

MASTER'S THESIS

An exploratory study of asexual marriage on a Chinese website

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Date of Award:
2013

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Abstract

The process of individualization is increasingly permeating all levels of Chinese society. This research attempts to highlight some aspects on how Chinese individualization is emerging in marriage and the family through the prism of China's emerging "asexual marriage" – a consensual partnership that has no sex or a limited amount of sex. Collecting qualitative data in different ways, this study first examines the less obvious and less studied effects of China's sexual revolution as part of the individualization process brought to the asexual individuals on a specific matchmaking website WX920. One can see that these individuals undergo great suffering and are under pressure to find a partner in light of the sexual imperative in the couple relationship. My study also focuses on the idealized view of asexual marriage currently promoted by the rhetoric of affection. What is particularly striking is that the same ideal is perceived as equally worthy of a relationship in a proforma marriage with a homosexually inclined person, when one cannot meet an asexual partner. In addition, this study suggests the reintegration of individuals into a new type of collectivity – the family, which is primarily structured as a unit of emotional importance to the individual's marital decision. Nevertheless, the other side of family connection constitutes a crucial dilemma for some non-conformist individuals, who are confronted with a dual demand for satisfying personal aspirations and family expectations. Drawing on the concept of "negotiated familism", this study reveals how these individuals are by no means passive recipients and they actively engage in negotiation about their ideal of personal life through a marriage in form only. Finally, I will engage a discussion on individualizing trends by exploring asexual people's reorganization of conventional norms of marriage and other expectations such as reproduction is given.

Acknowledgements

Many people helped me during this research, I acknowledge all with gratitude. First, I would like to acknowledge gratefully the advice and guidance given to me by my supervisor, Dr. Day Wong. She has been tremendously helpful at different stages of my research. Thanks too to Prof. Jack Barbalet, for his kindness, encouragement and comments along the way. Many other colleagues, whom I have consulted or who have heard my presentation at the postgraduate seminar, have assisted me with critical insights and enthusiasm, and I am grateful to each of them. Particular thanks go to Prof. Susanne Choi and Dr. Thomas Wong, who made invaluable comments on my preliminary draft when I took their course at CUHK and HKU respectively. My gratitude extends to Prof. Tan Chee-beng for introducing me to the fascinating field of Chinese anthropology before his retirement at CUHK. I express special thanks to Prof. Wing-shing Tang, Prof. Clara Ho and Dr. Joe Yau, for their constant support and heartwarming encouragement since my undergraduate years. I am also indebted to my referee, Prof. Nick Ellison, for believing in me and my work when I was an exchange student at Leeds University in the UK two years ago. The journey would have been impossible without support from friends and the peers. In alphabetical order of the first name I wish to thank: Aijin Wu, Amy Hao, Connie Leung, Dorothy Kwok, Elaine Yau, Ema Wong, Gloria Shan, Ivan Yung, Jan Law, Jenny Chui, Maurice Choi Kwok To, Stephanie Chui, Tsz Man Mak, Winnie Chan and Zetao Chen. It is no small thing to ask someone not only to read a manuscript, but to offer remarks and suggestions for change and refinement. A huge thank you to Rita Gill for her painstaking effort at reading through the early version of the manuscript. For reasons of confidentiality, I cannot name my informants individually who have helped me in this research. However, I am grateful to all of them who trusted enough to offer me their stories. A true fellowship of the marginal is to give voice to their experiences and affirm the value of their perspectives. I offer my deepest gratitude to God for making this thesis possible, especially for so many wonderful people I have met throughout the long timespan of this project. Finally, my parents and dear brother, who have always been supportive of me in many ways, have my heartfelt gratitude.

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