China. The evidence of this dissertation has led to the conclusion that the hidden script of a confrontational strategy of women's groups has successfully expanded their political space for advocacy work. Because the analytic focus of this dissertation is upon the strategies of women's activists, I have not discussed much about the adaptive character of the governance system. However, the state has played the major role in the dynamic of state-social group relations.

As Florini, Lai and Tan state, "While formal regulations on civil society organizations continue to be strict, with crackdowns taking place occasionally, all manner of local, international, and government-owned NGOs are de facto operating in China and engaging with state authorities on a range of problems, revealing deep-seated contradictions within the party-state about how to act on this issue" (2012, 35).

As I have argued, women's advocacy groups evolve. The next analytic focus will be on answering the question of how the state responds to this evolution? There are two important dimensions that provide critical information to this question. First, will the participation of women's activists in the public policy area strengthen the regime's legitimacy or will this participation create a more inclusive political culture? Second, will the young generation activists use more confrontational strategies? How will the state respond to an emerging confrontational movement?

Women's advocacy groups have negotiated for more space for younger activists to form a much more confrontational movement. The above-mentioned two questions will be worth noting for future studies on possible political change in China.

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