THE MAKING OF "CONCUBINES": MEDIA, AUDIENCE, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Fang Chen

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By: Fang Chen

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_____ Chair
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_____ External Examiner
Dr. F. Xu

_____ External to Program
Dr. S. Gabriele

_____ Examiner
Dr. F. Shaver

_____ Examiner
Dr. C. Rentschler

_____ Thesis Supervisor
Dr. K. Manning

Approved by: _____
Dr. E. Manning, Graduate Program Director

April 11, 2014 _____
Interim Dean J. Locke, Arts and Science

ABSTRACT

The Making of "Concubines": Media, Audience, and Social Change in Contemporary China

Fang Chen, Ph.D.
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This dissertation examines marriage and sexuality in contemporary China through the lens of media and audience, with a specific focus on audience interpretations of the media discourse of "keeping a second wife" (*bao ernai*). The emergence of this discourse, one that can be traced back to socialist condemnation of concubinage in Maoist China, is an awkward and unexpected finding at a time when the state has purportedly retreated from private life, and the media is increasingly globalized. Even more unexpected, perhaps, is the startling diversity with which this discourse has been deployed, re-appropriated, and resisted by working and middle class women. The Dissertation draws on discourse analysis, digital ethnography, and individual and focus group interviews to argue that the relationship between the media and audiences in contemporary China is dynamic and mutually transformative. Moreover, the ways of interpretation link to audiences 'social positions and subjectivities that help to conceive individuals' perceptions of self and society in relation to marriage and sexuality.

The first part of the dissertation draws on content analysis of news accounts to analyze how the media has consistently coded "keeping a second wife" as an instance of "family crisis," and in so doing re-affirm a Maoist-era idea of marriage and sexuality. The second part of the dissertation draws upon reception analysis to investigate three dominant themes that emerged in the interviews and social media: managing marriage, sexuality, and corruption. The dissertation

argues that "managing marriage" is a key phrase deployed by women, with subjectivity breaking down along class lines: indeed, while middle class women employ new discourses to perform gender within the household, working class women understand the management of marriage through Maoist-era vocabulary and ideology. A reception analysis also allows new insight into contemporary practices of sexuality; in contemporary China the transformation of sexual norms is a complex process, in which the dominant, the residual, and the emergent are intertwined to constitute a fuller picture of sexual culture in China. Finally, the dissertation highlights a link between "keeping a second wife" and official corruption through story-telling and instances of "talking back" to the media discourse. I argue the audience's own narratives and the ways in which they contest the media's narrative illustrate that the media discourse of corruption has encountered vigorous resistance.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

PRC	The People's Republic of China
ACWF	All China Women's Federation
CCP	The Chinese Communist Party
KMT	Kuomingtang (the Nationalist Party)
ROC	The Republic of China
PSC	The People's Supreme Court

Chapter One

Introduction

In 2011, a serial TV program on "mediating marriage problems" aired on the Jiangxi Province's satellite TV station. On August 10 at 9:15pm, the show broached the subject of "keeping a second wife": three guests, the husband, the wife and the mistress ("second wife"), were all seated under the spotlight and asked to narrate their views of the affair. A number of marriage consultants and law experts sat behind the three guests and served as lecturers, mediators, and moral judges. Inevitably spectators also functioned as part of the observatory team. At the end of the show, the husband was convinced to reconcile with the wife, a woman who demonstrated her devotion to their family. He was enjoined to live up to his responsibilities "as a real man"; the wife was advised to be "more understanding", "more caring", and more attentive to her husband's needs. The married couple were made to sign an agreement of reconciliation, and left the spotlighted area together as symbolic proof of "the triumph of marriage". The mistress received sympathy and given a lecture. She appeared dejected and left the stage alone, signifying the doomed tragedy that befalls a woman who transgresses society's laws and mores.

The TV show illustrates the Chinese state media's interest in manipulating the cultural understanding of extramarital affairs in very specific ways.[1] Since the late 1990s, a news

[1] This is not by any means the only example demonstrating the Chinese television's interest in extramarital affairs. For example, one of my friends, a TV producer in a provincial capital, has made a successful career on the strength of one of his most popular shows: catching the "second wife" in bed. In a personal conversation in 2005, he revealed the secret of his success: he had reporters spy on husbands and subsequently released incriminating evidence to their wives in order to spark a fight scene between two women. This was the show's main selling point. The camera crew followed the angry wife as she moved to catch the husband with his mistress. After filming was

narrative focused on "keeping a second wife" (*bao ernai*, 包二奶) has played a vivid role in Chinese news media coverage. "Keeping a second wife", once known as "concubinage", is an old patriarchal adjunct of the traditional family institution that was abolished decades ago by both the Kuomingtang (KMT) government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) [2]—and yet these kinds of stories still figure prominently in the mainstream press. By the turn of the millennium, for example, a news report alleged that some 200,000 women were being "kept" ("supported") (*bao*, 包) by "affluent men" in the Pearl River Delta alone.[3] Extramarital affairs, in particular relationships between women and married men, have become one of the hottest topics in media coverage and public discussions. The term *ernai* (second wife, 二奶),[4] an oral expression derived from the formal term concubine (*qie*, 妾), has re-appeared in social life and occurs frequently in state media narratives.

This "rebirth of concubinage" has drawn the attention of state authorities. In responding to this "resurgence" of "keeping a second wife", the state authority often anxiously condemns this "feudal sediment", characterizing it as a threat to "social stability" and "family harmony". For example, on December 29, 2000, *The People's Daily* (*Remin Ribao* 人民日报), the mouthpiece of the ruling CCP, declared that: "bigamy (重婚 *chonghui*), concubinage (纳妾 *naqie*), keeping a second wife (包二奶 *bao ernai*) and illicit cohabitation [without a marriage certificate] (非法同居

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done, the TV crew stopped fighting and acted as mediators lecturing the husband and the wife. I obtained his permission in the June of 2013 to disclose our conversation in my dissertation.

[2] Although the KMT government made an effort to abolish concubinage in the Civil Code issued in 1930, it is widely understood that the practice was not annihilated until the Chinese Communist Party's Marriage Law took effect in 1950. See Yang 1959.

[3] *"Baiwan xiongshi xian falu zhongwei"* (Million male lions besieged in the law), *Yazhou zhoukai* (Asian Weekly), August 28, 2000.

[4] More recent news reports employ the terms *ernai* (a second wife), *qingfu* (mistress), and *xiao san* (the little third) interchangeably in reporting upon extramarital affairs. In particular, in the term of *xiaosan*, *xiao* means "little", "minor" equivalent *to xiao laopo* (minor wife, concubine); *san* means "the third party", a common usage to refer the female party in extramarital affairs. Therefore, *xiaosan* shows a combination or a negotiation between the old and the new.

feifa tongju) have become overbearing social problems". The All China Women's Federation (ACWF), the party-state apparatus formed to represent women, has attentively scrutinized this "immoral behaviour" that threatens the PRC's family institution.[5] The ACWF actively supports "vulnerable wives", whose husbands are having an affair. In 2001, after intensive discussions, the People's Congress passed revisions of the 1950 and the 1980 Marriage Laws in order to strengthen the institution of monogamy, amended the older codes with a clause in the General Principle that "forbids a married person for cohabiting with others".[6] Since the late 1990s, the ACWF, much more marginalized by the post Mao regime in the market economy, has re-discovered its importance in re-entering the gendered territory of the family in order to search for solutions "to the challenges that established family values [must] confront".[7] In 2009, as part of the larger party-state project known as the "harmonious society", the ACWF launched a "harmonious family" initiative designed to "integrate traditional family values into the new age of transition".[8]

Since concubinage was abolished by the CCP with vigorous political campaigns in the early 1950s, the terminology of "*qie*" had become obsolete in the People's Republic of China (PRC) (it has only existed in fictional drama illustrating "feudal vice"). Hence, the reappearance of "keeping a second wife" in the state media and the state concerns about this issue raises puzzles: Why has a term referring to concubinage been employed in the state media after its abolition was declared a triumph of the "family revolution" during the Maoist period? And

[5] "*Fulian xiugan hunyinfa jianyi zhi yi: ezhi chonghun naqie he bao ernai*" (One of Women's Federation's suggestions for amending the Marriage Law: restraining bigamy, concubinage, and keeping a second wife). December 29, 2000, accessed August 12, 2012. www.people.com.cn.
[6] See Chapter 1 "General Provision", in *Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China*, accessed September 3 2012:http://www.law-lib.com/law/law_view.asp?id=15279.
[7] See Chen 2010.
[8] See Zheng 2010.

given the evidence that the party-state in reform-era has largely retreated from the private sphere (Farrer 2002) and intended to produce autonomous neoliberal subjects through its technologies of the self (Bray 2006, Liu 2008, Jeffrey 2009, Tomba 2009), why are state authorities so obsessed with the issue of "keeping a second wife" during an era in which individuals have gained greater autonomy to pursue sexual freedom?

This dissertation is concerned with "keeping a second wife" as a media construct, rather than as a social phenomenon; hence, it sets content analysis of "keeping a second wife" in the state media as the starting point. The media content offers a chance to examine how the dominant discourse of marriage and sexuality is disseminated through the media stories of "keeping a second wife". The content analysis deals with the ways in which the phenomenon is encoded and examines the reasons which underlie the state and its media's extreme reactions to the concept at certain historical and political junctures—centering upon the old notion of concubinage prior to the establishment of the Maoist regime and the post-socialist state's scheme of the "harmonious family". Examining media accounts obviously raises the question: how do the media report on instances of "keeping a second wife"? In other words, how is the dominant discourse of marriage and sexuality reinforced through the media report of "keeping a second wife"?

Furthermore, instead of dwelling on media messages alone, this dissertation sets an ambitious goal to examine meanings made by both media producers and media consumers. An analysis of the media's construction opens up a space for investigating the adherence of the dominant discourse during the dramatic social change in contemporary China. The social use of the term "keeping a second wife" predates the media's construction. The term of "keeping a second wife" appeared among society members before the usage of the state media (i.e.

referring to sexual relations between married Hong Kong men and Chinese Mainland women in Guangdong Province) , while media outlets code the term and imbue it with a meaning in line with the imperative to reinforce family and monogamous (and heteronomative) sexuality for the purposes of social control, it is also coded by members of the society at the conjuncture of gender relations and the emergence of class during the post-socialist period. This may lead to the possibility that various social actors could perceive the phenomenon in ways that differ from the state media's construction. Hence, investigating the interaction between the media discourse and audience can reveal the degree to which social actors adhere to the dominant ideology of marriage and sexuality during China's period of rapid transition, and can subsequently reveal how the culture is evolving and transforming Chinese society itself. How do audience members interact with the media accounts of "keeping a second wife"? To gauge the gaps between the media messages and the audiences leads to a question: to what extent do audience members adhere to the ideology? These questions demand an inquiry about the ways in which sexual culture is shifting under current social context.

These questions are the focus of this study, which is an examination of marriage and sexuality through the lens of media. I will argue, first, that the media stories of "keeping a second wife" have come to serve as (re)articulations of the PRC's ideology of marriage and sexuality established during the Maoist regime as a means of controlling diverse sexual practices through which individuals have gained greater autonomy over the past three decades. This re-articulation not only illustrates a high degree of continuity in the interventionist approach to marriage, family, and sexuality, but also incorporates key features of the post-Mao state's governance policies, which largely rely on reinforcing the discourse of gender and sexuality through the media to bolster the officially stated approach of "governing the country by laws". This

argument may help to revise the scholarly consensus regarding a "retreat of the state" vis-à-vis "sexual freedom". Second, the recent development of media technologies and media reforms towards a more market-oriented media industry have changed the ways in which audiences have engaged with media discourse. Hence, attachment to the official discourse is greatly diluted and the reception of media stories centering on the practice of "keeping a second wife" can pull audiences in many different directions, based upon competing interpretations. I argue not only that the degree of attachment to the established ideology is losing coherence among different social groups, but also that these attachments have become quite heterogeneous. In particular, I argue that class identity has an impact on the degree and particular characteristics of adherence to the ideology of monogamous sexuality. Class plays an important role in perceptions of "keeping a second wife". It is a major cleavage in contemporary Chinese society and thus it must be examined to gain any insight into the practice of sexuality in China today. It becomes a significant variable in predicting "openness" or "conservatism" on issues related to marriage and sexuality. Class has emerged as a new and increasingly significant factor in determining social identity and media consumption choices in contemporary China. Class identity arises at the conjuncture of China's modernity discourse of "*suzhi*" (human quality), which has been part of a social engineering project to develop "self-worth". Hence, class plays an indicative role in determining attitudes towards the changing landscape of marriage, family and sexuality, as well as in fostering or inhibiting the practices of sex out of wedlock and cohabitation without a marriage license, homosexuality, and other forms of sexual behavior. This argument will add a new variable to study changing sexuality that has primarily focused on age/generation differences.

Moreover, given that audiences feel comfortable with certain components of the media stories (e.g. gender roles) while experiencing considerable alienation from other components (e.g., the script of "bad women" ruining "men's world"/political life), I show that "audience activity" is a complex process, which cannot be dichotomized as "active" or "passive". Resistance can occur to a certain extent while "audience activity" remains paralyzed by some structural factors. In order to account for this complex relationship, this study makes an effort to move beyond the "text decoder" paradigm and the binary distinction of passive/ active audience by crossing the boundary of media forms and situating audience in a larger social context.

This chapter begins with a review of the ideology of family, marriage, and sexuality in the PRC established during the Maoist regime vis-à-vis the gradual opening up in individuals' private affairs. These are the discursive settings that set the stage for the media stories of "keeping a second wife". Subsequently, I also provide a critical review of studies on media and media consumption in contemporary China; in particular, I focus on the conception of a "Chinese audience" that needs to be re-conceptualized to account for the current development of media technologies and increasing global flows of media messages. In the final section of the chapter, I present a road map of the dissertation for the reader.

Monogamy meets "opening up"

How does the news narrative of "keeping a second wife" fit within the context of the dominant ideology? What available discourses and given frameworks can be drawn from and work within the journalistic practice? A brief review of the ideology of marriage and sexuality under the PRC is necessary in order to understand the ways in which these news stories present the resurgence of concubinage (or "keeping a second wife").

The role of the state in intervening in the private sphere through laws, policies and official discourses dominates the society and defines marriage, family and sexuality and establishes the parameters of what the state will tolerate (Croll 1981, Evans 1997, Glosser 2003, Honig and Hershatter 1988, Glosser 2003, McMillan 2006, Yan 2003, Yang 1959). The impact of the state's ideology on family, marriage and sexuality looms large in the literature of gender relations in PRC, particularly in scholarship dealing with the Maoist regime. Indeed, the ideology of family, marriage and sexuality established during the Maoist period can be reduced to the following points: first, a monogamous and heterosexual relation within marital status is officially considered as the only legitimate and moral form (Evans 1997, Jeffrey 2004, Sigley 2006, Yang 1959). Subsequently, in spite of the CCP's advocacy of "men and women's equality" (*nannü pingdeng*) through its "women's liberation" project, gender roles remain traditional in the organization of family life; in particular, women are encouraged to be "household managers" in the family while participating in the labor force (Manning 2010). These ideas have been inherited as part of the Maoist legacy by the post Mao regime and continuously appear in the discourse in contemporary China. Moreover, these ideas combine with the post Mao era's family planning agenda ("one child policy") to provide the moral image of an idealized family, marriage and sexuality under the post Mao regime.

The ideology of family, marriage and sexuality was articulated well before the establishment of the PRC in 1949 (Glosser 2003, Gilmartin and Hershatter 1995). The issue remained crucial during the 1930s and the 1940s, when the CCP engaged in a critical military struggle for survival against both the Japanese and the KMT government. While the CCP targeted the "feudal" institution of concubinage, a rigid moral position towards exclusively monogamous sexuality was enforced across the board through its marriage policies/laws and

political campaigns in the CCP's base regions (Glosser 2003, Gilmartin and Hershatter 1995). After the establishment of the PRC, the CCP identified the practice of exclusive monogamy as a means of ensuring "social stability" in the name of modernity (McMillan 2006), and as a consequence, heterosexual relations within marital status is seen as the only legitimate and moral form for sexual practices both expressed in the discourse and administrative/legal regulations (Evans 1997, Sigley 2006). Sexual conduct and reproduction are linked to empowerment of the nation (Glosser 2003, Jeffrey 2004), and hence, heterosexual norms were strictly reinforced under the Maoist regime (Barlow 2004). The only legitimate sexual behavior was the sexual relation within heterosexual marriage, according to both the ideological discourse and legal sanctions (Evans 1997, Sigley 2006).

Prior to 1949, rules regarding the family fell under the purview of society within the Confucian ethical system, which valued family as an essential stabilizing force. The traditional family institution was relatively autonomous in relation to the state. The party-state, on the other hand, began taking an interventionist approach to the family and marriage in the 1950s. Diamant (2000 and 2001) offers a good recent example of this historical interpretation. In his work on the state's approach to reshaping the family, Diamant (2000 and 2001) argues that the state has made enormous efforts to encourage individuals, particularly the younger generations, to turn their backs on family authorities and search for "freedom of marriage" ; in so doing, the state subordinates individuals and becomes the authority in individuals' personal lives. The traditional family institution stands for privacy and individuals' interests against the state (the Maoist state emphasizes that individuals ought to sacrifice their own interests for the good of the state); and moreover, the traditional family was seen as a potential site of resistance against and a standing challenge to the state's administrative instruments. In order to dissolve the traditional family and

replace family prerogatives with state authority, the modern marriage registration system was introduced in the 1950s, privileging marriage registration prior to marriage consummation (Diamant 2001). During this period, marriage registration was reinforced to an extreme extent. Marriage became the only legal conduit for sexual expression, and marriage became the equivalent term for sex (Evans 1997). Hence, marriage registration became a way of controlling sexuality.

The 1950 marriage law aimed to emphasize the ideological dimensions of family (Meijer 1972). The state replaced family authority as the only power which could recognize or deny citizens' marriages and assumed comprehensive control over marriage, family and sexuality. Mate selection, wedding customs, organization of family life, household management, sex behavior and divorce became prime targets for state intervention (Croll 1981, Diamant 2000, Johnson1983, Wolf 1985, Yan 1997 and 2003, Yang 1959). The pre-1949 family institution of concubinage was targeted as one of the symbolic codes of "backwardness" in the trajectory of modernizing the "backward" nation over the course of the 20th century. Monogamy equals "modernity", "advance" and "civilization" vis-à-vis "feudal", "backward" and "savage" polygamous sexual practices such as concubinage (Evans 1997, McMillan 2006). Historically, concubinage was an apparatus designed to institutionalize men's extramarital affairs under the traditional Chinese family framework, providing an outlet for married men to engage in sexual behavior out of wedlock either for pleasure or for patrilineage (Ebrey 1986, Eastman 1988, Hsu 1949, Jaschok 1988). It was abolished first by the KMT government through its Civil Code in 1930, and later was declared a moral vice and a symbol of the "feudal" society's incivility and ugliness by the CCP during its family revolution throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Yang 1959). The PRC's family institution emphasized monogamy, presented as a modern and advanced form

of relations between the sexes that would help to foster modernization. In addition to moral condemnation, any sexual intimacy out of wedlock was outlawed and became tightly monitored by laws and administrative regulations.[9] Commercial sex was outlawed and eradicated under the Maoist regime (Hershatter 1999).

Women are placed at the core of the "family revolution". What it meant to be a woman has been articulated and re-articulated during the course of 20th century China through a number of different political eras. Tani Barlow's (2004) textual analysis of the discursive shifts around the definition of women in 20th century literary and political texts in China, for example, reveals the political, social and cultural drift of the meaning of womanhood/femininity back and forth from *nüxing* (woman primarily as a sexual subject attached to her biological difference from men) to *funü* (woman struggling for social standing as a political category) in Maoist ideology and return to *nüxing* in the post Maoist era. She reveals the complex ways that gender roles are coded, and examines the construction of women's roles through the ideological presentation of an "ideal woman". At the foundation of the Chinese feminism, Barlow (2004) argues, lies a firm belief in women's biological and hence social difference from men, which forges the dominant paradigm of the "liberation" project. The definition of women and women's role in the family and society are articulated through the party-state's project of "women's liberation" (*funü jiefang*), which is based on assumptions borrowed from the Marxist idea that women's participation in productive work will ultimately lead to gender equality (Andors 1983, Johnson

[9] Adultery was not a terminology in the 1950 Marriage Law. Instead, "concubinage" was one of the targets of the PRC's first marriage law in 1950. However, there was a crime called "*liumang zui"* (crimes of immoral behaviors/indecency or "hooligan crimes") that was used to penalize behaviors that "challenge public morality". Sexual behaviors such as homosexuality, rape, sexual harassment, sexual intimacy out of wedlock, sodomy, pedophile and the like can be prosecuted in the name of *liumang zui* ("hooligan crimes") during Maoist time and at beginning of the "Reform and Openness". It was considered a severe crime and many people were sentenced to death. "*Liumang zui*" was removed from the Penal Code in 1997. See, Luo 1998.

1983, Stacey 1983, Wolf 1985). In this construction, a woman is defined as a socialist worker participating in the labour force during the Maoist period, and at the same time motherhood and wifehood are considered an essential element of femininity (Croll 1978 and 1981, Johnson 1983, Phyllis 1983, Wolf 1985). This perception led to a particular emphasis upon women as "household managers"—unloading domestic work primarily on women's shoulders in the private sphere (Manning 2010, Wang 2005,).

However, the incursions of the market economy during the post-Mao regime has gradually loosened adherence to rigid monogamous sexuality and resulted in a shift towards a pluralism of sexual practices since the 1980s (Evans 1997, Farrer 2002, Farrer and Sun 2003, Huang et al. 2011, , Li 1996, Pan 2006, Rofel 2007). The increasing diversity of sexual practices has broken up the monolithic structure of the dominant ideology. Although still viewed through an ideological lens, family, marriage and sexuality have taken a back seat to the state's sponsorship of economic growth and other political challenges; as a consequence, administrative regulations and the criminal code have become more tolerant of non-monogamous sexuality during recent years. The divorce rate has been increasing over the past two decades (Wang and Zhou 2010), and divorce itself is no longer considered a vice caused by moral weakness or sexual misbehavior. The wave of sexual autonomy in youth culture demonstrates new sexual behaviors in opposition to monogamous sexuality (Farrer 2002, Pan 2006). The monogamous ideal has been challenged by the recent practices of extramarital affairs and sex out of wedlock which have emerged in urban China (Farrer and Sun 2003, Li 2009). Moreover, homosexuality has become increasingly visible in public spaces (Li 2006, Rofel 2007, Rofel and Liu 2010) and has triggered public discussions about discrimination against homosexuality and a call for the

legalization of homosexual marriage.[10] In addition, commercialized sex has become a profitable industry despite frequent police raids during periodic "anti-porn campaigns" (Evans 1997, Hershatter 1999, Pan 2004, Zheng 2009).

The occurrence of changes, such as new forms of governance, consumer culture and multiple media resources, produces diverse sexual subjectivities in the post-Mao period. The formation of new subjectivities during the post-Mao era takes shape in the light of changing definitions of gender, family life and sexuality. With the perception of women shifting from "*funü*" to "*nüxing*" under the post-Mao regime, post-Mao gender politics have returned to the progressive feminist model which predates the PRC. This approach articulates sexual difference and gender roles and views women primarily as sexual subjects (Barlow 2004). The representation and performance of gender in urban China have been characterized by the transformation of gendered subjectivity. The mother cohort and daughter cohort each identify the self with different experiences that have occurred under the auspices of this shift (Evans 2008). In comparison with the mother cohort, which was primarily shaped by the "unnatural" representation of women under Maoist gender ideology, the daughter cohort coming of age in the post socialist period reconfigures their gender identity in relation to sexual and material desires (Rofel 2007). The desires and practices of the daughter cohort takes shape in what Farrer calls a "youth culture", in which changing sexual practices and capitalistic moral attitudes towards marriage emerge in urban China (Farrer 2002).

[10] Over the past decade, homosexuality in China has entered public discussions focusing on questions such as whether homosexuality is "normal" or abnormal and guy rights. For example, in 2010, Li Yinhe, a well-known sociologist studying marriage and sexuality, made a proposition to the People's Congress to legalize homosexual marriage. It stirred up a lively public discussion online and in the news media. Although the People's Congress turned down the suggestion, but the concept of "homosexual marriage" has emerged as a challenge to the dominant idea of marriage and sexuality. See Li 2013.

The "sexual liberalization" of youth culture illustrates that the established ideology of marriage and sexuality during the Maoist period encountered challenges and was contested by members of the younger generations. However, the nature of these challenges must be understood in relation to a number of different social factors. The scholarly reconstruction of gender and sexuality in the post-Mao period has largely relied upon the variable of age or generation (Evans 2008, Farrer 2002, Rofel 1999 and 2007), and thus the cohorts of different generations are examined to parse out their different attitudes toward marriage and sexuality. Age (or generation) may continue to be a significant variable for scholars striving to understand the evolving process of sexual culture in the PRC. However, age difference is a generalized variable. In the scholarship, the young cohorts coming of age during the 1980s and 1990s are now middle-aged. Have these cohorts become conservative by virtue of their age? Or has "sexual freedom" been embraced in China by the middle aged *and* by younger cohorts? Over the past three decades, younger generations of the PRC, have indeed confronted the dominant ideology in their sexual beliefs and practices, but generational difference alone can hardly explain the complex vagaries of these changes.

As opposed to the category of age/generation, I suggest that class should become a more significant variable in predicting "openness" or "conservatism" on issues related to marriage and sexuality. Defining class is important for a class-related analysis that is an empirical investigation as well as a theoretical conceptualization. There are diverse conceptualizations of class in the studies of social classes, but choice of criteria ought to depend on the actual context and purpose of a research. It is difficult to situate the class phenomenon rising in China's economic development in any particular Western class theories (e.g. Marxist, Weberian and Thompsonian class analyses). The conceptualization of class in this dissertation follows a class

analysis within a broadly Neo-Weberian perspective, which focuses on individuals' positions in capitalist markets to inequality in the distribution of life chances (Breen 1978). In this sense, classes are "sets of structural positions. Social relationships within markets, especially within labour markets, and within firms define these positions. Class positions exist independently of individual occupants of these positions" (Sørenson 1991, 72). A neo-Weberian class analysis [11] allocates positions to classes so as to capture the major dimensions of differentiation in labour markets and production units that are consequential for distribution of life chances. Sociological analyses of classes have particularly focused on the types of employment relationship to examine the associations between class positions and differences of life chances (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992, Evans and Mills 1998). Importantly, different life chances dictate the conditions under which certain types of values and actions are undertaken according to class position, and these values and actions link to the variations of social and cultural resources that individuals can bring to bear (Breen 1978).

One's occupation links to the possession of organizational, economic and cultural resources (Lu et al 2002 and 2005), which not only reflect economic inequality between classes but also subjectivities related to China's modernity discourse and the state's current social engineering projects. Therefore, the conceptualization of class in this dissertation also examines political and cultural dimensions of both middle class and working class. Considering that urban workers and migrant workers have constituted the new working class during the post-socialist

[11] This conceptualization also draws on Lu (2002 and 2005) and his team's framework of social stratification in contemporary China but without using the term "stratum", which Lu and his colleagues generally define as class in neo-Weberian term based upon occupational category. Nevertheless, their research attempts to avoid the term "class" by employing an alternative term " stratum" because the term class not only specifically refers to Maoist class ideology in the Chinese context but also the term itself politically sensitive for the researchers within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in the current politics of class. See Lu et al. 2002 and 2005.

period, despite differences between these two social groups (Hurst and Sorace 2011), I use the term "working class" to identify informants of both urban workers and migrant workers in this dissertation. It includes the old "proletariat" in urban areas , the "most advanced productive force" in Maoist class ideology, many of whom were laid off by the state-owned enterprises during the massive wave of layoffs beginning during the late 1990s, and rural migrants working in the cities, estimated at one hundred fifty million migrant workers since the late 1980s (Li 2011).

Class has emerged as a new and increasingly significant factor in determining social identity and media consumption choices in contemporary China. Furthermore, the practice of "keeping a second wife" appears to be a class-coded issue. Finally, class identity arises at the conjuncture of China's modernity discourse of "*suzhi*" (human quality), which has been part of a social engineering project to develop "self-worth". For all of these reasons, class plays a more indicative role than age in determining attitudes towards the changing landscape of marriage, family and sexuality, as well as in fostering or inhibiting the practices of sex out of wedlock and cohabitation without a marriage license, homosexuality, and other forms of sexual behavior. An examination of the relationship between class and the attitude toward sex out of wedlock throws light on the extent of the attachment to state ideology among a broad spectrum of citizens, as well as upon the nature of the tolerance for and embrace of the subcultures which constitute the sexually liberated culture. Therefore, this dissertation examines the ways in which class plays itself out in the attitude towards sex out of wedlock, and analyzes the extent to which class is significant to the evolution of the concepts of marriage, family and sexuality.

The re-configuration of governance in the post-Mao era seemingly signals a "retreat from policing private life" (Farrer 2002, 252), which provides some basis for the claim that a new era

of sexual freedom has begun, particularly among younger people in urban China (Farrer 2002, Pan 2006, Pan et al 2011, Xiao et al 2011). Unlike the mother (and father) cohort, who absorbed much of the sexual austerity communicated by the Maoist ideology of sexuality, the younger cohorts in urban locales have gained greater freedom to engage in their sexual lives according to their desires. This "sexual freedom" has been further accompanied by an emerging gay culture in the public sphere (Li 2006, Rofel 2007), the proliferation of the commercial sex industry (Hershetter 1999, Pan 2004, Zheng 2007) and the increasing practice of extramarital affairs (Farrer 2003, Li 1998).

The claim of sexual freedom overlooks the constraints and the persistence of the party-state's continuing interventionist approach to marriage and sexuality in the post Mao period, a time in which the party-state has adapted to new ways of controlling its citizens. It does not explain many countertrends and anomalies which mark the post-Mao period. The celebratory account overlooks the question of why sexuality in China today consists of entangled contradictions. Mere generational evolution cannot account entirely for this detachment from the official discourse of sexuality. Moreover, traditional norms of female chastity and virginity are still valued (Edwards 2012, Guo 2010, Sigley 2006). Homosexuality has been subject to administrative sanctions and widespread social discrimination fueled by accusations of "abnormality" and "pathology" (Li 2006, Sang 2003). The sexual freedom thesis also overlooks the state's continuing efforts to discipline marriage and sexuality. The state sanction of legitimate outlet still does not recognize the validity of sexual relations beyond the confines of the heterosexual marital unit, and as a consequence of this stance, sex workers frequently encounter police raids and are targeted under the auspices of the Public Security Regulations (Li 2003, Pan 2004, Zheng 2007). Police raids on adults watching pornography in private residences and adults

participating in sexual gatherings are still encouraged by the Penal Code.[12] The post-socialist state continues to play an intrusive role as a regulator of sexual relations and reproductive practices. For example, the rigid "family planning" policy dictates that the birth permit (*zhunsheng zheng*) is only issued to couples with a marriage registration—a situation upheld both by state discourse and legal sanctions (McMillan 2006). The claim of sexual freedom underestimates the forms of knowledge that the state utilizes to continue governing at a distance. Hence, though certain autonomous subjectivities (Farrer 2002) are indeed the fruit of the "neo-liberal" era, private affairs (family, marriage and sexuality) are still vulnerable to the state's attempts to reconfigure and re-organize them. Wang Jing (2001, 42) suggests that the state has not relinquished its interventionist prerogatives, contending that the post-socialist state performs this role "more skillfully" by "weaving its agenda into a new common sense that ideology is blurring into (commercial) culture".

Despite the fact that there is an ideological shift of gender subjectivity in post Mao period (Barlow 2004, Evens 1997, Luo and Hao 2007), the legacy of the dominant discourse established during the Maoist period remains a key ideological component of the post Mao regime's effort to continue exerting social control. Hence, there is a potential gap and conflicts between the discourse and the post-Mao era's social contexts, in which the private sphere has gained a greater autonomy in comparison with its role under the Maoist regime. Without a doubt, sexuality is undergoing a dramatic change in China, particularly when forms of governance, economic formations, and consumer cultures (both material goods and cultural products) have produced

[12] "*Sichuan yibing yi nanzi zaijia kan huangtu bei zhua*" (A man in Yibing of Sichuan Province was arrested for watching porn pictures at home). *Tianya luntan*, March 23, 2010. Accessed September 14, 2013. www.bbs.tianya.cn.
Also see *Nanjing yi fu jiaoshou zuzhi juzong yinluan bei qishu* (An associate professor in Nanjing prosecuted for organizing licentious activities). Xinhua News Agency, March 11, 2010. Accessed March 5, 2013, www.xinhuanet.com. This case is discussed in Chapter Five.

diverse sexual subjectivities in an era of globalization**.** Hence, sexual culture is an ongoing process of negotiation and contestation between state intervention (discourse and laws) and the formation of new sexual subjectivities.

Resistance to the ideology of gender and marriage under both the Maoist period and the post Mao regime has been observed by scholars engaging in empirical approaches (Diamant 2000, Hershatter 2002, Honig 2003), but direct talking-back (or negotiation) to the dominant ideology of monogamous sexuality through the lens of media and audience is rather rare in the China scholarship. Farrer's (2003) term "opening up" contains the emerging uncertainty and instability of the ideology, struggles between the established and new ideas**.** If a dominant ideology never withdraws without a struggle (Grossberg 1986, Hall 1982, LaClau and Mouffe 1985), how is the "openness" of the market economy working to erode the dominant ideology? Never secure, ideological constructs are always challenged, defended, and contested (Grossberg 1986, Hall 1982, LaClau and Mouffe 1985), but how and in what way does the struggle occur? The news narrative of "concubinage" is a crucial site of the party-state's strategy for re-articulating its ideology. How audiences comprehend this site remains unknown, and the meaning of "keeping a second wife" remains incomplete without an understanding of the audience's participation. If the news media speak to this issue ideologically, do audiences interpret it ideologically? How and to what extent can audiences negotiate with ideological components? Are they able to overthrow the established ideology? Hence, this dissertation examines the ways in which the previously established ideology struggles over different ideas/cultures and vice versa, attempting to assess whether and to what extent these ideas/cultures may have undermined the hegemonic position of the established ideology. The media construction of "keeping a second wife" and audience members' interpretations of this

narrative offer an ideal case study for observing the scrambled relations between official ideology and sexual liberalism.

This dissertation focuses on social actors' compliance and resistance as they engage with ideology through the site of the narrative of "keeping a second wife". In so doing, this dissertation adds a media study to our understanding of family, marriage and sexuality in everyday life and experience within the current social context in China. Hence, building upon and moving beyond the scholarly studies on the discourse of marriage, family and sexuality and the scholarly evidences of so called sexual freedom, this dissertation pays particular attention to the relations and tensions that arise between ideological structure and agency. On the one hand, social actors have gained increasing autonomy in advocating and negotiating ways of living of their own design; on the other hand, the state's institutions, through media and education, are crucial structural factors that shape subjectivity in various ways. Moreover, contradictory forms of sexual culture in contemporary China—for example, some people still value female virginity, while others demonstrate much more tolerance toward sex out of wedlock— need to be further interpreted, using tools which go beyond both the official discourse and "sexual freedom" account . Neither the official discourse concerning marriage and sexuality nor the broad claims of sexual freedom can singlehandedly capture the landscape of marriage, family and sexuality in the PRC. Hence, this dissertation asserts that the contradictory forms together constitute the sexual culture in a complex way.

Media consumption in contemporary China

Asian media studies scholarship has employed a Cultural Studies approach to investigate the complex interplay between media texts, representations, and particular audiences. This

scholarship focuses on the practices of interpretation, negotiation/contestation and the sense making of identity. It explores the political, social, historical and cultural factors intertwined among textual producers, media consumers, ideology and particular social contexts (Erni and Chua 2004, Kim 2008). The Cultural Studies approach has been applied to the media studies in many Asian regions (Chua and Junaid 2005, Yang 2005). However, the Cultural Studies wing of Asian media studies has paid little attention to media in the PRC, and hence the complex nature of audience in China remains unknown to the scholarship.

Within a political-economy framework, studies on the Chinese media have largely focused, instead, on issues of media ownership and state control, and issues of media management and marketing (Fung 2008, Keane et al 2002, Latham et al. 2006, Li J 2000, Wang 2008, Zhao 1998). These latter approaches stem from the role that the media has played in China as an arm of party propaganda. More recent analysis has focused on the rapid expansion of consumer culture in China, the influence of globalization on the nation's media industries, and the increasing tensions between the state's interest in media propaganda and the media industry's pursuit of profit on a globalizing scale (Zhang 2009 and 2011). Studies of media in China also investigate the trends and possibilities of political liberalization opened up by the commercial liberalization of media in the authoritarian state (Stockmann 2009, Sun 2010).

The commercialization of the media in China has oriented media outlets simultaneously toward the Chinese media and the free market. On the one hand, centralized political control ensures that the media continue to function as the party's primary tool of political mobilization. For example, all the newspapers are under the supervision of state agencies and major newspapers are under the direct administration of the party's Department of Propaganda (local newspapers fall under the purview of local propaganda departments). All television and radio

stations are supervised by the Bureau of Broadcast and Television, and the publishing houses are controlled by the Bureau of Journalism and Publication. On the other hand, open market pluralism and competition has encouraged the media to develop as an industry with an eye to markets beyond the borders of China. Although the media industry is closely supervised by the party-state, new trends in media production are providing new possibilities for diluting state ideology as it appears in the media. In the meantime, individuals receive competing messages from different media resources in the age of the Internet (Yang 2009). This complex climate calls for a cultural study that can examine tensions and interactions between the state, media practices and society members. The existing literature, unfortunately, has little to tell us on this subject.

To date, the few existing studies that examine reception of Chinese media (Meng 2009, Womack1986) cast the Chinese audience as a homogeneous subject, as a large group of passive consumers who embrace consumer culture and as survey subjects whose main role is to aid marketers. Thus, the "audience" in China appears in these studies merely as a passive collective that simply receives the messages given by the authoritarian state. Because the state controls the media and employs the media for the purposes of party propaganda, studies on audience in China overlook the site of media as a cultural field in the age of opening up and globalization. Hence, this dissertation examines the cultural field (Bourdieu 1987) in China and conceptualizes the audience from a sociological perspective. According to Bourdieu (1987), within the cultural field, audience members bring a variety of economic, symbolic, social and cultural capital to bear upon their consumption of cultural products. The audience cannot be treated as a homogenous entity that reads texts in the same way; instead, the audience is composed of individuals situated in definite social positions, possessing access to different kinds, and amounts, of capital. Therefore, this dissertation is a "situated" audience study of particular

relationships to the media discourse of "keeping a second wife." I contend that this approach will add a significant, and heretofore missing, perspective to Chinese media studies. Such a study reveals the heterogeneity of media reception, and the internal contradictions and external impact that both reinforce and destabilize state ideologies as they are articulated through media discourse.

Although the Cultural Studies approach has been deployed as a set of analytical and political tools in studying media in different regions of Asia, using this approach to study media in China is still very new. Today's China, like many other parts of the world, is an increasingly mediated space. It is important to understand the consequences of media consumption as an everyday experience in a dramatically changing society where the party-state struggles to exert social control. This dissertation is intended to provide a much-needed perspective on these social transformations within the specific context of "keeping a second wife". It explores the everyday experience of media reception and thus contributes to Chinese media studies that have largely focused on the media as a generator of economic growth. Moreover, studies engaging with a cultural approach in Asian Media Studies focus on the individual's everyday experience in relation to the discourse they negotiate, but often overlook the historical and political aspects of the dominant discourse. While rigorously engaging with everyday experience, this study also explores important social and political questions dealing with contemporary China. In addition, despite the cultural significance of news narratives, Cultural Studies scholarship has paid intense attention to the politics of "pleasure" in the media as embodied by popular fiction, films, TV and other types of popular culture, while it has under-examined news media, and in particular news reception. This is particularly true in Asian media studies, as it is in other parts of the field.

This dissertation will analyze news reports of "keeping a second wife" for the purpose of examining the dominant discourse of marriage and sexuality inserted in the stories of "keeping a second wife". The intention of doing a news analysis, instead of a content analysis of the other types of media forms (e.g. films and women's magazines), is based on two considerations. First, the news press (and TV) in China is the major form of state media tightly controlled by the Party's propaganda departments, representing the authority of the Party-State voice. During the past decade, the state media have masterfully utilized technologies to develop online forms of news media and provide online space for audiences' interaction within certain ways (e.g. the online news of *the People's Daily* and the *Xinhua* News Agency). Therefore, the news reports in the state media have been read through the Internet by large audiences. Second, the online form of news reading provides convenience for researchers to collect data for discourse analysis.

Because my focus is the content of "keeping a second wife" that links to the ideology of marriage and sexuality, for the analysis of audience's interpretations, I employ other types of media forms that cover the content (e.g. TV and the Internet) due to the fact that the reception of "keeping a second wife" in the communication reality—in which audiences do not face single genre or single media form in today's mediated world (Hermes 2009)— does not come solely from the news press but also from the Internet and other types of media forms. My intention is to examine discrepancies in the understanding of the dominant discourse that has been discussed by different types of media resources that audiences may employ.

The news media in post Mao China has undergone "news reforms" that add "soft news" (e.g., social events and glamour tabloids) to the previous news style of rigid party propaganda. These adjustments speak to the demands of marketization, accommodations that have allowed the news media to rise as a massively profitable industry (He 2000, Wu 2000). As a result of the

double function of the Chinese press (party line and the news market), party propaganda has been largely diluted, and predictably the news audiences have greater autonomy. Moreover, the Internet has recently emerged as a major news source for some social groups (e.g., younger populations, the middle class, and "public intellectuals" (*gonggong zizhi fenzi*), and consequently, some members of the society have been exposed to contradictory media messages. Under these changes, the patterns of news reception have shifted from news use (as passive pattern) to news consumption (as fragmentation and polarization of audience). [13] In short, media production and media consumption in China have undergone massive changes, manifesting in a much more complex range of developments such as pluralisation, diversification, commercialization, internationalization and decentralization. These changes require new perspectives for understanding how the media operates in a different way from the established paradigm of news as "the party's throat and tongue" (Zheng 2005).

In her discussion of the relations between audiences and publics in Western societies, Livingstone (2005, 12) points out that today's "publics are increasingly mediated, moving ever closer to audiences, while audiences are increasingly diffused and diverse". Indeed, scholars have argued that a "plurality of media" (Couldry, Livingstone and Markham 2007, 24) and the increasing "fragmentation of audience" (Couldry, Livingstone and Markham 2007, 35) has undermined the public sphere that used to have a "common understanding of the world" and " a consensus regarding the collective interest" (Livingstone 2005, 9). Lurking behind this "pessimistic" statement about the public sphere is the idea that media and audience are no longer attached to a monolithic ideology; an idea equally applicable to authoritarian states such as China. Although scholars have distinguished mass media systems between democratic societies

[13] See Ang's discussion (1996) about the difference between "media use" and "media consumption".

and authoritarian states (Becker 2004, Meyen and Schwer 2007), and have pointed out that the role of authoritarian states in media operation is to generate rhetoric symbols of power as a strategy for domination (Wedeen 1999), recent studies on media reform in authoritarian states reveal that audiences primarily receive ideological messages in the form of entertainment (Becker 2004). In the case of the Chinese media, the news media has emerged as a massive industry, no longer functioning solely as the party's propaganda mechanism. Moreover, in the era of the internet, Chinese audience members are increasingly likely to receive contentious messages from non-official resources (Link et al. 2002, Yang 2009, Zheng and Wu 2005, Zheng 2007). As a consequence of these contexts and developments, contradictory and confrontational messages are delivered, thus providing more diverse possibilities for audience interpretation. While the party-state continues to make an effort to intervene in marriage, family and sexuality via the dominant discourse, various media resources have proliferated during the course of the past decade, aided by China's further "opening up" to the world, which has, by necessity led to the rise of more extensive and faster information transmission through the internet, popular culture or other channels, and consequently the monologue of the official discourse has come to an end.

Moreover, classic audience research with a cultural studies approach has intensively focused on gender and race to investigate audiences' activities in relation to media consumption and interpretations of media messages. Studies focusing on social change in terms of sexuality in China have paid particular attention to age (generational) difference in examining "youth culture" due to China's dramatic changes over the past three decades (Farrer 2002, Rofel 1999). This study acknowledges the continuing importance of age difference in determining attitudes toward sexual freedom and retains gender as a lens for looking at social change in terms of

marriage and sexuality. However, my research adds a key social category to mix—arguing for the importance of class in studying audiences' media consumption and interpretations. In other words, this study shows the ways in which the reception of "keeping a second wife" narrative reflects changing sexual culture and broader identity formation in terms of class.

Organization of the dissertation

The next chapter lays out the theoretical framework that guides the analysis. It also outlines methodological issues, the research data, and the challenges of fieldwork. It first outlines the central idea of the relation between media and ideology conceptualized in British Cultural Studies, within which this study is situated. I particularly link this study to feminist politics of gender and media that shed light on the media representation of women vis-à-vis feminist strategy of talking-back. I then offer a critical review of the debate of audience activity and situate the audience for this study. Finally, this chapter outlines the methodology and research data, and the challenges of fieldwork.

Chapter Three provides a content analysis of the media accounts of "keeping a second wife" as presented by the Chinese media. I show how the media accounts rely heavily upon crimes and perceived sexual chaos as a threat to the PRC's family institutions, the foundation of Chinese society, through which the news stories have created a "family crisis" that is in line with the official condemnation of "keeping a second wife" and coordinates perfectly with the state's efforts to reinforce the family. I thus argue that the news narrative of "keeping a second wife" is a re-articulation of the previously established ideology of marriage and sexuality, through which the post-socialist regime aims to maintain its hegemony over the increasing freedom in individuals' private sphere.

Chapter Three is the basis for Chapters Four, Five and Six that examine the audience's interpretations of "keeping a second wife". Three themes emerged as predominant and they became the key touchstones for my reception analyses: "Managing marriage", the linkage between corruption and "keeping a second wife", and the media discourse of the heterosexual marital unit as the only legitimate sexual outlet and moral sexual relationship. In Chapter Four, I examine the ways of understanding "managing marriage", which is a popular discourse that has appeared in the media as a strategy for fomenting the "family crisis" as well as in everyday life as a key word for mastering one's happiness, particularly when referring to a woman's well-being. I first link the "family crisis" in the media to the state-affiliated ACWF's "harmonious family" project, which is a component of the larger state project of building a "harmonious society". Subsequently, an analysis of the negotiations associated with "managing marriage" among audience members constitutes the bulk of the chapter. I argue that the entangled relations between gender and class play a crucial role in determining ways of "managing marriage", and thus link to a subject's compliance with or resistance to the idea of "managing marriage".

Chapter Five is concerned with the process of changing sexuality in contemporary China. While the state media continues to articulate heterosexual marital relations as the only moral and legitimate sexual behavior, contemporary audience members respond to this media discourse in various ways. This chapter deals with audience members' diverse responses to official sexual discourse. It also incorporates elements from interviewees' lived experiences, through which past beliefs, dominant discourse imperatives, and emerging sexual practices converge to sketch a fuller picture of sexuality in China today. I argue that the process contains multiple and overlapping forms of sexual culture, in which the party-state's ideology, emergent sexual cultures, and traditional Chinese beliefs intertwine and struggle.

In Chapter Six, I examine the theme of corruption as it appears in the news narrative of "keeping a second wife". This chapter provides a gendered perspective by investigating the media discourse of corruption vis-à-vis the audience's response to these stories. It focuses on audience members' story-telling and instances of talking-back to the media discourse that highlights a link between "keeping a second wife" and official corruption. I argue that despite the media narrative's essentialist presentation of gendered "nature" and the gendered causes of this corruption as aspects of "common sense" (a firm or unquestioned article of social belief), the audience's own narratives and the ways in which they talk back illustrate that the media's discourse of corruption has encountered vigorous resistance. This reflects the intensity of social animosity towards officialdom as well as the persistence of a political consciousness that the regime has been trying to erase.

The concluding Chapter summarizes this study with by making two primary arguments. First, the findings of the chapters reveal that the degree of adherence to the official ideology of marriage, family and sexuality is not uniform among different social groups. Taking class and age into account, this study demonstrates that class identity has an impact on the degree of adherence to the ideology of monogamous sexuality and age difference continually marks the differing attitudes toward sexual practices out of wedlock. Moreover, the process of modernity in China plays a predominant role for social change in terms of sexual culture. Second, through my approach to audience activity in this study, I show a broader sense of audience activity beyond the debate of active/passive audience.

Chapter Two

Theoretical framework and methodology

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework and methodology that guide my study. This study is built on the Cultural Studies model, a model which enables me to examine the relations between the media accounts of "keeping a second wife" and the previously established ideology of marriage and sexuality, along with an analysis of the ways in which audience members interpret the media discourse. This study also is built on the feminist perspective on gender and media. In the first section of this chapter, I outline ideas of culture and representation on which this study is based. This theoretical approach not only enquires into the relations between media (news and other forms of media) and ideology, but also investigates responses of the audience. Hence, subsequently, I present a critique of audience activity in cultural studies and situate the audience in a larger social-cultural context for this study. In particular, I suggest that the plausible image of the "cultural hero" presented in audience activity requires revision. I focus particularly on the key issue of women's resistance by focusing on instances of women's talking-back in a feminist politics of media that also sketches a "woman warrior" overthrowing cultural representations.[14] I argue that resistance can occur to certain extent while "audience activity" remains partially paralyzed by structural factors. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss

[14] Feminist media studies have paid particular attention to representations of physically and mentally strong women heroes in popular culture that has challenged a male-dominant binary representation of gender. Feminist historical studies also have attempted to discover the role of women in wars. The image of "woman warrior" reflects a shifting nature of gender representation, which brings women out of shadows to spot light and challenge patriarchal norms in society. See the discussions in: Early 2001, Innes 1999, McLaughlin1990.

methodology, multiple research methods (and three data sets) for this study, and the challenges of fieldwork.

Culture and representation

This dissertationt presents textual analysis, as well as sociological communication research (through empirical study), and engages theories derived from Cultural Studies that bridges the gap between reception research and textual analysis. Cultural Studies aims to understand media as a cultural form and assess the media's relationship to everyday life. Hence, it pays attention to audience in order to rethink the power relations between the media and message receivers. It is a critical perspective that focuses on the political, social and cultural implications of mass media. Notions of culture, representation, and encoding/decoding are important tools for this analysis of media and reception.

Culture is one of the most crucial concepts in Raymond Williams' work (1958, 1973, and 1977). His notion of culture highlights the importance of experience and activities in the making of culture and society. Williams conceptualizes culture as "a whole way of life", rather than simply "creative effort" (1958, 76). His definition of culture includes the activities of ordinary people, whose daily lives demonstrate a way of meaning-making and reflect a particular mode of social and economic organization. Therefore, this study of the textual reception of "keeping a second wife" strives to engage Williams' concept of culture by examining the ways in which individuals use culture as a means of mediating experience and social relations in contemporary China. Williams sees individuals as active participants in creating their own culture, performing a role that is linked to social relations and reflects social change under specific political and economic conditions. Moreover, dominant culture is always co-existent with and destabilized by

oppositional cultures (Williams 1977). Hence, because the dominant culture of monogamous sexuality in China encounters the threat of contestation by other subcultures, it can never completely dominate the lives of its constituents. According to Williams' (1973) argument, this dominant culture of monogamous sexuality is unstable and shifting despite its undeniable impact upon the ongoing process of the transformation of sexual relations.

Moreover, Williams further elaborates how culture is organized, negotiated and modified. Williams argues that culture is organized through the competing forces of dominant, residual and emergent cultures. There exists "conflict, difference and contradiction" (1973, 55) between the dominant and the subordinate. The dominant ideology is articulated through cultural practices. Residual culture, which comes from a former social existence, keeps alive a set of "experiences, meanings and values which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in the terms of dominant culture" (1973, 10), while emergent culture is a set of new meanings and values that the dominant cannot integrate into its frame. Because culture is organized in this way, the dominant culture cannot entirely control other types of cultural production. Williams' notion of culture offers a framework for this study's investigation of the relations between and the intersections of the dominant ideology of monogamous sexuality and the emergent ideas of "sexual freedom" in contemporary China, under a particular context of liberalization and globalisation. This dissertation pays particular attention to the ways in which sexual culture is changing in a complex way, in which the old and the new coexist and overlap in people's daily lives.

Cultural theorists pay particular attention to representation that transmits dominant ideology via the media. Representation signifies understandings of the world by using language, signs and images for communication (Hall 1997). It is the symbolic construction of meaning as well as the practice of representing others (Hall 1997, Spivak 1988). Importantly, representation

is a process through which meanings are produced and culture is organized, transformed, and challenged. According to Hall (1997), representation produces and disseminates meanings, values and identities through language and visual images; and yet, these meanings are also socially, historically and politically constructed. Therefore, media representation is far from neutral. For cultural theorists, representation is a medium through which meanings are produced by power/the ruling class (Curran and Morley 2006). According to this perspective, mass media functions as a discourse in support of the dominant over the subordinate by creating rhetorical/symbolic images. Furthermore, representation is also a site of struggle between different positions on the power spectrum (Hall 1997). It is a set of political practices, in which power, on the one hand, consistently strives to define meanings, while on the other hand, finds itself unable to fix the meaning as a stable site of interpretation. As a consequence of this lack of stability, these images are always beholden to interpretation, negotiation and resistance. Without an audience, the construction of meaning cannot be completed. The difficulty of fixing meaning derives from the fact that the receivers are socially, culturally, and historically located and thus disposed to interpret texts in a wide variety of ways. In short, cultural theorists see representation not just as meaning that is interrogated, but as the processes though which it is made and struggled over.

Based on the theoretical framework described above, this dissertation interprets the media narrative of "keeping a second wife" as a reconstruction that disseminates the ideology of marriage and sexuality established during the Maoist period. The news narrative attempts to create a "family crisis" in order to maintain social control during a period of increasing diversity of sexual practices. If it is true that concubinary practice has reappeared during the course of the rise of China's new rich, it is also true that pluralism of sexuality has led to the idea that the

PRC's monogamous idea of sexuality is threatened. The news narrative comes to perceive "keeping a second wife" as a sign of the disintegration of the social order and as a dangerous indicator of the possibility that the PRC's sexual mores and family institution are coming apart at the seams. Therefore, the news analysis also deals with the "family crisis" surrounding the practice of "keeping a second wife", in which sexual mores and the PRC's family institution are assumed to be endangered.

Audience activity

This dissertation explores the impact of the state ideology of marriage and sexuality through the site of "keeping a second wife" presented in the media, and thus it employs the term audience, a concept that has come to "cover the space of the individual/social distinction in locating the site of the impact of the media" (Allor 1988, 217). Hence, this section is not offering an overarching notion of audience, but is elaborating where to situate audience for this study.

The audience in this study is conceptualized within Cultural Studies. Early audience studies treat "audience" as an object of analysis in serving media industry, advertisers, and the state concerns of society. The Frankfurt School emphasizes the impact of the mass media, treating audience as a passive receiver who is easily manipulated (MacDonald 1959). Under this treatment, audience is an object of study ready for analysis. It also is the victim of media effects. In Ang's words, this kind of audience research is "merely a function of the systemic design, and privatized reception completely subjected to the requirements of centralized transmission", and thus it produces "the looming image of the 'passive audience'" (1996, 7).

It is at the core of the Cultural Studies to examine the dynamics of audiences' interpretations. As Morley (1980, 15) points out,

> the audience must be conceived of as composed of clusters of socially situated individual readers, whose individual readings will be framed by shared cultural formations and practices pre-existent to the individual: shared " orientations" which will in turn be determined by factors derived from the objective position of the individual in the class structure. These objective factors must be seen as setting parameters to individual experience, although not "determine" consciousness in a mechanistic way; people understand their situation and react to it through the level of subcultures and meaning systems.

The "readings" might seem heterogeneous, but the audiences' activities reflect the functioning of "the ideological operation" (Ang 1996.) Hall's model of encoding/decoding offers insight into the ways in which ideology operates through both media producers and audience interpretation (Hall 1973). By elaborating upon media message-receiver relations, Hall challenges the media effects model that claims that meaning is determined solely by cultural producers and then simply consumed by audience. For Hall, meanings embedded in messages are made in practice, and through the struggles between competing positions. This encoding/decoding model allows for a more process-oriented understanding of the production and consumption of representations. It emphases both sides of the notion: the dominant ideology that produces representation and the multiple interpretive possibilities available to different social groups (Hall 1973). The encoding process reveals the relationship between media messages and ideology and shows the ways in which the representation embedded in the messages can be naturalized through this process, whereas the decoding process illustrates the possibilities for a contested reading of ideology (Hall 1973).

Cultural studies dismantled the idea that there is an "audience" as an object to be studied during the 1980s (Allor 1988, Ang 1985, Erni 1989, Fiske 1988, Grossberg 1988, Morley 1980 and 1986, Radway 1988). In contrast to the emphasis on "media power" and media effects in early audience studies, since the 1980s, the audience in Cultural Studies emerges as an "active"

agent struggling over meaning in the reception process of the media (McGuigan 1992, Moris 1988, Morley 1983 and 1992). In particular, the emphasis in the conceptualization of audience not only perceives it as active in the sense that it produces meanings, but also examines the link between meaning-making and the micro-politics of media consumption. In contrast to early audience studies as conducted by the likes of the Frankfurt School, in Cultural Studies, the audience takes a critical and active position. Credited with making its own choices and "free" to engage in meaning-making (e.g. feminist audience studies on feminine genres emphasize the politics of pleasure and claim that watching TV or reading women's magazines are not cultural oppression but the site of negotiation and contestation) (Ang 1985, Livingstone 1991, Nightingale 1986 and 1990, Radway 1984). Nevertheless, this approach does not elaborate to the extent to which the audiences' power is operative, and as a result, as Ang points out, the audience figures as a "cultural hero" that seems able to overthrow the structures (Ang 1996, 8).

The problem with the figure of "cultural hero" presented in audience studies is embedded within the larger structure and agency debate that continues to drive the social sciences. The two poles remain stranded at either end of an overstated dichotomy and thus interconnections between these two concepts are overlooked (Hays 1994). Hence structure is seen as a static set of external constraints, while agency shows its opposition to structure by being active, contingent and flying banner of absolute freedom. The interconnections between structure and agency are lost in this understanding of the dichotomies. Examining interconnections between structure and agency may shed light on the entwined nature of compliance and resistance, though which we gain a better understanding of the ways in which cultural metamorphosis and social change actually occur. On the one hand, structure depends upon the participation of social actors (Berger and Luckmann 1966, Giddens 1982 and 1984) and thus it is empowering as well as constraining

(Hays 1994). On the other, agency maintains structure through interactions among individuals and is made possible by the empowering elements of structure, while it is hemmed in by the bounds of structural constraint. As Hays points out, the power of agency is better conceptualized as "structurally transformative agency" (1994, 64). While making choices and contesting structural features, individuals also make ideological commitments that help to maintain aspects of the structure itself.

Based on this understanding of structure and agency, audience activity should be understood as an entanglement of compliance and resistance. This dissertation searches for a multiplicity of audience interpretations of the media messages that reflect audience members' subject positions and other dynamics central to the ways in which they interpret their own lives and the rapid changes transforming China today. This implies that the complex interaction between audience and media cannot be reduced to the binary categorization of "passive" or "active" audience which dominates audience studies—a formula that casts audience members either as objects that are acted upon or as "cultural heroes".

Audience activity is both complex and changing, and neither the passive nor the active interpretation accounts for all of its particularities. As Bird (2003) states, although individuals articulate their perception of media messages in different ways, the media are firmly anchored into the web of culture , the intricate process by which ideologies are embedded in a variety of practices and through which individuals are constructed as particular kinds of subjects. Audience becomes "active" whilst applying codes of their cultural competences to give negotiable or oppositional interpretations on the one hand. On the other hand, it can be passive when being manipulated as a victim of many kinds of ideologies (e.g. consumerism, gender ideology) (Takahashi 2010). It is due to media's nature as a form of culture that this dissertation, on the one

hand, advocates the notion of active audience— the framework on which the dissertation moves to investigate audience's responses; on the other hand, this dissertation has identified ideological factors that restrain audience activity. Hence, the debate of "active/passive" audience is not the way that we ought to think about audience activity.

Despite encoding/decoding model is conceptualized to investigate the relationships among discursive structures, social location and positioned interpretive practices (Allor 1988), recent media scholars have criticized Hall's encoding/decoding model with an effort to move beyond the binary distinction of texts/recipient (Ang 1996). Hall's model sheds light on audience research during the 1980s, but now is criticized as an "abstract hermeneutic model" that reduces audience to a simple decoder vis-à-vis texts (Bratich 2008). Thus, Hall's model does not fundamentally deconstruct the previous paradigm of audience as passive receiver. In Ang's words, Hall presents a paradigm that merely opposes the "sender's sphere to the receiver's sphere" (1996, 20). Moving beyond the text/decoder model, the audience must be located in the communication practices (e.g., the party-state media institution and its development over the course of marketization and globalization) as well as the larger social and cultural context because a text is not an isolated phenomenon. This understanding of audience is two-fold: it first demonstrates the validity of Hall's model for us to understand the power of audience, and subsequently it attempts to move beyond the boundary between texts and decoder.

Moreover, as audience research emerged within the cultural studies it often focused on a single medium or a single genre (Radway 1988, 363). This has fallen into a trap that Seiter (1999, 9) identifies in this way: "how do we draw the line in our data collection and the study of society, the family, the community"? The distinction between audience and the media is outdated in the age of internet. As Livingstone (2004, 81) points out, " in the new media

environment, it seems that people increasingly engage with content more than forms or channels…as media become interconnected, increasingly intertextual, it is content irrespective of the medium that matters to people qua fans, for they follow it across media, weaving it seamlessly also into their face-face communications". The weakness of audience research within the fold of cultural studies lies in both theoretical and methodological approaches, which rely heavily on bounded relations between texts and recipients (e.g. Hall's encoding/decoding model). Consequently, this kind of research pays much less attention to the larger context of culture in which both texts and audience are embedded.

This study crosses the boundaries of a single medium and a single genre, and it focuses on the content of "keeping a second wife" represented in various media forms. It does not focus on a specific text/audience relationship within a particular newspaper. During the course of my field work, I provided news texts to audience members at the beginning. Later I realized that the understanding of audience facing particular texts failed to connect audience to their everyday life experience—audience members were tightly bounded to the texts. They read the texts carefully and made an effort to grasp the media messages' meanings. While focusing on these texts, they overlooked the relationship between these texts and their own lives, and in consequence, it became impossible to look at their attachment to the established ideology during a time of social change. Later, I focused on small-scale explorations of individuals' meaning making dealing with major themes appearing in the media stories that concerned the informants. These themes largely link to everyday life experiences that enable them to reflect upon their intimate lives, yearnings and emotions. I intend to shed light on how people (i.e. middle class women versus working class women and older generations versus younger generations) interact with the themes in the media stories to create meanings within their everyday lives. These themes are familiar

from discourse that they have been exposed to through different kinds of media (e.g. TV, films, news and literary work). Unlike the classic audience research in cultural studies, I am not focusing on the readers of one particular newspaper or one particular TV drama (i.e. *Woju*, *Dwelling Narrowness*). Instead, I am looking across a spectrum of media forms (printed press, internet, TV drama) that present audiences with the ideology of marriage and sexuality. This is to widen the range of approaches in the field, experimenting with different methodologies as well as to show the intensity of "media saturation" and of struggling in meaning-making during everyday life. As Bird (2003) points out, today's world is media-saturated and thus it is impossible to single out the effects of a particular media form (as if it ever was in the classic studies of audience). Hence, this research on audience in China is building on the models represented by Hall's encoding/decoding model and the classic audience studies based in Western societies by pioneering audience scholars such as Ang (1985), Lull (1990), Morley (1980 and 1986), Radway (1984), and Hobson (1982), but it moves further towards a broader sense of audience by focusing on the reception of "keeping a second wife" across various media forms.

Acknowledging the validity of audience research through one particular genre and medium, this study includes different media on the subject of "keeping a second wife", such as the printed press, the Internet, TV and different genres such as news stories and TV drama, all of which represent the site of "keeping a second wife" for negotiating the established ideology of marriage and sexuality. The aim of this approach is to link the media discourse and the audience to the larger political and cultural contexts.

Feminist politics of gender and media

This dissertation is enlightened by a feminist perspective on gender and media, and thus employs political and epistemological dimensions of feminist scholarship. Theorizing within a cultural studies approach, feminist media scholarship primarily focuses on media representation and identity. In early media studies, feminist concepts and theoretical frameworks focused upon the theoretic framework of the "male gaze". Feminist media scholars employ this framework to investigate the ways in which women become objects of the male gaze and the ways in which narratives produce subjectivities and identities. The media's portrayal of women is seen as false or limiting, communicating a narrow and stereotyped view of women's social roles. For feminist critics, there exists a cultural lag between real media images and real roles of women in a changing society (Thornham 2000). Early feminist media scholarship generally centered upon the analysis of representations of women in popular media as belonging to the paradigm of misogyny (Byerly and Ross 2006, Walters 1995). Gender stereotyping, misrepresentation and under-representation of women in media have been investigated by feminist media scholarship. Concerned with cultural representations of women, they ask questions about the ways in which meanings are made and the ways in which women are represented. Feminist media studies have developed major concepts and theoretical frameworks for investigating representation in accordance with feminist politics. These approaches to representation are inter-textual, multidisciplinary, and deeply invested in the demystification of patriarchal images and the creation of a cultural space for feminist images. The investigation of representation particularly includes the relationship between women and cultural representation, and between historical and material women and the category of "woman" represented in complex and contradictory ways by the media (Walters 1995). In particular, feminist news studies question women's marginality and

misrepresentation. News has increased its representation of women over the last three decades, but women remain under-represented in general. Studies of news practices challenge the fantastical and ideological aspects of the media's construction of the real world, revealing the contradictory relations between women and news discourse. Authenticity or the presentation of the real world is always socially constructed. These studies sought to understand the ways in which news is constructed, the ways in which content is made, and the ways in which sources are manipulated (while analyzing the purpose of news manipulation). Representation of women in the news media disseminated to the reading/listening public is regarded as significant in shaping women's social roles and subjectivities. Feminist media scholars point out that the news media has a gendered organizational structure and produces a discourse that leads inevitably to a gendered discussion of public issues (Gill 2007). In summary, early feminist media studies of the representation of women are often characterized as an angry repudiation, condemning the media's symbolic annihilation of women and silencing, marginalizing, trivializing, and objectifying women in the media. The purpose of this critique centers upon the demand for the production of positive images of women (Gill 2007).

From the 1980s onwards, there was a shifting understanding of gender. Judith Butler (2004) argues that gender is the product of embedded social action. She conceptualizes gender performativity as acted within regulatory norms; and, in turn, repeated gender performance reproduces itself via its discursive effects, naturalizing the power structure. Moreover, bodies are "intentionally organized materiality", in accordance with the terms and imperatives of the "heterosexual matrix", which represents the sedimentation of the iterative norms of cultural legibility through which particular gender performances are enacted (Butler 1988, 521).

Echoing this understanding of gender, there was a poststructuralist shift away from the focus upon the gap between representation and real women or real women's pleasure toward the articulation of concerns about the media's construction of all social categories, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality. This model views the category of femininity and other categories as entirely socially constructed. Naturally, the media plays an important role in this construction. While interested in poststructuralist approaches to media studies, feminist critics still take representation very seriously. They investigate the ways in which media genre constructs representations, such as post-war female consumers and feminist heroines (Brunsdon, D'Acci and Spigel 1997). These constructed femininities trigger questions that invite feminists to revisit the problem of representation. The traditional model of content analysis does not produce a complete picture that explains how the images of women are constructed, so scholars supplement it with structural analysis. Feminist critics employ semiotic analysis to understand the ways in which meaning is produced and conveyed through media representation (Krishnan 2007). Studies focus on intertextuality, instead of close textual analysis of a single text, in order to examine media representations of women and femininity in a fuller context. This approach not only allows feminist media scholars to examine the media representation of women, but also to investigate the broader cultural system in which representation is embedded (Brunsdon 1997).

In poststructuralist feminist media studies, media representation no longer figures as a skewed reflection of reality; instead, it is seen as a constructed reality that brings certain understandings/interpretations, subjectivities and complex images into cultural play. In the poststructuralist view, identities, subjectivities and desires are fragmentary, unfixed and contradictory, and thus the media's construction of femininity occupies an unstable position.

Poststructuralist theorists work to exhibit these destabilized meanings. This opens up a space for the investigation of reception.

Feminist politics of gender and media shed light on the content analysis of "keeping a second wife" and women's negotiation of the media discourse throughout this dissertation. In accordance with feminist theories of femininity and masculinity, gendered representations (e.g., "second wives" and "virtuous wives), and the form of masculinity privileged by the market economy loom large in this study. These representations are situated within the larger cultural and political context of the PRC, which produces these gendered subjectivities. Moreover, women's "talking back" is a feminist strategy for resistance. Building upon feminist strategy, this dissertation emphasizes women's ability to talk back to media representations. Nevertheless, while searching for women's voices, this study scrutinizes the extent to which women's agency can step outside of ideological structures. This study of the degree of women's resistance helps to concretize the idea of moving beyond the debate of audience activity.

Methodology, research data, and the challenges of fieldwork

This dissertation takes a cultural approach to studying the media discourse in contemporary China. A cultural approach centralizes "experience, subjectivity and consciousness, ideology, history" (Hay, Grossberg and Wartella 1996), and calls for an ethnographic study of the media. Methodologically, in order to provide a more informative account of the media discourse and its reception by audience members, this dissertation is a multi-method study, combining different types of data and approaches. Chapter Three provides a discourse analysis, focusing on the media reports of "keeping a second wife". The media coverage of "keeping a second wife" offers a chance to study the interrelations between media

discourse, the state ideology, audience and social change in China. Chapters Four, Five and Six employ an ethnographic study of media reception and "digital ethnography" techniques.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The initial methodology is a critical discourse analysis that examines how and why the news narrative of "keeping a second wife" comes into play. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims to analyze news texts about social events, on the theory that these cultural products provide insight into "the subtle manipulation of images and the variations in meanings that result" (Furniss 2001, 33). This approach is particularly well suited to studying the treatment of women and other marginalized social groups in the media (Fairclough 1989). Drawing upon CDA methods, Chapter Three pays close attention to semantic strategies (e.g. *ernai* and *xiaosan*), representation, content and the structuring of the stories.

Methodologically, feminist media scholarship has relied upon textual analysis (close reading of media messages), including the examination of narrative structures, iconography, symbolic codes, themes, and the solicitation of pleasure, identification and subjectivity. Similarly, this study employs a feminist discourse analysis of mediated women and gendered discourses in the media. Feminist discourse analysis links feminist politics and critical discourse analysis. Feminist media scholars have engaged in an in-depth analysis of mediated women and the gender politics behind the issues of representation in the media, including all mass-produced popular culture (Brunsdon, D'Acci, and Spigel 1997, Byerly and Ross 2006, Cuklanz and Moorti 2009, Carter and Steiner 2004, Dow 1996, Gill 2007, Walters 1995).

Feminist discourse analysis aims to disclose the unequal power relations in the complex of gender discourse and dominant ideology. A number of feminist scholars have engaged with

femininity and feminine genres through textual analysis – through studies such as Krishanan and Deghe's work (1997) on the construction of femininity in India and Rowe (1997) on *Roseanne*. Others have examined gendered discourse in mass media, including D'Acci's work (1997) on abortion discourse and 1970s television documentary and Kane's study (1997) of the ideological function of "freshness" in feminine hygiene commercials. In the field of feminist critical media studies, scholars have employed close textual analysis as a means of uncovering meanings behind representations of women. Recent feminist discourse analysis has paid particular attention to subtle meanings in gender discourse and ideology at a time when a cultural backlash has emerged against feminism (McRobbie 2009, Tasker and Negra 2007, Probyn 1997). In the case of China, the "state feminism" that advocated gender equality (*nannü pingdeng*, men and women's equality) under the Maoist regime (Wang 2005) has fallen by the wayside remarkably quickly during the Post-Mao period. Femininity and gender roles in the public discourse have derived much of their reactionary energy from the cultural backlash emerging in the market economy against the previous socialist "iron girls" (Jin 2006).

Chapter Three studies news reports between May 1, 2000 and December 30, 2004, which I consider the most active period for discussions about the new marriage law amended in 2001. I also collected some news items from March 2008 to September 2009 in order to examine changes and new trends that have developed in more recent media accounts. The latter collection demonstrates the state media's continuing interest in the subject of "keeping a second wife"; in particular, a new terminology, *xiaosan* (little third) has entered into the narrative, which may reflect a negotiation of the identification.[15] This new term, employed interchangeably with older

[15] My field research in Taiwan conducted in July of 2011 shows that "*xiaosan*" is common term employed in Taiwan to identify the woman in an extramarital affair while "*bao ernai*" specifically refers to an affair between a mainland woman and a Taiwanese businessman. These differences will be left to further studies.

forms in the news reports, illustrates that the media narrative itself is by no means a closed structure; rather, it is an open site through which new definitions and ideas may emerge. Chapter Three focuses on 134 news reports collected in 2004 and 2006, and 50 pieces collected in 2009. In total, there are 194 news reports collected from *Jinyang Wang*(金羊网)*,* a news website run by the *Yangcheng Evening News* (*Yangcheng Wanbao,* 羊城晚报), one of the giant news corporations under China's state capitalism.[16] By typing the key word *ernai* (the second wife) into the website's search engine, I was able to collect a number of items containing this crucial term. Some of these news reports derive originally from a variety of national and local newspapers, including the *xinhua* news agency, the news website of the CCP's institutional newspaper— *The People's Daily*, along with provincial and city newspapers, while others had previously appeared in the corporation's own newspapers. Most of these news reports appear to have been widely circulated through repeated citations by different news websites and newspapers in other provinces of the PRC. Among these items, I singled out 194 news reports pertinent to the subject of "keeping a second wife".[17]

Subsequently, I divided these news articles into two categories for the purposes of a content analysis: stories and commentaries. There are 139 news stories and 55 news commentaries identified in the collection. I first examined the usage of the term "keeping a second wife" in the news and coded the content of each news story. I also observed and categorized the main storylines and differentiate between the types of advice given. In particular,

[16] The news corporation of *Yangcheng wanbao* owns its news website, *jinyang wang*, bringing together several newspapers run by the news corporation, which is under the supervision of the provincial Department of Propaganda. It is one of the most influential news corporations under China's capitalist regime.
[17] Irrelevant items are those ones that use the term of "*ernai*" but talk about irrelevant events such as football teams. In these items, the key word "*ernai*" is linguistically borrowed to refer to something "informal", "illegal" "minor" and the like.

I pay close attention to the news descriptions in terms of gendered morality and representations of femininity vis-a-vis masculinity.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF MEDIA

Apart from the analysis of "encoding", examining the reception of news is particularly important to this study. With reference to the theories of cultural studies, textual analysis is detached from media culture in everyday life. Meanings contained in the media text cannot attain completion without the audience's participation. Both Williams' notion of culture and Hall's encoding/decoding model consider audience members to be active subjects creating meaning from the signs contained in media (Hall 1973).

Despite criticisms of Hall's model of encoding/decoding that characterize it as a closed relation between texts and recipients, the concept does serve as an important tool in my examination of audiences' analyses of media texts. The model should not be understood as a closed system but as a useful constellation of ideas that we can add something onto. It is compatible with a methodological approach that focuses on everyday life experience. I link the process of "decoding" to the relation between media messages and everyday life (rather than the relation between messages and the readings of the messages); hence, "decoding" becomes heterogeneous and contingent upon the experiences of individual audience members.

I bring different methodological strategies to bear upon my investigation of the media reception. Audience research in particular asks how different people understanding media messages and create meanings, and studies the ways in which those media are embedded in social, political, and economic systems. Also, the audience is not understood as a monolithic group that receives the messages in the same way. An understanding of the plurality of audience

interaction with the media messages calls for situated audience research that uses qualitative methods of audience ethnography. The methodological tradition of cultural studies thus guides this dissertation into an ethnographical study of media. Pioneering scholars, such as Ien Ang (1985), Janice Radway (1995 and 2003), Joke Hermes (1995), Jennifer Hayward (2003) and Diana Crane (2003), have conducted audience research intended to develop a cultural understanding of media reception. Using ethnographic techniques and qualitative research methods, these scholars have examined the ways in which audience members respond to media messages. Their studies reveal interpretive and creative readings performed by media audience members—their articulation of cultural meanings and their insertion of such readings into daily lives.

In addition, feminist ethnographic research strives to investigate power relations from "the standpoint of women" by engaging with women's experience and agency (Harding 1987, Grossberg and Wartella 1996, 210). This approach to feminist sociological theory sheds important light upon the use of audience studies to gauge women's responses. Recent feminist audience studies have taken gender relations into account by examining the articulation, production and interpretation of media texts and in differentiating gendered audiences (Ang 1985, Hermes 1995, Hayward 2000, Radway 2003, Yang 2005). Moreover, the feminist strategy of talking-back to media texts focuses research investigation on how female audiences negotiate, resist, and re-interpret identity in opposition to the dominant discourse in media (Russo and Jackson 2002.) Hence, in comparison with the gendered representation that comes under the purview of this textual analysis, my data collection focused on the interpretations that women audience members offered in accordance with the methodology of feminist audience studies that has guided feminist researchers to conduct critical studies by bridging feminist epistemology and

methodology. A feminist epistemological approach focuses on power, gender, and sexuality and digs into the interrelationship between knowledge, experience, and reality (Skinner, Hester and Malos 2005). This approach to my research provides reliable data on women's experiences in relation to the media representation of "second wives".

Three factors motivated me to add class component to this research. First, "keeping a second wife" is a class-coded issue (the "new rich" men and the lower-status women who are either urban workers or rural migrants in the media narrative) (Xiao 2011). It is important to remember that "keeping a second wife" is an issue related to the understanding of masculinity, and that Chinese masculinity has been substantially reshaped by the market economy. Consequently, masculinity is tightly linked to class identity in post-Mao era gender politics (Zheng 2007). Second, the media discourse of "managing marriage" is preliminarily targeting the middle class wives in the time of "family crisis". The media stories (and marriage consultants, "emotion experts") suggest and lecture middle class wives to take heed of the "family crisis" and accordingly to adopt strategies in order to control the male's sexual nature (i.e., promiscuity) and hold the family together. Third, the emerging landscape of class distinction is characterized by the rise of the new rich vis-à-vis the old "proletariat" and the new working class (composed mainly of rural migrant workers) (Carrillo and Goodman 2012). Class has affected media consumption and as a result, the different media resources that each class depends upon may provide different views of "keeping a second wife". Based on all of these factors, I take class into account while investigating perceptions of issues related to marriage and sexuality (Chapters Four and Five).

The data for Chapters Four, Five and Six derives mainly from in-depth interviews with 45 women, conducted during the summer of 2011.[18] Because I was interested in class, I recruited both middle class and working class women through the snowballing method, via acquaintances, relatives and personal networks. In the urban settings, some of the participants are acquaintances of my own family members, my friends' students, and some of them were introduced by the participants after the first round of interviews. A former colleague of mine, a journalist, arranged for me to interview the rural migrants in the two factories in Huizhou city. Some of the interviews were conducted individually, while due to circumstances some of them were conducted in focus groups, which included one middle class group, two female college student groups and two migrant worker groups. The interview with middle class focus group was arranged by an acquaintance of my family who was also interviewed by me. This group consists of two medical doctors, one nurse and one dentist. The focus group interview was conducted in the doctors' afternoon nap room in the hospital. Two friends of mine who were university professors arranged for me to meet their female students for the college student groups, and the informants consisted of 8 college students. The interviews occurred respectively in the professor's office and a chemical laboratory.[19] My inclusion of college students was to examine the age difference. With migrant workers, two focus groups were held in the managerial meeting rooms. [20]

In total, the interviewees include 19 "middle class" women, 8 female college students (for the purpose of looking into age difference) and 18 working class women including urban factory workers, former laid off workers in the state sector and migrant workers in private

[18] I received ethics approval from Concordia University for interviews before I started my fieldwork.
[19] The interviews were conducted without their professors' presence.
[20] Women in both of two migrant groups were allowed to be off-duty to participate in the interviews without deduction of their wage. None of managerial stuff attended the interviews.

factories. The middle class women I interviewed are from Chongqing, a metropolis in the South West of China that used to be an industrial city where the old "proletariat" gathered during the Maoist era and became a site of massive layoffs throughout the 1990s. Also, recent developments in this region on the maps of China's economic blueprint have led to its designation as an "advanced" area, with a corresponding rise of "the new rich". These middle class women included professionals and housewives whose husbands belong to the "new rich" class. Their ages ranged from 31 to 55. By way of contrast, at the lower end of the social ladder, the eight working class women I interviewed in Chongqing included former laid off workers and workers in state-owned factories. Most of the urban workers were in their 40s, and the youngest one was 29. None of these women is married to a middle class husband who would have moved their class category upward.

While the working class women in Chongqing were willing to speak, the migrant workers I interviewed in Guangdong were not actively participating in the discussions. In total, I interviewed ten women working in a sports bag factory and an electronics factory in Huizhou, a Southern coastal city of Guangdong Province. Their ages ranged from 18 to 42. I recruited these women through my personal contact. The interviews with rural migrants were conducted in a focus-group style in the manager's meeting rooms (both groups consisted of five women), and each group took two hours to discuss questions related to the topic of "keeping a second wife".

The voices of middle class women, urban workers, and migrant workers are not equally represented in this research. This is due to two reasons: the subject position of each social group and the flawed process of my interviews with migrant workers. In contrast to the middle class women's eloquence and confidence when employing current popular discourse and the urban workers' empowerment by the Maoist terms, migrant workers failed to narrate their experience

in their own terms. The under-representation of migrant workers' voice in this research is salient. As Adrienne Rich (1979, 204) points out, "Where language and naming are power, silence is oppression". This not only reflects social inequality, but also increases the challenges of conducting fieldwork.

Following some scholarly categorization (Chan and Ngai 2009, Ngai and Lu 2010), this research identifies both migrant workers (the new working class) and urban workers (the old "proletariat") as the working class. However, it is important to note that migrant workers' social status and cultural and political resources are rather different from urban working class (Lu et al. 2012, Research Group for Social Structure in Contemporary China 2005). Migrant workers are a social group that is the most exploited on the factory floor and discriminated and stigmatized in the discourse (Li et al. 2007, Wong et al. 2007, Yan 2008). Their social condition requires interviewing techniques to ensure full participation. Bringing out their agency and their perspectives on their lives is the challenge of fieldwork. The problem with the two focus groups of migrant workers primarily lies in the "asymmetrical power relations of the research interviewer and the interviewed subject" (Kvale 2002) due to the fact that I was seen an urban person affiliated with a foreign university. Unfortunately, the arrangement of my interviewing migrant workers reinforced the asymmetrical power relations, and the ways of the interviewer-interviewee interaction exacerbated by presumptions arising from arrangements affected my data collection.

Two migrant worker focus groups were arranged by a former journalist who was a colleague of mine, now the head of a quasi-official organization and the wife of a high-profile leader of the city. Officials' wives (and relatives) in contemporary China often function as the nexus of *guanxi* (social networks) practice (Li 2011). Because I was introduced as her friend,

managers did their best to "satisfy" my needs since my *guanxi* with the official's wife worked as the codes of social conduct. The focus groups were arranged before I arrived at the city. The interviewees were chosen and organized by the managers. The location was the managers' meeting rooms, which were the symbol of authority where the workers could not enter without permission. The whole process was arranged like an official visit. The workers were given a special permit to take two hours off, and the workers performed the interviews as a job task. All of these factors contributed to the silence of migrant workers. For example, some of the workers barely said a word over the course of the interviews. Often, they wanted to know my opinions and made an effort to answer my questions in a "correct" way. Most of the working class women from rural areas felt embarrassed and shy. This is similar to the situation that Jacka (2006) encountered during her interviews with "*dagong mei*" (rural migrant sisters) who claimed "not knowing how to speak". Therefore, as a result, the analysis of working class women does not include the data from the migrant worker interviews.

DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY

The Internet in China has opened the age of contention with the ascendance of online activism and a number of online communities that have helped to dilute the "culture of official-centricity" in recent years (Yang 2009, 224). These tools give voice to the voiceless and provide a civic space within the authoritarian state. Encouraged by the fact that digital ethnography (Leibold 2011) has become a more frequently employed method during the age of internet, the data for Chapter Six also derives from social media in China that is less censored than the conventional press media. I began to collect data on the linkages between "keeping a second wife" and corruption through BBS, blogs and micro-blogs in 2010. Moreover, I took an immersion approach during the process of data collection. I signed up for a micro-blog (*weibo*)

on *Sina* to interact with and observe discussions related to the topics of corruption and "keeping a second wife". Although major social media like Facebook and Twitter are officially blocked in the PRC, Chinese versions of social media like micro-blogs have emerged and experienced explosive growth. The scholarship on social media in China, to date, has positively estimated the impact of social media in transforming China in terms of democratizing the communication of information (Tai 2006), promoting political openness (Zheng 2007), challenging the party-state's ideology (Xiao 2011) and mobilizing collective actions (Yang 2009). Social media in China has become a space for contestation, in which the party-state's emphasis upon harmony and political consensus encounters challenges and conflicts. Netizens appear in the space with skeptical and antagonistic attitudes, forming a new model of public space that disseminates messages emphasizing contestation and resistance (Dayan 2008). Therefore, the method of collecting data from the blogosphere obviously derives from my intention to investigate and explore the possibilities of contesting official media discourse.

In summary, while drawing upon concepts derived from Cultural Studies model that have bridged the analysis of media discourse and the investigation of audience interpretation, this study attempts to move beyond the binary debate of passive/ active audience. I suggest that individuals are able to negotiate and contest ideological elements even while they are constrained by structural components. Methodologically, the multi-method approach in this study aims not only to provide a fuller account of social change, but also to cross the boundaries of single mediums and single genres presented in the classic audience research literature by incorporating different media forms focused on a single subject.

Chapter Three

Creating Family crisis: "Keeping a Second Wife" in the News Media

This chapter offers a content analysis of the news accounts of "keeping a second wife". It analyzes the ways in which the media has treated the topic in order to engender "family crisis", through a process that Stuart Hall would describe as the "ideological construction of reality" (1978, 29). I argue that concubinage was a complementary component in the traditional family institution, whereas "keeping a second wife" (*bao ernai*) is a semantic strategy that contains both moral condemnation and tabloid appeal. The news narrative of "keeping a second wife" suits Chinese journalism's double function perfectly, allowing reporters to derive the maximum benefit from the loaded terminology and contents of the stories—naming the issue as "concubinage" and telling stories of crimes and "sexual chaos". Hence, the news narrative is a signifying practice that the predominant ideology of family, marriage and sexuality employs to achieve social control.

In total, I analyze 194 news reports dating from between May 1, 2000 and December 30, 2004 — the most active period for discussion about the new marriage law amended in 2001— and from March, 2008 to September, 2009, a control group added to keep track of changes and new trends in more recent news reports. All of these news reports were collected through *Jinyang wang*, a news website associated with *Yangcheng Evening News* (*Yangcheng wanbao*), located in Guangzhou—the capital of Guangdong Province. Some of the news items derive originally from a variety of national (e.g. the Xinhua News Agency and *The People's Daily*) and

local newspapers (including provincial and city level press organs in other provinces), while others had previously appeared in the newspapers run by the *Yangcheng Evening News* corporation. I divided these news items into two categories: stories (139 items) and commentaries (55 items). I focus on terminology, the content of each news story, storylines and the dominant quality of the advice given. In particular, I pay close attention to the news descriptions in terms of gender roles, gendered morality and representations of femininity vis-à-vis masculinity.

Drawing upon Hall's conceptualization of news and ideology, I first situate the news account as an ideological re-articulation of the conflicts between the longstanding discourse established under the Maoist regime and the increasing freedom of the private sphere since the beginning of the reform era. Then I take a close look at the "encoding" of the terminology with a focus on the convergence and divergence between the origin of "keeping a second wife" and the meanings contained within its official adoption. Subsequently, I examine gendered representations of the three parties involved in the news stories—"second wives", wives and husbands— through which I sketch the dominant image of gender roles within the family and marriage. Then, I lay out several types of news stories focusing on crimes and dangers that appeared repeatedly in the news media: homicide, injury, corruption, disputes over property and sexual chaos, all of which are used to construct the "family crisis" (*jiating weiji*, 家庭危机). The rhetoric of "crisis" contends that sexual conduct that trespasses beyond the bounds of marriage shakes the foundation of the social structure. In the final section of this chapter, I examine the official response to "keeping a second wife", exploring the reactions of state agencies including the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) and the juridical body.

News and ideology: situating "keeping a second wife"

The Cultural Studies tradition suggests an approach to news media which privileges the empirical analysis of journalistic encoding practices (Hall 1973 and 1980). Employing a structuralist perspective, Stuart Hall (1978) assesses the news media's strategies for "making an event intelligible". In a study on mugging in the British news media, for example, Hall (1978) systematically investigates an ideological implication in encoding these events during the course of a moral panic over mugging during the 1970s. Hall (1978) demonstrates that news events are coded in order to serve the needs of everyday "ideological practice". For Hall, encoding is a process through which meanings are produced (1973). The nexus of the encoding process lies in the ways in which codes of media are linked to ideology. Hall claims that news transforms the "historical' into the 'natural', and through this transformation news stories "repress their ideological dimensions by representing" events and producing meanings as the "real world" (1973, 84). Moreover, for Hall, ideology is transmitted through representation in the news that signifies understandings of the world by using language, signs and images for communication. The process is achieved through the symbolic construction of meaning as well as the practice of representing others (Hall 1997). For Hall and other cultural theorists, representation is a medium through which meanings are produced by power (Curran and Morley 2006).

Hall demonstrates that news media naturalizes ideological structures in news production. In his encoding model, denotation that works through the process of "naturalization" conceals the practices of coding in the media whereas connotation "intersects with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional, more active ideological dimensions" (1980, 133). For Hall (1973), encoding is not completed in isolation, but works with the dominant ideology to ensure its hegemony throughout society. The encoding process includes reporting, reflecting and

orchestrating. Reporting and reflecting work to code events within the framework of the dominant ideology, whereas orchestrating aims to win the audience's consent and to shape the audience's decoding process within the given ideological structure. Hall demonstrates that the encoding process functions particularly during "crisis time", in which news media report and reflect on an event so as to win consent in accordance with the ideological script (Hall 1974).

Although Hall's conceptual framework and analysis are theorized from and make reference to the British news media, Hall's insights reveal complex relations between news and ideology and thus can shed light on the news media's narrative of "keeping a second wife" in China. News is a social production, the bureaucratic organization of media, the structure of news values and the construction of news stories play key roles in promoting the dominant ideological interpretation of "the problematic reality" (Hall 1978, 56). "Keeping a second wife" becomes news worthy in the conjuncture of recent news media reforms and the party-state's continuing interventionist approach to individuals' private affairs. Post-Mao journalism has two primary functions—targeting the market and news consumers while continuing to function as the party's propaganda (Keane, Hong and Donald 2002, Latham, Thompson and Klein 2006, Li 2000,). The old institution of concubinage has been imaginatively represented in popular culture and literary work, such as films and fiction. The news media's use of the term accommodates the industry's search for "extraordinariness" and novelty. On the one hand, it fits into the recent trend toward "soft news", and is helpful in targeting news consumers via tabloid-style exposure of extramarital affairs; on the other hand, the issue itself has attracted the attention of state authorities, for whom reporting the issue is in line with Chinese journalism's imperative to deliver ideological messages. Hence, the news narrative that tells of a resurgence of concubinage demands scrutiny in order to reveal what is behind the narrative. Indeed, Hall's critique of news

media representation helps us to understand how deeply rooted the (re)construction of "keeping a second wife" is within the ideology of marriage and sexuality established since the early 1950s.

Creating "family crisis"

Figure 1

One of the numerous official posters in urban China representing an ideal family positioned in the background image of "modernity". This kind of poster started to appear in the urban settings since the 1980s. This was one in the 1980s. (source:http://photo.blog.sina.com.cn/photo/6f5e212ahacd303bd9f2b)

When speaking of photographical images, both Hall (1985 and 1997) and Barthes (1981) argue that an image is a representation of implied meanings structured by the dominant ideology.

The ideological image of family and marriage in the post Mao regime can be illustrated through the official posters installed in streets in many cities (figure 1). The massive poster articulates the PRC's ideal image of family. The image conveys three key concepts — heteronormative monogamy, family harmony, and the family organization of "one couple one child" within a marital status — all of which constitute the PRC's prescribed way of living. This poster's family image contributes to the project of nation building and modern industrialization, symbolized by the "modern" and "civilized" family. In contrast, the term "keeping a second wife" connotes three opposite elements—polygamy, family disharmony and children out of wedlock—all of which are linked to a "backward", "uncivilized" way of living, signifying a crisis of the official image represented in the poster.

The "crisis" of the family created in the news media focusing on "keeping a second wife" relies on what Hall (1984) calls a "historical reconstruction", which is signaled by the label as well as is engraved in framing storylines, the figure of the "second wife" as "the source of troubles". It is also built on gender ideology governing sex nature and gender roles, which are used as the major elements in fabricating storylines and explaining the causes of "family crisis". In this section, I focus on the ways in which the new reports of "keeping a second wife" create a "family crisis", through which "keeping a second wife" becomes the state's target while the narrative is organized to deliver messages supporting the dominant ideology of marriage and sexuality. I analyze the label of extramarital affairs, the gendered representation of wives, husbands and "second wives" and the plots associated with crimes and sexual chaos that are blamed for undermining or destroying the very idea of "the family".

THE REBIRTH OF "CONCUBINAGE": A CRISIS OF MONOGAMY?

When extramarital affairs are labeled as "keeping a second wife", the terminology itself creates a crisis in the PRC's family institution and subsequently justifies the state's intervention, evidenced by the language of moral condemnation and the 2001 marriage law. As Hall (1978, 19) points out, "labels are important, especially when applied to dramatic public events. They not only place and identify those events; they assign events to a context. Thereafter the use of the label is likely to mobilize this whole referential context, with all its associated meanings and connotations".

The news stories employ the term of *bao ernai* ("keeping a second wife") as a synonym for extramarital affairs, strongly invoking the old institution of concubinage. This usage has been particularly prevalent when the state, the media and society have reacted to news of extramarital affairs between married higher status men and lower status women. The re-appearance of the terminology does not necessarily imply the rebirth of the old institution in China today. Instead, the linkage between the practice and the old institution ought to be scrutinized as a "journalistic ritual" (Hall 1984). In his discussion of the British news media's reporting of the Falklands' crisis, Hall (1984) highlights an instance of historical reconstruction in journalistic practice. Hall discovers that news "narrative doesn't come from anywhere. We mainly tell stories we've told before, or we borrow from the whole inventory of telling stories, and of narratives" (1984, 5). The label of "keeping a second wife" signals the history of concubinage. Either "*ernai*" or the later version "*xiaosan*" (the little third), is re-drawn from the available inventory found within the historical lexicon. The reappearance of the old terminology in the news narrative serves to re-articulate the monogamous sexuality previously enforced, as well as to deny the increasing space for sexual freedom. Moreover, the resurgence of the terminology denies the concept of divorce

introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century by Chinese modernizers and subsequently suggests a strong monogamous idea embedded in the traditional Chinese family institution, which served as a permanent bond between two families rather than between two individual parties. This is an observed trend toward increasing individualization in the Chinese family.[21]

The trope of "keeping a second wife" originated with truck drivers in Hong Kong who traveled frequently to Guangdong Province, bringing the terminology and practice into mainland China just as the state began to implement its open market policies. It is said that this group initiated the practice of "keeping a second wife" with mainland women (Smart and Long 2001).[22] Because of the large income gap between Hong Kong and the mainland during the 1980s and the 1990s, the lorry drivers experienced unprecedented upward social mobility once they crossed the border. These men leapt from a working class position in Hong Kong to the status of rich men with a foreign identity. Hence, within less than one hour's driving distance, their working class masculinity was transformed into a far more valued masculine identity. These married middle aged lorry drivers were said to have found their "second youth" in mainland China by setting up a second household with young mainland women. Concubinage was outlawed in the British colony of Hong Kong in 1971.[23] "Keeping a second wife" (*bao yinai* in Cantonese) is a term referring to concubinge in Hong Kong. Later, this Cantonese expression unexpectedly

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[21] The traditional Chinese family was a monogamous institution— rather than polygamy in some Islamic countries—for uniting two families with a complementary system, concubinage, to grant a particular privilege to men for extramarital relationships and to secure patriarchal lineage. See Goody 1990. Also see Watson, J. 1980 and Watson, R. 1991. The traditional family institution was vigorously interrupted by both KMT government and later the CCP regime, in which marriage has become a matter for two individual parties. See Yan 2009.

[22] Tu Qiao, a news reporter in Guangdong who has gained fame for her stories of "second wives", focused on the relationships between mainland women and married men from Hong Kong in Shenzhen, the "Special Economic Zone". See her serial news stories: Tu 2004. "*Guanzhu ernai chun*" (Concerning about 'second wife' villages). Yangcheng Wanbao, April 18-May 25. The collection of these stories was later published as a book. See Tu. 2004. *Kuhun, yi ge yinchang nüxia wodi caifang shilu (Bitter Marriage: A Journalist Report by a Covert Female Warrior*).Beijing: *Zuojia chuban she*.

[23] The British had ruled Hong Kong in accordance with the local customs and laws established in the Qing dynasty since 1842.

spread throughout mainland China during the early 1990s and afterwards, despite the fact that concubinage had been abolished there by the KMT in 1930s,[24] and again by the even more vigorous efforts of the CCP during the early 1950s.[25]

The terminology quickly diverged from its original meaning to refer to a different context in mainland China. The state media borrowed a Cantonese term that originally referred to particular relationships between married Hong Kong men and mainland women in Shenzhen, the first "special economic zone" in Deng Xiaoping's economic experiment of the early 1980s, but encoded it with an ideological component designed to reinforce the monogamous sexual customs of the PRC. This adoption of the term borrowed from Cantonese installs a confusing camouflage in the identification of the issue. For example, "keeping a second wife" has recently come under scrutiny as a subject for studies mainly conducted by scholars based in Hong Kong and Taiwan that examine the causes and the nature of the phenomenon (Smart and Lang 2002, Shen 2005, So 2003, Tam 2004, Xiao 2011, Yuen 2004). However, both the state's construction and the scholarly studies have dwelled on the notion of the "rebirth of concubinage", without ever asking the question: *is* "keeping a second wife" a resurgence of concubinage? The label is important in order to properly identify and define the issue.

This question is not as simple as the term suggests. If we accept the news at face value, we may take it for granted that concubinage experienced a resurrection during the "market economy" of the post Mao era — a time when individuals have been granted more "sexual

[24] In 1935, the KMT government revised Criminal Code by including men in the adultery law for equality between men and women to oppose retention of the late imperial law that punished only wives for adultery. Concubinage, thus, was considered adultery under the Criminal Code of the Republic of China. See Tran 2009.

[25] The term adultery in the CCP regime did not appear in Marriage Law, but it was strictly monitored by administrative regulations. See Diamant 2000. It is unclear why the CCP did not use the term "adultery" in its marriage law. The legal term close to "adultery" in the CCP's marriage law is "bigamy". Over the course of discussing 2001 marriage law, the term "adultery" did not appear in the state media.

freedom". However, the news is never neutral. Rather, it is constructed within the specific framework of the dominant ideology (Hall 1978, 1973, 1982, 1984). Within the given framework of family, marriage and sexuality established during the early 1950s, neither engaging in extramarital relationships nor engaging in sexual relationships outside of wedlock can be considered legitimate and/or morally neutral activities. Indeed, the re-emergence of the term "keeping a second wife" is rather ideological in the news media's playful narrative. According to the CCP's discourse on marriage and the family, concubinage was a notorious practice condemned as an "ugly vice" that deprived women of human dignity (Yang 1959) and a "backward" barrier to the trajectory of the nation's progress toward modernity (McMillan 2006). When we remember that the linguistic formulation/categorization of particular social events was a consciously undertaken and politically sensitive aspect of the CCP's history and its regime (Schoenhals 1992), it becomes manifest that this terminology is linked to connotations of "backwardness" and "immorality" in the CCP's political lexicon, as well as in the collective memory, which links a man's extramarital relationship to moral condemnation, an imaginary eroticism, and a social context that reveals economic and gender inequality.

It is rather an extraordinary event that the news stories of "keeping a second wife" have recently assumed so much importance in the Chinese media. This effort to revive memories of the historical form of concubinage and its abolition has taken place under social conditions defined, on the one hand, by the party-state's use of ideological language inherited from the Maoist era in order to maintain social control and, on the other hand, while advocating a brand of pluralism within the private sphere that has led to a gradual opening up of the culture (Farrer 2002, Farrer and Sun 2003). The strategic use of "concubinage" narratives helps to generate a

"family crisis" that will justify calls for legislative sanctions against sexual practices out of wedlock.

"Concubine" and "concubinage" are the terms that equate (on the political level) to "vice", "ugliness," "incivility" and "backwards" social practices in the PRC's political lexicon. These terms offered legitimate meanings that could be easily understood by the mainland population as descriptors for the increasing "sexual chaos" of the post-Mao period. "*Ernai*" is a term that functions as a label identifying a woman as a concubine, and through the label the rebirth of "concubinage" occurred. *Ernai* literally means "a second wife" (minor wife/concubine, *xiao laopo*). This term became obsolete after the 1950s family reforms, but has since re-emerged as a popular news construction and a part of the everyday lexicon. *Er* (second) suggests a rank (number two/minor/younger) that is coexistent with, but lower in status than the first/legal wife.[26]

In comparison with *qie*, the formal term for concubine, *ernai* is an informal term. The terminology itself sketches a female figure. *Ernai* also is playfully punned as "two breasts", emphasizing the woman's role as an erotic object (figure 2). She is "kept"/ "supported" by a married man, lacking the social status of marriage (*meiyou mingfen*) that is considered the ultimate destination of all women. Therefore she is a materially-oriented whore, transgressive but tragic. The terminology also implies male power. *Bao* (keeping/support) specifically highlights the similarity between the old institution and the new practice, in which the married man has the financial power to support "the other woman". Indeed, *bao* alludes directly to the lower social status of the women through marking and elevating Chinese masculinity. While *wen* (cultural attainment) and *wu* (martial valour) were the main elements in traditional Chinese masculinity

[26] In oral usage, the legal wife traditionally was addressed as *danai* (Cantonese), *dalaopo* (Mandarin).

(Louie 2002), the contemporary news narrative indicates that economic power has become the most important aspect of Chinese masculinity. "*Bao*" not only suggests a dependent and passive status for the woman, but also situates her as a sexual object. Hence, the terminology of "keeping a second wife" reflects the gender politics of the post-Mao period.

Figure 2

The term "*Bao ernai*" often is punned in an erotic way. For example, in 2010, a bra advertisement in Shenzhen was presented with a female figure in front of an underwear store. The banner beneath the billboard says that "*bao ernai* underwear", and it plays with two meanings: "underwear for keeping second wife" and"underwear for covering up two breasts". (http://www.laifudao.com/tupian/13639.htm), September 6, 2011,

The (re)birth of the terminology indicates that "keeping a second wife" in the news media is an ideological construction. The meaning of the terminology ideologically refers to a crisis of the monogamous institution, the assumed core of modern family that is seen as the foundation of society.[27] Sexual practices that occur out of wedlock are violations of the dominant ideology of family/marriage and sexuality. The rebirth of the terminology indicates that within the ideological framework there is no available language to address extramarital relationships. The emergence of new terms, such as *xiaosan* (the little third) and *qingfu* (mistress), does not alter the main issue described here.

Nevertheless, the newly emerged term serves as satire: metaphorical, playful and plausible in the usage of the news stories. It refers to concubinage but diverges from the old institution. The shift between "*na qie*", an old term meaning "taking a concubine", and the new term "*bao ernai*", distinguishes current polygamous behaviour from the traditional family system. The new term sketches a different context from the old institution. The terminological shift from "*qie*" (concubine) to "*ernai*" ("a second wife") reflects one of the outcomes of the Chinese drive to modernize over the course of the twentieth century. After all, the disappearance of "*qie*" from the contemporary lexicon implies a political achievement of the CCP, dating back to the abolition of concubinage via the family reforms of the 1950s. The resurgence of "*bao ernai,*" on the other hand, speaks to the current political concerns of corruption and the maintenance of "harmonious families", about which I will speak more shortly.

In short, the available language retrieved from the old institution serves to denounce relationships out of wedlock and the current pluralization of sexual practices. It constructs a

[27] Hu Jintao, the former General Party Secretary of the CCP and the president of the PRC (2003-2013), emphasized this idea in his speech on the 100th Anniversary of the International Women's Day in 2010. See Chen 2010.

crisis in the PRC's family institution, and subsequently serves to justify the state's intervention. The usage of the terminology reveals that there is no room for sexual intimacy out of wedlock in the discourse; and, as a consequence, the terminology in the news reports tends to paint all women in extramarital affairs as concubines. This labeling practice is significant, as it serves to stigmatize and stereotype women participating in these relationships. Because of the ideological factors involved, the identification of women in the usage of the terminology is rather vague in the news reports. As it has been variously used, an *ernai* could be a lover/girlfriend, a mistress, an adulterous wife, and/or a sex worker. This wide application of *ernai* to any woman in an extramarital affair provides little space for a diverse understanding of sexual practices in the ideological framework, and creates a vast discrepancy between the identification and the reality. The terminology works to simplify the motivations and disparage the characters of women in extramarital relationships. With the creation of a materialistic woman involved in sexual intimacy out of wedlock, the news narrative forges a similar link between the woman in the news and the concubine in the history books – a link that brands her as a "second wife".

THE SCRIPTS OF GENDER: PROMISCUITY, WIVES, AND WHORES

Social and political issues are attributed to problems caused by sexual "nature", which leads to a talk of morality, particularly of "women's morality". This construction of gender based on an essentialist understanding of biological differences is expressed as "common sense" (i.e. the "natural" way of living for men and women). The news media's construction of "keeping a second wife" appeals to popular "common sense" and carries convincing messages to the audience because of entrenched beliefs regarding gender roles and the "nature" of male and female sexes in Chinese society. As Nowell-Smith points out, "the key to common sense is that the ideas it embodies are not so much incorrect as uncorrected and taken for granted…common

sense consists of all those ideas which can be tagged onto existing knowledge without challenging it" (cited in Hall 1978, 154). The entire narrative rests on implied assumptions based on gender interpretations which govern male sex nature and the bad morals of transgressive women.

In her path-breaking work on the discourse of gender and sexuality in the PRC, Evans (1997) describes the state's binary construction of sexuality in the discourse of marriage and sexuality. Men and women are defined by biological difference. The public discourse contrasts a strong male with a weak female. Female sexuality has been defined as the biologically passive and subservient counterpart of a more active and autonomous male sexuality. The essential understanding of gender roles defined by biological difference between men and women is the key to deciphering the family crisis through representations of the three parties tangled in an affair. Three figures play their parts in the drama plotted between male and female sexualities. Idealized representations of men and women are reduced to the stereotypically financially successful male and the physically attractive female.

First, in spite of the market ideology that embraces the party's slogan, "to be rich is glorious", the characteristic representation of the newly rich subject in the news media is as a hedonist polluted by money. The key to male sexual identity is culturally understood as promiscuity (Chang 1999). Formerly "emasculated" by the Maoist state's laws and administrative regulations for governing sexual behaviours (Zheng 2009), the post-socialist state's withdrawal of sexual regulations has permitted the revival of (state) repressed male promiscuity. The sex industry, extramarital affairs and other types of sexual practices out of wedlock are seen as evidence of "sexual freedom" unleashed by the post-socialist regime (Farrer 2002, Pan 2006). The market ideology has added one primary element to Chinese masculinity:

financial success. The men in news reports are often identified as businessmen and governmental officials who make up China's new rich. The combination of these two essentialist traits (male monetary power and male sexual promiscuity) work to construct a portrait of the new rich (an almost exclusively masculine social category) as a threat to the PRC's monogamous family institution. A popular saying that "a man who gets rich will become bad" reflects the social perception of the new rich. News stories and commentaries embellish upon the popular saying by describing men as "lower body animals" (*xia banshen dongwu*), and propounding masculine dictums such as: "having a wild flower smells better than an indoor flower" (*jia hua meiyou yehua xiang*) and "off with the old and on with the new" (*xixin yanjiu*). Financial power becomes a means to undo the Maoist restraints on male sexuality and to reactivate patterns of promiscuity. News commentaries suggest that many wealthy men have a "red flag" (the legal wife) standing straight at home while flying "colourful flags" (mistresses) outside of the home (*jiali hongqi budao, waimian caiqi piaopiao*), hinting at the coexistence of the state ideology (red flag) and current pluralism in sexual practices (colourful flags), as well as of marriage/monogamy (red flag) and concubinage (colourful flags).

On the other side of the story stands the popular construction of female sexual identity. The "nature" of the female sex is represented as weak and sexually passive; hence, she is represented as "the kept woman", a sexual object who exists to satisfy the man. The construction of female sexuality is derived from the sexual imperatives imposed upon women. While male sexuality is naturalized as promiscuity, female sexuality is defined primarily through a woman's capacity for devotion both physical and mental. As a result, women's sexual behaviour out of wedlock is culturally described as "red apricot flowers climbing out of the wall" and " flying willow catkins on flowing water" (*hongxin chuqiang, shuixing yanghua*) (Chang 1999). "Fallen"

women are stigmatized as "broken shoes" (*poxie*) in the common Chinese saying. Based on this understanding of female sexuality, the culture distinguishes sharply between two types of female subject: the good woman (wife) and the whore (second wife). In speaking of "good women", the news reports describe idealized wives boasting all of the virtues culturally ascribed to a "good woman". The wife becomes a paragon of her gendered role and stands for monogamy, a position which bestows upon her the power of morality, a power that gives her considerable leverage vis-à-vis an errant husband in news reports of corrupt officials. Bearing her wifehood with traditional (good) virtues, she is described as a woman "starting the family from scratch and managing the household through hardship" (*baishou qijia, xinku chijia*). When the husband achieves the status of "blue chip stock" (*jiyougu*, meaning the desirable masculinity) with his success in either business or officialdom, she becomes the "husk and chaff" (*zaokang zhiqi*), a term referring to a woman's aging and the corresponding loss of her physical appeal.

Nevertheless, the "husk and chaff" connotes the "bitterness" that the wife eats (*chiku*)[28] in managing the household before the man's prosperity. Culturally, a wife is expected to sacrifice herself for the man's success. In return, she will never be dismissed due to her devotion, in spite of the fact that she is "an old woman with a sallow face" (*huang lianpo)*, a cultural image referring to the loss of physical attraction. In spite of the wife's permanent status in the marriage, the factor of her loss of physical attraction helps to trigger the promiscuous man's infidelity. Below a news report offers an example that interprets "family crisis" caused by male promiscuity vis-à-vis wives' loss of physical attraction.

> Some "muddy legs" who used to combat nature in the field now have become powerful village and township entrepreneurs after they left the farming land behind. The husbands have transformed their old appearance into a new feature whereas the wives still keep the

[28] For the cultural and political implications of this common expression, "eating bitterness" (or "eating husk and chaff", particularly during the Maoist period, see Manning 2010 and 2011.

> awkward appearance; therefore, some entrepreneurs began to be "psychopathically disturbed". They eventually did not return home at night, but visited houses of ill repute. In order to solve these entrepreneurs' "family crisis", the department concerned held a "wife training course", calling on the wives to get rid of "husk" and "chaff" (the wives' distasteful appearance) and to give a fresh feeling to the husbands who are off with the old and on with the new: "a new wife everyday". [29]

In the other female category come the whores, who echo a historical script of the "bad women" that endanger "social stability" and "family harmony". Whores are "foxy witches" (*huli jing*) in the traditional Chinese narrative tradition, which presents them as youthful and beautiful female bodies metamorphosed from a non-human creature (the spirit of the fox). These women seduce men for the purpose of sucking the masculine essence (*jingxie*), taking advantage of his indulgence in copulating with the fox (and later killing him).[30] The classic popular narrative of foxy witches is a cultural response to women who transgress the script of gender ideology that codes feminine virtue as a woman's sacrificing herself for men. Transgressive women violate the codes by which women are measured according to certain norms and limitations. Unlike males, who are naturalized as "promiscuous", the cultural script presents foxy witches (and "second wives") as "incomprehensible" as women, who "only becomes intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility" (Butler 1999, 22). The stories of foxy witches linger on as fictional constructs, and the narrative role plays in the cultural production of misogyny. The idea of the "incomprehensible" women, and the concept of the "foxy witch", has long been applied to transgressive women. These women are understood as "morally fallen", dangerous, and intent upon ruining men's lives. Tradition abounds with

[29] "*Shanghai juban taitai xuexi ban re zhengyi*" ("wives' training course" in Shanghai causes a debate), *Jiefang ribao*, April 29, 1998, Shanghai.

[30] The tradition of "foxy witch" storytelling dates back to AD 900-1000 in China. See two popular short story collections, *Liaozhai Zhiyi* and *Yuewei caotang biji*, by two well-known writers Pu Songling and Ji Yun in Qing Dynasty. These stories were collected from folklore tales and retold by these two writers for the purpose of moral warning. See Zeitlin1993 and Chan 1998.

historical examples of this trope, from the notorious concubines owned by previous emperors to the most recent example of Mao's wife, (Jiang Qing), and to ordinary men's mistresses (second wives). These women are seen as transgressors against the operation of gendered codes of femininity.

The narrative of "foxy witch" repeatedly appearing in storytelling plays the part in "keeping mythologies and ideologies alive" (Macdonald 1995, 11). The news reports foregrounding the image of "second wives" have the potential to create awareness of a crisis of the established model of "the virtuous feminine". Indeed, comments of so-called marriage experts employ the term "foxy witches" to illustrate the dangers of the "second wives" who violate the viability of the codes of gender ideology. Like foxy witches, "second wives" are described as youthful and physically attractive women who are materially oriented. They are not wives and mothers (with legal status); hence they are unnatural and incomprehensible. The comprehension of "second wives" in the state media falls into the dominant discourses. They are described as scheming and sexually loose whores with aspirations of "grabbing money bags" (*bang daguan*). They seduce men and ruin their lives as per the narrative of "foxy witches".

The news narrative has made an effort to incorporate these "incomprehensible" women. By identifying "second wives" as uncivil and backward beings, the news media further describes their lives as "indecent" and "fallen". Cultural terms for "fallen" women reappear to describe the materialistic women "seeking ease and comfort" and "taking a shortcut to wealth".[31] The news discourse also depicts their lifestyle as "indecent". They usually live in a more expensive residential quarter provided by the man, playing Mahjong all day, an indecent game in the

[31] Qian Lihong, "*shui shihe liyong qingchun*?"("Who is suitable to take advantage of youth?"), September 26, 2002, *Jinyang Wang*.

official discourse. They frequently visit beauty salons, a signifier illustrating that her life is full of emptiness.[32] In particular, in the news stories of corrupt officials, "second wives" are depicted as "the source of troubles". They are spiritually destitute and morally fallen. News reports pay particular attention to the morality that the "second wives" represent, while the economic condition of these women is largely overlooked.

THE DANGEROUS RELATIONSHIP: MAIN CONTENT OF THE NEWS CONVERAGE

Ideology helps to narrate news stories and to make sense of events (Hall 1984). How do the news stories make sense of the "issue" within the given ideological framework? First, the news media borrow familiar storylines loaded with moral lessons for the audience while targeting their "consent" and reading pleasure that they used to receive from the old stories. The news narrative contains moral warnings inherited from Chinese narrative tradition. All of these bad consequences which are presented as the result of outlawed affairs that threaten family unity help to deliver a moralistic discourse of marriage and sexuality. Subsequently, "keeping a second wife" is identified by the state authorities as an "overbearing social problem" that breaches sexual mores and threatens the family, which is the foundation of social order. Moreover, the state media defines the problems/crisis and actively selects news items illustrating the problems, through which the reproduction of ideology is completed. The selection of the news coverage of "keeping a second wife" is designed to illustrate the crisis of the central value of Chinese society posed by the practice of "keeping a second wife". It carries the assumption that a resolution of the issue will restore social harmony. This is the key point of the news narrative; therefore, the news media creates specific topics and represents them to illustrate its key point.

[32] Tu Qiao, *guanzhu ernai cui xie lie baodao* (Concerning about "*ernai* village": a serial news report). *Yangcheng wanbao*, April 25- May 24, 2004.

The news production delivers the state's concerns of the family and social order; hence, it is constructed as illustrative scripts of what and how the family crisis is caused. The main content of the news converge focuses on homicide, injury, corruption, family disharmony, all of which are consequences of "keeping a second wife". The persistence of these themes in the news narrative is evident. A content categorization study (cf. Table 1) reveals that particular types of stories are favoured, illustrating the ways in which general elements and processes of the news construction operate on the ideological level. In a total of 139 news stories, 40 involve crimes of homicide and injury and 25 items of the news stories are about civil lawsuits regarding disputes of property, all of which were deemed to be caused by "keeping a second wife". These 65 stories can be placed into one category: a kind of morality tale that explains the dissolution of the family (the essential unity on which society is built). Twenty eight stories discuss other serious crimes, such as bribery and embezzlement, caused by officials who are "keeping a second wife", which I will discuss in Chapter Six. Fifteen stories focus on private detective companies investigating affairs and DNA testing for men suspected of bearing sons by second wives, which also illustrate the theme of family crisis. These contents count for 78 percent of total news stories analyzed. Each type of story provokes a particular "bad consequence" that "endangers social and family stability", sending the clear message that "keeping a second wife" is a dangerous relationship. In addition, there are 33 items related to the discussion of the 2001 marriage law and 55 items providing advice to husbands/officials, wives, and "second wives". These reflect state efforts to control "keeping a second wife", which I will discuss in the next section—Controlling the family crisis.

Table1: Key contents of the news reports (numbers are the news items)

Stories			**Commentary opinions**		
Homicide/ injury	40	29%	Advice given to wives	20	36%
Official corruption	28	20%	Warnings given to "second wives"	15	27%
Property dispute	25	18%	Advice given to husbands/officials	14	26%
DNA testing & detectives	15	10%	Other (morality, social stability, etc.)	6	11%
STIs & abortion	2	1%			
2001 Marriage Law	33	22%			
Total	139	100%	Total	55	100%

There are only two items specifically related to STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) and abortion, but several stories describing the regrets of a "second wife" highlight STIs & abortion out of wedlock, which fall into the category of "commentaries speaking to 'the second wife'". This category is singled out due to its significance in the understanding of female sexuality and the female role in the discourse. Like the news stories and commentaries, "officials" in all tables as well as in this study exclusively refer to male sex.

Crime news: homicide, injury and headlines

Crime news focusing on homicide, injury, and corruption is of particular importance for illustrating that "keeping a second wife" is a dangerous relationship. Crimes often are treated as news because they "evoke threats" as well as reaffirm the social morality (Hall 1978, 66), and subsequently crimes in the news call for symbolic and physical punishment. Crimes (homicide, injury, and corruption) in the news media's construction of "keeping a second wife" consist of nearly 50 percent of the news contents. These crimes are narrated as the consequences of "keeping a second wife", and through these crimes, "keeping a second wife" is singled out as not only a transgression of moral boundaries but also a violation of the law. This section only focuses on homicide and injury. Corruption will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The peak of the press coverage of "keeping a second wife" occurred from 2000 to 2002, during the discussion of amendment of the Marriage Law. Thereafter news media maintain the interest in reporting the event although new themes and new terms, such as *xiaosan* (the little third), appeared in the narrative as tabloid style journalism has grown. Crimes related to "keeping a second wife" emerge as major news stories because their dramatic plots fit the demands of "soft news", which were not practiced under the previous regime. The requirement of "softness" treats crimes as melodramas carrying moral warnings, attracting news consumers while delivering moral lessons that enforce the dominant ideology. The "extraordinariness" and "novelty" of news (Hall 1978, 71) have elevated crime stories to new levels of visibility; especially crimes caused by a particular event interpreted as a rebirth of the old institution. Hence, the frames of the stories are constructed to align them with the given language and ideas. The crimes ascribed to the practice of "keeping a second wife" are presented without reliable sources and the interpretations are entirely based on gender assumptions that conform to "common sense", which is treated as a key factor to develop the storylines. These crimes are highlighted to illustrate that "keeping a second wife" is a dangerous relationship, helping to support the familiar narrative of "families broken, some dead and some gone away" (*jiapo renwang*) in the Chinese story-telling tradition. In order to create the particular theme of family crisis, crimes are reduced to reiterations of simplistic plot progressions and the complexity of life is reduced to a moralizing parable.

Homicide caused by adultery (extramarital affairs) is a narrative tradition in the Chinese story-telling, which was employed by the CCP cadres to justify their condemnation of

extramarital affairs during the 1950 marriage law campaign.[33] It is an available storyline in the inventory of story-telling for the news reports of "keeping a second wife". The news stories exactly follow a gender script to formulate the crimes of homicide and injury, which are presented as aspects of a war between wives, second wives, and husbands, taking place on two fronts. On the one hand, these crimes are initiated by male promiscuity; on the other hand, wives are victimized in their own battle with transgressive whores. "Second wife", husband, and wife are positioned as three major characters within the drama, based on an essentialist understanding of biological differences between males and females. News stories focus on the legal cases of homicide and injury in order to elucidate how the practice of "keeping a second wife" undermines the family (and society in general). The crime news of homicide and injury rarely involve firsthand accounts of the crimes themselves; instead, news reports assume an "increase of crimes committed by women" and assert that the women who commit murder and injury do so as a result of female weakness. Indeed, these women, both wives and "second wives", are accused of being excessively emotional, a state that drives women into "the entanglement of love and family".[34]

Major storylines are dramatized on the basis of emotional "entanglement". In the murder plot, jealousy, anger, and the need to maintain secrecy are described as the key motivations for the protagonists. Any of the three parties, the man, the wife, or the "second wife" can become the protagonist or victim in a killing drama. In addition, children (born to the wife or to the "second wife") can sometimes become victims of the entanglement. The murders often confirm to a precisely choreographed script. First, due to the second wife's demand of a marriage offer, the

[33] See the 1953 archival document: "Adultery causes murder and affects social security", cited in Hershatter 2011, page 111.
[34] Yu, Yaling 2004. "*guanzhu nuxing fanzui: wei ai he jiating fenzheng sha ren*" (Concerning crimes committed by women: killing for love and family entanglement"). *Yangcheng wanbao*, March 8.

man commits murder in order to keep the secret from his family. An alternative to this plot turns the "second wife" into a killer. She demands marriage, but when the man fails to divorce the wife, the second wife kills the man. In this plot, if the "second wife" is a sex worker or a miss *san pei* (a female companion for drinking, singing and dancing), she consorts with villains to have the man kidnapped and killed. The third plot turns the wife into a killer. Jealousy and anger drive her to commit murder, and she kills the "second wife" and the second wife's children. The final variation of the story describes a desperate wife who kills her own children and then follows with her suicide as a form of vengeance against her husband.

In her study of the depiction of extramarital affairs in the Taiwanese media, Chang (1999) points out that feminists are likely to focus on the ways in which women struggle against men as "sisters" and thus overlook conflicts between women. Chang discovers that wives are threatened both financially and emotionally by the other women, and they are likely to take revenge on "the other women" instead of their husbands. The news stories on the other side of the Taiwan Strait share the same cultural heritage and also focus on the tension between two women. In the injury plots, wives injure "the second wives" (and vice versa), while the male protagonist is often absent from the drama. Instead of blaming husbands, wives blame "the second wives", "foxy witches" ("*huli jing*") who seduce men and destroy families. News stories also highlight dramatic forms of violence such as attacks with sulfuric acid or kitchen knives used by wives and second wives.

The crimes of homicide and injury are featured to illustrate the serious consequences of "keeping a second wife": combining the disruption of family harmony with damage to "social stability". Disruption of family harmony is the most unfortunate outcome for human life in the Chinese storytelling tradition, and thus the storylines and morality tales are culturally available in

the storytelling tradition. The stories echo the state's project of building a "harmonious family" that considers infidelity as the primary factor endangering the family. [35] While justifying the state's intervention, the journalistic practice embodies the dominant ideology of the family.

News headlines are important for news articles. They are designed to be particularly memorable and effective with particular linguistic features and representations. Headlines enclose the news content, but more importantly they contain signposts that lead the readers to understand the news content within the particular structural view of the events. Headlines dealing with crimes first clearly identify that the crimes are caused by the issue of "keeping a second wife", with three figures involved in the event. The news headlines directly employ the term "second wife" to identify the "nature" of the crime. These headlines suggest a resurgence of "concubinage". For example,

January 11, 2002	Second wife bites off wife's ear
January15, 2004	Businessman's wife drowns second wife
December 8, 2008	Wife and second wife slash each other; scared male Protagonist dodges conflict

Once the event is identified, the headlines emphasize that the crimes are committed by women. The headlines treat the crime as a conflict driven by the male and female "natures". Three characters appear in the headlines, but most of the headlines focus on violence conducted by women (wives/mothers and "second wives"). With the focus on women committing crimes, the headlines represent wives and "second wives" with different moral characteristics. Wives are represented as desperate mothers and vulnerable victims of male promiscuity driven by jealousy, the unavoidable feature of the female in the "gender war". On the other hand, "second wives" are

[35] See Mi 2010.

treated as suspect and "wicked" and "greedy". The headlines do not dwell on the figure of the man, but the male genitals are highlighted as evidence of "male promiscuity". For example:

September 5, 2001	Mother kills son and jumps from roof
February 26, 2002	Desperate mother poisons three sons
July 5, 2002	Consorting with robbers the second wife kills the man
October 14, 2002	Wife chops off husband's genitals
January 15, 2004	Businessman's wife drowns second wife
August 13, 2004	Furious wife kills "the second wife" and is put on the defendant seat
October 13, 2008	Suspected of keeping a second wife, wife pours boiling rice porridge on sleeping husband's genitals.
December18, 2008	Extorting second wife demands permanent position, furious wife stabs her to death
January 2, 2009	Being a second wife for ten years she chases the man with a kitchen knife for five floors and the promiscuous man is hacked to death

The family is culturally and politically understood as the "smallest cell" of the societal structure, and hence family issues are taken in such a way that shakes the society's foundation. When considering the cultural meanings of women and family in the Chinese context, these crimes committed by women seem fundamental as they attack the foundation of the cultural order. The implications of women committing crimes in the headlines highlights the message producer's intention to locate the issue in the domestic domain, where a woman is understood to be primarily a figure playing a central role in the "backyard" of the household (*houyuan*). It is

the understanding of women's role in the family that the state takes its particular approach to the issue of "keeping a second wife". Hence, the news headlines highlight the seriousness of the crimes conducted by women (wives and "second wives") in order to emphasize the extreme impact of "keeping a second wife" on social stability. Moreover, murder and serious injury are predominantly seen as male crimes with women murderers being seen as exceptional to the rule of human societies (Dobash 1995, Kelleher 1998). However, the news headlines strive to establish women as the default aggressors in cases connected with "keeping a second wife". Naylor (1995, 81) suggests several typologies of women's crimes in the Western media:

1. Madonna/whore
2. Sexual passion/love as an "excuse" for crime
3. Reproduction and madness
4. The figure of evil—the witch—the monster
5. The criminal woman as "not woman"
6. The female as devious and manipulative

Naylor's (1995) categorization of female crime media representation helps us to understand the narrative choice media outlets make in publicizing these stories. In the case of "keeping a second wife", the "second wives" could be placed in both the category of "evil—the witch—the monster" (due to her seducing and distracting the man) and the category of "Madonna/whore" (based on her transgressive behavior that crosses sexual mores). However, placing wives on Naylor's grid is more problematic. They do not fit neatly within his typology. One of the threads in the image of wives seems to be that of "love as an excuse for crime", but the cultural imagination of "wives" seemingly put them in the center of the family rather than as associated with the image of "love"/ "passion". The iconic figure of the family— the wife —becomes a

criminal, which is highlighted in the news headlines. In so doing, the media attempts to suggest that the family is in crisis and consequently that society is breaking down. In particular, the headlines highlight "wives" as "mothers" killing their own children, showing the horror of femininity, distorted from its "natural" course of motherhood. Therefore, within the culturally specific context of the Chinese news media, we may add another type of representation to Naylor's typology: "wives seeking revenge against husbands' polygamous sexuality". It is one in which women as wives and mothers attack the second wives, their husbands and their own children.

In short, these brief news headlines are formulated to highlight several aspects. First, they identify the issue at hand— pointing to "keeping a second wife". Second, they pinpoint the causes of the crimes— again pointing to "keeping a second wife". Subsequently, these headlines introduce the theme of family crisis, and raise the specter of subsequent disorder of "social harmony"— thereby justifying state intervention.

Dispute of property

The dangerous relationship is not only illustrated through violent crime news, but is also elucidated through disputes over property that dissolve family unity and family harmony: the essential cornerstone of society. "Family harmony" is constructed as indispensable to human happiness and likewise appears as a social norm. For a family dispute to become caught in the machinery of the legal process it is culturally linked to a failure of the family, family prosperity and the social face of each family member.[36] News stories are inclined to emphasize the cultural

[36] The cultural expression "everything becomes possible if a family is harmonious" (*jia he wan shi xing*) is written in calligraphy on the walls of many households in China. Although Yan argues that there is increasing degree individualization within the Chinese family, the cultural understanding of family remains firmly entrenched in the discourse. For the meaning of family life in PRC and individualization in rural families, see Yan 2003.

understanding of marriage that reflects upon the interests of the family as a whole rather than upon the happiness of two individual parties. The collapse of family unity that leads to property disputes is overwhelmingly attributed to male infidelity. In accordance with an amended article in the 2001 Marriage Law, the misbehaving party—exclusively men in the news stories— must financially compensate the other party when a marriage dissolves. Property disputes are one of the major themes in the news reports of "keeping a second wife". Fighting over property plays a pivotal role in these narratives, which are used to illustrate the ways in which "keeping a second wife" can break up a family.

In order to avoid compensating the wife, the husband bestows property upon the "second wife"; in other plots, the husband and the wife plan together to hide property or retrieve money from the "second wife". A frequent trope depicts the wife suing the husband for bestowing gifts upon the other woman. She "wields the weapon of the law" (*naqi falu de wuqi*), as the Women's Federation suggests, by protecting her property rights that have been violated by "the second wife". The new marriage law is propagated to strengthen the position of wives, and news stories describe the "second wife" as a thief who violates wives' property rights. In some plots, the "second wife" takes the man to court, requiring alimony or child support. At the close of the drama, the law protects the wife; the husband (as the misbehaving party) ends up alone after all family members forsake him for his wrongdoing. In other stories, the promiscuous man is punished by the law for committing bigamy. In the end, the family is broken up, and the husband becomes a lonely loser again.

Diseases, untamed fertility and the cuckold

Stories focusing on Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs), children out of wedlock and DNA testing are used to illustrate a crisis of monogamy and family institution through the angle of degenerated sexual mores. Sexual chaos is largely seen as a danger to the social order and the social norm of monogamous sexuality. During the Maoist period, the state employed legal sanctions and administrative regulations to enforce sexual morality, criminalizing "abnormal" sexual practices such as homosexuality, sodomy and "collective sexual behaviours". During the post-Mao era the regime has policed sexuality through ideological articulation. The news construction of "keeping a second wife" demonstrates the ways in which sexuality is articulated at the ideological level. The news stories involving STIs, DNA testing and detective stories serve to illustrate the kind of sexual chaos caused by "keeping a second wife", including the spread of a sexually transmitted infections, the risk of untamed fertility challenging official "birth control" policies and a crisis of masculinity represented by the figure of the cuckold.

STI is a term equivalent to moral vice and forbidden sexuality, inscribed into news stories as a consequence of unrestrained sexual behaviors with multiple sexual partners. It is estimated that some 10 million individuals had STIs when the CCP took power in 1949 (Cohen 1996), a figure that was used by the CCP as evidence of the sin of "the old China". The CCP determined to remove the diseases of the "old society" through its propaganda machine and its policy-making. For example, the 1950 Marriage Law forbade marriage if one of the two parties had a STI (Evans 1997). By the mid-1960s, the government's draconian public health measures had basically eradicated STIs (Cohen 1996), prompting a celebratory account of the CCP's triumphant annihilation of social vices. Given the historical context of STIs in the PRC, attitudes towards STIs are still linked to sexual morality. In spite of increasing tolerance towards

transgression of sexual mores in the reform era, STIs continue to be considered moral diseases. For example, a study on STI patients in China reveals that among 406 patients, 80% felt stigmatized, 28% sought treatment only after symptoms persisted for at least one week, and 40% reported continuing to have sex while having symptoms (Liu et al 2002).

STIs are constructed as factors disruptive to family harmony in two ways. First, sexuality is always linked to one's morality in China, with the monogamous ideal and heteronormativity understood as the only acceptable moral positions. Hence, STIs signify ones' transgression against the imperatives of monogamous sexuality or heteronormativity. Second, sexuality is bounded to the state's eugenics project that aims to produce a healthier population for a strong nation. Monogamous and heteronormative sexuality is seen a hygienic sexuality, whereas polygamous sexuality and homosexuality are viewed as dangerous and dirty sexualities that cause STIs and AIDS. The state's eugenics project disseminates information that STIs are damaging to women's fertility (McMillan 2006), and thus a fundamental building block to happy marriages and "harmonious families". The representation of sexual diseases in the media reflects these understandings of sexual diseases. STIs in the news narrative are explicitly associated with the discourse of sexuality. STIs are constructed as dangers and as a form of retribution against "second wives" for their transgressive behavior. This type of storyline is often narrated through the lens of the second wife's regret, and as a warning to other young women who have the tendency to "take a shortcut to wealth". The descriptions of STIs in the stories issue warnings about loss of social status and declining physical health. Stories of STIs hint at second wives' loss of fertility, jeopardizing her only chances of obtaining a proper future position through a marriage offer; as a consequence, second wives are insecure and doomed to fall into tragedy:

> Afang came to a hospital in Zhuzhou in January 15. The doctor confirmed her worry: she was pregnant. The worse thing was that she was diagnosed with a STI at the same time. After she knew the result, she emotionally cried to the doctor: "this can't be true, absolutely not true!" However, the confirmation brutally broke her last hope…January 23rd was Afang's cousin's wedding day, but for her, she wrote: "it seems that I was several years older these days. I have tasted the joys and sorrows of life, the doctor's taunt, the pain of my body, the wound of my soul. I slept alone crying on the pillow every night." When Afang needed her beloved "Brother Lin" (the man who passed the STI to her), he was not there for her. She was in fear and heartbroken, and she eventually began to lose her hope. [37]

Importantly, monogamous sexuality is linked to the state concern for birth control. The population control policy has been seen as a triumph in the urban regions, whereas measures to restrict population growth have met with resistance in rural areas (White 2006, Zhang 1999). Both *hukou* registration and the system of work units (*danwei*) have been utilized as a means of maintaining social order related to birth control (Xie and Wu 2009). Rural migrants, described as "floating population" (*liudong renkou*) (Solinger1999, Zhang 2001), have crossed the boundary of *hukou* registration and transgressed birth control policies that are bound to a specific work unit. The representation of rural migrants has painted an image of uncivil, backward, traditional peasants coming to "modern" cities (Guang 2003, Yan 2008, Zheng 2007), and the stigmatization of rural migrants is obvious in popular culture. Films and TV comedies have connected unplanned childbirth to the rural migrants' "traditional desire" of "wanting sons". [38]

In 2001, the Women's Federation of Guangdong published a report in the media that claimed that nearly 70 percent of "second wives" were rural migrants, and most of them had only

[37] "*Shiqi sui nusheng de xinlu lichen, dang ernai huaiyun ran xingbing*" (*a seventeen year-old girl tells her story: being a second wife and infected with a STI*), October 27, 2008, *jinyang wang,* http://www.ycwb.com.cn

[38] For example, a famous comedy "guerrilla birth corps" (*chaosheng youji dui*) played by two celebrities, Zhao Benshan and Song Dandan, in the Chinese spring festival Gala on the CCTV in the 1990s.

junior middle school education.[39] This emphasis upon disobedient, poorly educated rural migrants builds the case against "second wives" as "backward" and "uncivilized" (*luohou yumei*), while echoing the prevailing discourse concerning *suzh*i (categories of high or low human quality). Hence, "second wives" are targeted by state initiatives aimed at dealing with the "floating population" and the violation of birth control policy. As the rural population is often blamed for China's high fertility rates, the "second wives" are described as low *suzhi* women whose sexuality cannot be controlled by the state's policies. Hiding from the birth control inspector, she may produce unplanned children out of wedlock. In the official discourse, having more children is equivalent to poverty. Only backward, impoverished, and uncivilized rural people have a strong desire to produce unplanned children. The news reports orchestrate the discourse of rural population and birth control, showing another way in which "keeping a second wife" "endangers social stability" by violating birth control policy. For example:

> Those second wives hide in superior residential quarters to bear children outside of the birth plan. Some people move to Guangzhou from other regions and buy apartments in order to avoid the birth control policy and have more children. This is becoming common. Some wealthy men purchase expensive domiciles to build a cozy nest in order to escape from the birth control policy…now those second wives also adopt this trick to escape from birth-control inspections. [40]

DNA testing and detective stories are highlighted to illustrate other dangers that threaten men and women, as well as family harmony in general. The DNA testing stories present the image of a cuckold who seeks desperately to confirm the biological legitimacy of his offspring. Doubting the fidelity of "the second wife", and further suspecting that the child is not his

[39] "*Guangdong fulian yanjiu baoernai" (Women's Federation of Guangdong studies keeping a second wife), Jinyang wang, originally from Qilu wanbao*, Jan.21, 2003.
[40] "*Bao ernail pohuai jihua shengyu zhengche*" (Keeping a second wife violates the birth control policy). *Yangcheng wanbao*, May 23, 1998.

biological son, the cuckold utilizes modern technology to uncover the truth. He is found "wearing a green hat" (*dai lu maozi*), meaning that a man has an adulterous wife, a cultural reference to an unbearable humiliation for Chinese masculinity. For example, one news story about an adulterous wife/a second wife asserts:

> Since ancient times the adulteress has always triggered homicide….Men may swallow insults and humiliations for many things, but they can never bear "wearing a green hat" […] if other wives behave like Wu Hong and become a "second wife" [as a married woman], what serious consequence will result? It is really hard for us to imagine. Therefore, Wu Hong's behaviour is one hundred percent wrong and harmful in many respects. [Her behaviour] has many pernicious effects and benefits nobody. It is truly not worthy to commit [adultery]. (We) hope no women will follow her (example). [41]

The social discourse of "a green hat" is an engrained cultural script that refers to being emasculated and dishonored as a man in Chinese society. The news narrative highlights the discourse of "green hats" and hints at ways in which the law ought to punish adulterous women:

> A husband in Cangping of Beijing suspected that his child was not his biological descendant [so he sued for a divorce]. The court ruled that the couple have a DNA test, but the wife refused. Therefore, the court inferred that the husband was wearing a green hat, and thus granted a divorce. In addition, surprisingly, not only was the child given to the wife, but also the wife was required to compensate 60,000 Yuan to the husband. [42]

Female protagonists of the news narrative hire detectives to follow their husbands in order to collect evidence for compensation in accordance with the 2001 Marriage Law. Detective stories take up quite a large amount of space in the news media (see Table 1). A gendered morality is evidently described in the stories of DNA testing and detectives. When the husband ends an affair and returns to his wife, he is praised as "once lost now returning to the fold" ("*mitu*

[41] "*Yihun nüzi dang ernai*" (A married woman became a second wife). *Jinyang Wang*, March 28, 2007.
[42] "*DNA faxian zhangfu bei dai lumao*" (DNA testing finds husband's wearing a green hat), *Xin kuaibao* (the New Express), March 7, 2009, A30.

zhifan"), but there is no route of return for a misbehaving wife. The male's promiscuous nature is used to explain his affairs, whereas a woman's affair is attributed to her emotional need and her desire to enact vengeance upon a man for his misbehaviour. Without these "two motivations", a woman's affair is always attributed to her status as a "fallen woman". With reference to the representation of a "second wife", keeping "a second wife" is described as a risk because she is, by definition, a gold digging whore, and thus incapable of feeling or expressing the "true love" that a man receives from his (legal) wife.

In summary—taking the news coverage as a whole — more than 70 percent of the 139 news stories identified through a single news website deal with crimes of homicide, injury, bigamy, and corruption. These stories are used to explain the family crisis that threatens social stability. Other stories focusing on "sexual chaos" are also linked to the same theme. There is a great deal missing from these stories about "keeping a second wife" in terms of their social and political impact. Chinese journalism simplifies the news reports of "keeping a second wife" and thus strengthens the link between news production and the dominant ideology, as per Hall's fundamental insight (1978). Simplification helps to focus the story's rhetoric and creates an opportunity for a moral lecture consistent with the Chinese storytelling tradition. The patterns of the news stories around the theme of "family crisis" are in line with the official condemnation of "keeping a second wife" and coordinate perfectly with the state's efforts to reinforce the family. A majority of these news stories identify three parties involved in the affair and create a standard plot based on common gender assumptions. The journalistic practice irresistibly links crime and sexual chaos to the central theme of the family, the core of the social order. The condensed treatment of this link in news reports is presented rather like a moral parable driven by "common sense" assumptions of gender roles and cultural understandings of the family. The news narrative

asserts that these men and women have breached the accepted morality and the established way of living, paving the way for crimes and subsequent family crisis, which are the inevitable issue of this type of misconduct and violation of sexual mores. It is this treatment of the link between "keeping a second wife", crime and crisis that articulates the dominant ideology of family, marriage, and sexuality.

Controlling the family crisis

The discourse surrounding the negative social impact of "keeping a second wife" is generally organized around three main points: first, "keeping a second wife" violates wives' rights (their property rights and financial support are at risk and the wives and children suffer psychologically from the men's infidelity); second, "keeping a second wife" severely damages the family, the foundation of society (seriously violating a number of social interests by giving rise to criminal behaviour and endangering social stability); third, "keeping a second wife" is seen to violate the state's interests by destabilizing the birth control policy and endangering the monogamy and heteronormativity.[43] The efforts of controlling the family crisis reveal the relations between the media discourse, the state agencies and the laws. A brief overview of the media and state's orchestration of society's reaction to these presumed threats is helpful to understand the extent to which the party-state is not simply seeking to exert ideological control, but is trying to regulate behavior through legal means as well. The following sections will examine media advices regarding how to manage marriage, the legislative approach to "keeping a second wife", and efforts to defend the family made by a particular state agency, All China Women's Federation (ACWF).

[43] These main points are repeatedly highlighted by the state media, authorities and academic circles. See Yuan 2006.

PRESCRIPTIONS TO WIVES, HUSBANDS AND "SECOND WIVES"

Fifty-five items in my data set are categorized as commentary opinions written by marriage consultants and "love experts" (cf. Table 1, p77). These newspaper articles speak to three parties in the affairs within the discourse of gender roles and sexual mores. Most of these opinions provide strategies for holding a marriage together and target middle class wives whose husbands are assumed to have the potential (i.e., financial power) to "keep a second wife". First, news commentaries, editorial opinions and marriage experts prescribe solutions to protect the family. Because the crisis is constructed within the dominant ideological paradigm of gender and sexual mores, this advice is framed through the common sense identities respectively ascribed to husbands, wives and "second wives" in relation to the idea of "harmonious families" and social stability. News commentaries persuade men to restrain their "natural" male promiscuousness by making an appeal to the idea of "moral cultivation" (*daode peiyang*). Also, modernization is a key factor in appeals directed at men. The behaviour of "keeping a second wife" is constructed as a "backward phenomenon" that undermines "modern civilization". According to this narrative, "the Chinese men who have taken the lead in wealth"[44] are still out of the trajectory of modernization and thus need to be educated in order to become "civilized" subjects. Hence, the news commentaries persuade men that being rich is not enough; a modernized rich man ought to have a "respectful and graceful life". In addition, the idea of "true love" and the image of the wife are strongly advocated. While the "second wives" are constructed as gold digging whores, "proper" wives are described as virtuous and sacrificing women standing behind their men. Commentaries also suggest to men that an extramarital affair

[44] "*Zhongguo nanren yinggai youya wenming de shenghuo*" (Chinese men should live a civilized and decent life). *Yangcheng wanbao*, May 20, 2000.

is mentally and physically distracting. This type of prescription is directed at government officials keeping a "second wife". For example:

> "The more corrupt, the earlier to die". Yesterday, Hong Zhaoguang, the chief expert in health education of the Ministry of Health, was invited to hold a health lecture in Guangzhou. By quoting authoritative works, he discussed the issue regarding shorter life expectancy of corrupt officials. Hong Zhaoguang pointed out that diseases come from the mind. The source of many diseases is psychological pressure and that 76 percent of diseases are depression related. Every corrupt official experiences tremendous psychological pressure and the reason why he is likely to catch diseases or have a shortened life is that his insatiable desires cause psychological pressure.[45]

The discourse addressed to "second wives" is characterized by warnings about male promiscuity. Because youth is short-lived, relying on transiently youthful attributes is dangerous. A second wife will be replaced by a younger woman within a very short period. She is also warned of the dangers of becoming devalued in the marriage market and losing the capacity for childbirth, through stories of second wives' regrets. The primary dangers associated with second wives' regrets come mainly from STIs—signifiers of tainted morality and a woman's loss of fertility. A second wife is painted as doomed to the tragic life of a woman without a marital status. Commentaries recall the idea advocated by the Women's Federation, persuading her that she should be "self-depending, self-improving and self-respecting" (*zili, ziqiang, zizun*)[46].

Commentaries and editorial opinions focus primarily on the wife, portrayed by the dominant ideology as the key figure in "managing marriage", an embellishment upon Maoist "woman-work" (Manning 2010) adapted to the era of the market economy. Women are expected to become marriage managers responsible for controlling male infidelity during a time

[45] "*Guanyuan duanming lun, yisi mazui ji mihui tang*" (Short life expectancy of officials seems anesthesia and magic potion). *Yangcheng wanbao*, Feb. 18, 2009.
[46] See Judd's discussion (2002) on "self-depending, self-improving and self-respecting", a strategy designed by the ACWF to enhance women's position in the society.

of family crisis in the post Mao period, while they were encouraged to become "household managers", building upon their presumed responsibility for household finances and in-law harmony during the Maoist regime (Manning 2010, Wang 2005). For example, wives are said to bear the primary responsibility for protecting the family and "managing the marriage" (*jinying hunyin*). Considering that a divorce is damaging to wives' psychological wellbeing and financial resources, editorials advise wives to make an effort to maintain the family when husbands are having an affair. The figure of a wife in the news is constructed as a woman who clings to the marriage as her ultimate life goal. She is advised to find a solution that will expel the "second wife" from the situation and to be accepting of her husband's remorse, thereby encouraging him to return home. In addition to encouraging the wife's virtue and her tolerance of the husband's "physical return", commentaries also allude to feminine appeal as a means of encouraging the husband's "emotional return". Because the wife is portrayed as "an old woman with a sallow face" (*huanglian po*) and "husk and chaff" whose promiscuous husband no longer finds attractive, they bear some responsibility for pushing the husband into the arms of younger women. Blaming wives' lack of tenderness and caring character, commentaries teach strategies to defeat the younger rivals in order to hold the family together. Marriage experts suggest that wives improve their appearance and cultivate femininity, both "outside and inside" (*neizai wanzai*).

The family crisis takes place within the paradigm of the dominant gender ideology, and "fallen" women and bad sexual mores are blamed for the disturbance. The representation of "fallen" women contradicts the official ideological position on women since the 1950s, which has sketched a positive image of women "holding up half the sky". The news narrative has depicted "transgressive" women who cross moral boundaries and pose a threat to the idea of

"good women". The emergence of the new "concubinage", described as "feudal sediment stirred up", caused by these women who have affairs with the "polluted businessmen" (Jeffrey 2010), is deemed to "endanger" the foundation of the family institution, "pollute" all sexual morality, and trigger social chaos. Moreover, in the stories of corrupt officials, the news narrative helps to whip up a moral panic of sexual relations that corrupt the party's cause as a foil to deflect attention away from more pressing issues. In addition, the "resurgence" of "keeping a second wife" is blamed for bringing sexual diseases back to Chinese society through "chaotic" sexual relations. In so doing, the news construction serves to illustrate that the society needs greater restraints on sexual mores and less tolerance toward the inclination of sexual freedom.

"RULING THE COUNTRY IN ACCORDNCE WITH LAW"

The practice of "keeping a second wife" gave rise to intensive coverage at the beginning of 2000s, bolstered by commentary from marriage consultants, legal experts, and state authorities during this period, culminating in the passage of the 2001 Marriage Law.[47] The term "keeping a second wife" refers to the family crisis that had a massive impact upon a society still very much committed to family values, cultural inheritance and institutional stability; the media, academics, legal experts, marriage consultants, feminist scholars, activists, and state agencies all agitated for legal sanctions to restrain extramarital relationships. Instead of controlling the family and sexuality with Maoist approaches (e.g., targeting a larger-size of population with a rigid administrative regulation), the post-Mao state attempts to deal with the crisis through the

[47] The process of amending the Marriage Law started in the 1990s for the purpose of enhancing morals and defining rights regarding marriage and family. In October 1995, the 16th Conference of the Standing Committee of the eighth National People's Congress resolved to amend the Marriage Law. A marriage Law was drafted and submitted to the 18th, 19th and 21st Conference for examination and approval. On 28 April 2001, the new Marriage Law was approved and adopted. Apart from protecting monogamy (targeting "keeping a second wife"), the 2001 Marriage Law also deals with issues such as domestic violence, void and voidable marriage, matrimonial property, divorce. See Zhang 2002.

approach of "ruling the country in accordance with law". From a Foucauldian perspective, sexuality always involves particular institutions, through which sexuality becomes visible and meaningful; hence, extramarital relationships always give rise to legal debate (Lechie 1999).

The CCP's Marriage Law had four distinct historical antecedents. The first marriage law was promulgated in the Red Soviet Areas of Jiangxi Province during the early 1930s, and later on in the Yan'an border regions. This code claimed to abolish concubinage and other types of "feudal" institutions (e.g., arranged marriage and child daughter-in-law, *tongxiang xi*). The impact of the first marriage law was limited, however, by the CCP's all-encompassing military struggle against the KMT government and the Japanese. The CCP issued the 1950 marriage law immediately after it took control of China. By the late 1970s, after countless political campaigns reinforcing the marriage law, family reform, and harsh punishment for sex out of wedlock, the state believed it had successfully instituted monogamous sexual relations as an ideological norm. In 1980, based on the triumph that concubinage had been annihilated in the PRC, the statutes "prohibiting polygamy and concubinage" emphasized in 1950 Marriage Law were removed from the Marriage Law (Hershatter 2007 b, 18).

The drive to amend the marriage law in order to enhance monogamous sexuality dates back to 1995 when pluralism of sexual practices was deemed to be ascending (Zhang 2002). Before 1997, any defiant sexuality against the dominant ideology was labeled as crimes of "hooligan sexual behaviors" (*liumang zui*) in the PRC's criminal code (Li 2013), under which theoretically any sexual practices out of wedlock, including extramarital affairs and premarital sex, could be measured as crimes. [48] The new governance of the post Mao period appears to

[48] For example, one movie star, Chi Zhiqiang, and one pop singer, Zhang Xing, in the 1980s who had sexual behaviours out of wedlock with different women were found guilty of "hooliganism" (*liumang zui*) during the "wiping-out-yellow" campaigns (*saohuang*, anti-porn) and respectively served four years and three years in jail (and

intervene within the family and sexuality with more rational and skillful strategies, as exemplified by its claim that it "rules the country by laws" (*yifa zhiguo*). In 1997, the crime of "hooliganism" was removed from the criminal code, and "hooliganism" behaviors were left to the level of moral condemnation.

However, without punishing "hooliganism" behaviors in the criminal code, the social control of marriage and sexuality appeared to be threatened during the course of the discussion over "keeping a second wife", which stirred up a actual "moral panic", and consequently, it appeared to be urgent for the state to resubmit the family and sexuality to legal scrutiny. As McRobbie and Thorton (1995, 568) point out, moral panic act

> on behalf of the dominant social order. They are a means of orchestrating consent by actively intervening in the space of public opinion and social consciousness through the use of highly emotive and rhetorical language which has the effect of requiring that "something be done about it".

The reconstruction of the new "concubinage" has created a crisis of the "already modernized" family institution. In response to this crisis, legal experts, marriage counselors, and government agencies repeatedly— and in unison— condemn it as a threat to "family harmony" and social stability. The moral panic that followed led to the amendment of the Marriage Law, which was intended to restrain sexual relations out of wedlock.

In 2001, the new marriage law was issued after intense discussions. In order to restrain extramarital relationships and deal with them differently from the Maoist state's approach, the post-socialist state targeted this within a legal framework instead of within rigid and wide-spectrum administrative regulations (the targeting range was too wide in the Maoist regime). Hu

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it fatally affected their careers afterwards). Although the crime of hooliganism was removed from the Penal Code in 1997, individuals can still be subject to charges for "collective sexual behaviors" or for watching pornography at home.

Kangsheng, the head of the National Juridical Work Committee (*quanguo sifa gongsuo weiyuan hui*), argued for the necessity of amending the marriage law by claiming that "bigamy is intensely increasing in some areas in recent years. It endangers monogamy as well as violates the socialist morality, leads to broken families and affects social stability and the birth control policy".[49] Hu's speech reflects official concerns about the family crisis—the crisis of monogamy, family harmony, and the family organization of "one couple one child", which, under the Chinese cultural and political context, has become a crisis of the state.

Over the course of discussing the amendment of the marriage law, the judicial body declared that "keeping a second wife" was a crime and launched campaigns designed to "severely attack" the "crime". Nevertheless, the "crime" is punished by the law within the terminology of bigamy. The discussion of bigamy achieved its most vociferous expression through discussions of the marriage law. The judicial body categorized "keeping a second wife" as bigamy, which in the PRC's penal code is defined as "a behavior exhibited by a person with a legal spouse who cohabits with another person in the name of husband and wife or a behavior committed by a person who knows that the other person is married, but cohabits with him anyway". [50]

The People's Supreme Court (*zuigao renmin fayuan*) (PSC) emphasized the definition of bigamy and set forth descriptions of two types of bigamy: first, a married person with two marriage registrations; second, a married person who lived with "the other person" "in the name of husband and wife" and "the other person" knew that the person was married but continued to live with him/her. Both of these situations were declared to be "actual bigamy". The PSC

[49] "*Zengbu hunyin fa de jidian shuoming*" (Illustrations for amending the marriage law). *Xinhua news agency*, December 11, 2000.
[50] See Yuan 2006.

particularly highlighted the potential homicide, injuries and property disputes caused by bigamy as the media narrative describes. [51]

The new definition of bigamy stirred up the public interest in discussing "keeping a second wife". Sociologists, law experts, academics, and moral advisors suggested controlling bigamy with two swords: punishment by law and condemnation through moral sanctions. The state's intention to amend the marriage law in order to penalize extramarital affairs was released to the media, and initiated suggestions and discussions from government agencies as well as from legal experts, moral advisors, academic circles and the general public.

Discussions about extramarital affairs centered on the question of whether "keeping a second wife" and being a "second wife" ought to be punished by the law. In order to penalize "actual bigamy", legal experts suggested to the Committee of Amending Marriage Law three different possible definitions of bigamy: a married person holds a wedding reception with "the third party"; a married person cohabits with the "third party" for over six months and raises children with the third party; a married person lives with the third party for over six months. [52]

Official concerns reached their peak during the discussions pertaining to the Marriage Law amendments in 2001. Despite the anxieties aroused by its desire to control the "family crisis", the state retained the new governance approach to controlling the "family crisis". Legal experts argued that writing the term "keeping a second wife" into the marriage law would not be appropriate, since the institution had already been abolished during the 1950s; instead, they suggested using language that targeted the issue without making reference to the term. In 2001, the discussion of Marriage Laws ended with the insertion of an amended article in the new

[51] "*Zhuajia jieshi xin hunyin fa*" (Experts explain the new Marriage Law). *Yangcheng wanbao*, May 1, 2001.
[52] "*Li Zhongfang tan hunyin fa*" (Li Zhongfang talks about the marriage law). *Beijing wanbao*, October 10, 2000.

marriage law. As the legal experts suggested, the phrase "keeping a second wife" did not appear. The appearance of the term would deny the state already-declared triumph. Under the principle of the 2001 marriage law a new principle was added as follow: "prohibiting a married person living with a third party".[53] Ma Yinan, the senior member of the Marriage Law Amendment Committee, explained to the public that the term "second wife" was not written in the new law because "keeping a second wife" was not a legal conception; nevertheless, he claimed that the Marriage Law's new article functioned as a legal sanction that would control the practice of "keeping a second wife".[54] Hence, instead of reassuming the "hooliganism" approach, the post-Mao state approach to control the family crisis, in the end, exercises its power of disciplining sexuality through legal form.

DEFENDING THE FAMIY: THE ROLE OF THE ACWF

When the ACWF (All China Women's Federation) was established in 1949, its aim was to mobilize women as well as to address concerns regarding women's interests and equal rights (Wang 2005). It has a longstanding tradition of working with the party-state on two fronts: mobilizing women to participate in the labour force (and to fulfill the party-state tasks) and devoting their energy to domains defined as "woman-work". These two fronts often are overlapping and complementary. For example, during Maoist period, the ACWF mobilized women to participate in the state project known to "diligently and thriftily building the country" by emphasizing women's responsibility as "diligently and thriftily managing the family" (Wang 2006). The ACWF made an effort to mobilize women to participate in the political process for

[53] Wang, Ningjiang. 2002. "*Zhuanjia jiesdu xin hunyin fa*" (Expert explains the new marriage law), *Beijing Wanbao*, Jan. 4. Accessed June 5, 2003: http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/law/93302.htm

[54] Ibid.

women's liberation framed within a nationalist approach designated by the party-state (Barlow 2004).

The ACWF is bureaucratic tool of the state mechanism which advocates "woman-work" in order to enforce the party's political and economic policies. Historically, the ACWF has echoed the Party's strategy for enforcing gender policy, treating "family work" as a woman's major contribution to the "party work". The ACWF played a predominant role in framing ideas of the socialist family and drafting the 1950 Marriage Law (Manning, unpublished manuscript). The 1950 marriage law was intended to bring the Chinese women's movement to fruition, enshrining a number of ideas associated with the term "women's liberation" that had driven the movement since the beginning of the twentieth century. It reflected the degree to which "women's liberation" blossom under the CCP's regime. The ACWF's intention was not to abolish family and the marriage institution as radical feminists in the West suggested, but rather to establish a socialist family institution for the new state, based on a set of ideas including monogamy, "men and women's equality" (*nannü pingdeng*), and harmonious family relations among husband, wife and in-laws (Manning, unpublished manuscript). As the nature of the CCP's revolution was a social reform from the bottom up, the 1950 marriage law aimed particularly to protect lower class women by abolishing concubinage and the practice of taking child brides (*tongyang* xi). It also aimed to protect abused wives by simplifying divorce procedures by granting a divorce based on one-party petition (Manning, unpublished manuscript). The 1950 marriage law reflected the triumph of the ACWF's efforts.

In the post Mao regime, the ACWF has seemingly entered a "post-ACWF" period, due to the fact that it has been much more marginalized, along with the state's withdrawal of "gender equality" in the public sphere. At the same time, feminist ideas outside of the party-state

framework (e.g., Western feminisms) have emerged as a cutting-edge perspective incompatible with the ACWF's state-designed doctrines and have become increasingly popular, particularly among academic circles, "public intellectuals"(*gonggong zhishi fenzi*), and feminist activists (Liu 2006). The ACWF has remained as a party organ with a particular focus on family issues, and thus it focuses on "men and women's equality", largely within the framework of family. In the late 1990s, the ACWF launched a long term project to enhance "family construction" and solve major challenges to the PRC's family institution (e.g., "keeping a second wife"). In 2005, Hu Jintao's administration launched a state project "harmonious society" attempted to solve social disparities and conflicts. [55] Echoing the state's strategy, the ACWF named its family project as "harmonious family" as a core "woman work" in the ACWF's agenda during the Hu Jintao's administration.

For the ACWF, the family is a means of protecting women (wives)'s interests and wellbeing; hence, the ACWF approaches gender equality within the family by emphasizing monogamy as the most equal form of marriage for women, and within heteronomative monogamy the ACWF employs "mutual respect between wives and husbands", an idea that dates back to ACWF's notion of woman-work during the Maoist regime. One of the important understandings of "monogamous family" in the ACWF's agenda during Maoist period was to prevent husbands from straying as a means of protecting wives and family unity (Diamant 2000). Indeed, husbands' extramarital affairs in Maoist period were punished by "hooliganism" in criminal code, but in the reform era, the male promiscuity has resurged and is justified as the "nature" of biological differences in the discourse.

[55] See Hu Jintao, "*Zai Shengbuji Zhuyao Lingdao Ganbu Tigao Goujian Shehuizhuyi Hexie Shehui Nengli Zhuanti Yantao Shangde Jianghua* "(Talk Delivered to Provincial Main Leading Cadres In Seminar about Enhancing Capacity to Build a Socialist Harmonious Society). *Renmin ribao* (*The People's Daily*), June 27, 2005.

The ACWF approached the amendment of the marriage law as an opportunity chance to enhance the monogamous family institution and accordingly protect wives' interests. The local levels of the ACWF provide active support to wives whose husbands have strayed. For example, the two levels of the Women's Federation of both Guangdong Province and Guangzhou city, the "natal family"[56] of women in this region have provided channels for wives to seek help and support. Starting in the early 1990s, both the Women's Federation of Guangdong Province and Guangzhou City provided a service for wives to voice concerns about their husbands' affairs. This service acts as a moral support and a symbolic gesture, demonstrating an official concern, despite the fact that there are no longer any administrative regulations to monitor and punish extramarital affairs, as there were during the Maoist period. In order to illustrate the increasing prevalence of the practice of "keeping a second wife" and to call for legal sanctions during the discussion period of the marriage law, the Guangzhou Women's Federation revealed their statistics to the media: Appeal cases were increased from 246 in 1999 to 582 in 2000. During the same period, the Guangdong Province Women's Federation also claimed through that it had received 20, 246 cases between 1992 and 1996.[57] These appeals, according to the Guangdong Women's Federation, came from wives whose husbands were living and had children with other women and from the "second wives" whose children had been abandoned by the men. When these statistics appeared in the press, they were intended to provide convincing evidence of the need for state's intervention.

[56] "Natal family" (*niangjia*) is a nickname to address the Women's Federation. It contains a variety of political meanings: first, dating back to the early period of the ACWF during the enforcement of the 1950 Marriage Law, it is an emphasis to draw married women out of kinship networks into the socialist state (Freedman 1964). Second, it illustrates the ACWF's standpoint to support monogamous family institution of the PRC and to support wives who are abused by husbands. Third, "natal family" serves as an official support that empowers women to achieve "men and women's equality" within the family.

[57] Sun, Chaofang, 2002. "*Guangzhou fulian baohu funu quanyi*" (Women's Federation of Guangzhou defends women's rights). *Yangcheng wanbao*, October 13.

The Guangzhou Women's Federation also provided funding to support research on the plight of "second wives". It was in 2001, the moment of amending the marriage law, that the Guangzhou Women's Federation opened their findings to the public through the news media, exposing the stories of transgressive women and their motivations. Women's Federation's research on the "second wives" claimed that these women were mainly "outside sisters" (*wailai mei,* rural migrants).[58] According to the study, 69 percent of the second wives were from poorer provinces, and 95 percent of them were under the age of 35. Seventy-one percent were unmarried, while 58 percent had only junior middle school education. The women's motivations were interpreted as follows: 75 percent of the second wives were deemed to be motivated by "the desire to live in the city leaving their home places", 13 percent had chosen their lot "for love", while 42 percent of second wives claimed to be "willing to have no marital status". Interestingly, the WF's research also explored men's motivations in keeping a second wife: 64 percent of the respondents claimed to be "seeking stimulation", 27 percent attributed their behaviour to their wives' aging, while 10 percent of them claimed to relish the idea of "having a concubine".[59]

These findings not only label the issue as "concubinage", but also reflect institutional discrimination towards rural migrant women in the current gender politics and geopolitics. The questions underlying these statistics not defined in this published research, however, are the following: What is the statistical category of "second wife"? How should one define the behaviour of "keeping a second wife"? By calling attention to the growth of this practice, the organization hoped to spur the party-state to take disciplinary action. Regardless of the definitions used and the reliability of the Guangzhou Women's Federation's research, these

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

statistics precisely "confirmed" the reductive description of men and "second wives" in the media's creation of "family crisis". The statistics offer an interpretation that fits with "common sense" assumptions about gender and the stereotypes of promiscuous men and the materialistic women. As Hall (1978, 9) points out, statistics "have an ideological function: they appear to ground free floating and controversial impressions in the hard, incontrovertible soil of numbers. Both the media and the public have enormous respect for 'the facts' – hard facts. And there is no fact so 'hard' as a number".

The ACWF played an active role during the discussion of the marriage law. As an organization focusing on family and marriage, the ACWF suggested to the Amending Marriage Law Committee (*xiugan hunyin fa weiyuan hui*) that bigamy in the Penal Code should include the practice of any kind of cohabitation (regardless of whether they do so with or without an announcement of husband and wife) (Zhao 2000). The ACWF also advised the committee to add an article in the principle part of the marriage law "protecting marriage and family and prohibiting behaviors that destroy monogamy".[60] The Guangdong Women's Federation suggested that the law must punish men and women who participate in the practice of "keeping a second wife". Based on the service for supporting wives, the Guangdong Women's Federation particularly suggested that the "third party" ("second wives") have transgressed the boundary of family and marriage and hence bear legal liability for their actions.[61]

The term "spousal rights" (*pei'ou quan*) circulated widely during the course of the public discussion, suggesting that wives have the right to require police and procuratorial bodies to

[60] See the Department of Rights and Interests of ACWF. 2000. "Firmly control behaviors of bigamy, concubinage, 'keeping a second wife' and the like: one of suggestions for amending the Marriage Law". *Zhongguo fuyun* (Women's Movement of China) 9:2-3.
[61] Sun, Chaofang. 2002. "*Guangzhou fulian baohu funü quanyi*" (Guangzhou Women's Federation defends women's rights). *Yangcheng wanbao*, October 13.

investigate husbands' affairs and arrest second wives.[62] The proclaimed "spousal rights" attracted a great deal of attention in the resultant media furor. In particular, the Guangzhou Women's Federation supported the concept of "spousal rights" in the public discussions. The Guangzhou Women's Federation employed its statistics to demonstrate that the number of appeals had decreased and interpreted these figures to show that wives were expecting the promulgation of new legal punishments and compensation from their straying husbands. [63] The Guangdong Women's Federation suggested adding the concept of spousal rights into the marriage law because the practice of "keeping a second wife" violated the legal wife's "human rights", defined as "spousal rights" with particular reference to her rights to access her husband's financial resources (since the husband was assumed to be supporting the "second wife" as well). They defined spouse rights as "basic identity rights", which included name rights, decision right of abode, compulsory cohabitation, and compulsory fidelity (or "compulsory chastity"). The laws did make provision for name right and decision right of abode; however, for the ACWF, compulsory cohabitation and compulsory fidelity were essential elements of "spousal rights" that the new law should include (Yuan 2006). Therefore, the ACWF advocated that the law should penalize the "illicit cohabitation" of a married person (*yihun feifa tongju zui*). By criminalizing the practice of "keeping a second wife", extramarital sex could finally be restrained, and monogamy be made triumphant. In the process, women's rights and wellbeing are protected (Yuan 2006).

Nevertheless, the post-Mao state has shifted toward a new strategy of governance. It intends to restrain sexuality via the legislative framework as well as through a variety of media

[62] See Yuan 2006.
[63] Zhu Daqiang, 2001. *"Xin hunyin fa hou ruhe chuli jiating hunyin wenti* (How to solve family and marriage problems after the new marriage law). *Yangcheng wanbao*, May 14.

discourses. Unlike the drafting the 1950 marriage law, which primarily relied on ACWF leaders, the committee for amending the 2001 marriage law consisted of legal experts. The ACWF was marginalized during the time leading up to the passage of the new law, and ACWF's suggestions were not adopted by the committee. The new clause added to the marriage law was carefully formulated by the legal experts in order to narrow the definition of bigamy and to limit the applicability of the concept. [64]

With limited resources, this study is unable to address the conflicts and compromises forged between the ACWF and the Amending Marriage Law Committee. What were the exact particulars of ACWF's role within the committee structure? How did the ACWF perceive the final draft of the new marriage law? Was the ACWF satisfied or disappointed? What strategies did the ACWF employ to protect wives after the 2001 marriage law was issued? These details will be left to further studies.

With the newly amended marriage law, women's federations strived to make use of the added clause and encouraged wives to "wield the weapon of the law" to protect their interests when the marriage veers out of control. [65] One phenomenon appeared in the wake of the promulgation of the law: voluntary lawyers mobilized by the Women's Federations frequently went to the streets to provide legal advice to wives who had evidence of their husbands' "illicit cohabitation". [66]

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[64] The head of the committee for the amendment of marriage law, Ma Yinan, explained why the committee did not adopt suggestions such as punishing "second wives" and banning any kind of cohabitation without a marriage license. She particularly emphasized that "keeping a second wife" is not an appropriate legal term and thus it could not be written formally into the marriage law. See Ma 2001.

[65] Lai, Jinning. 2002, "*yudao jiating baoli shi zhangwo zhengju*", (Keeping the evidence when you encounter family violence). *Yangcheng wanbao*, July 25.

[66] Yu Renfei. 2003. "*Yuexiu qu sheli 151ge dian baohu funu ertong quanyi*" (151 locations for protecting women and children's interests spread in Yuexiu district). *Yangcheng wanbao*, July 4.
Sun Chaofang. 2004. "*Guangzhou liangbai falu zhuanjia tigong falu zhixun*" (Two hundred law experts provide legal consultation in Guangzhou). *Yangcheng wanbao*, April 1.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has focused intensively on news accounts of "keeping a second wife" in relation to the dominant discourses of gender, marriage and sexuality established at the founding of the PRC. It argued that the news reports of "keeping a second wife" formulate a narrative of "family crisis", through which the ideology of marriage and sexuality is re-articulated to discipline diverse practices of sexuality prevalent during the post-Mao period.

As demonstrated, the core of the news narrative is based on the gendered discourse of marriage, family and sexuality first established during the Maoist period. Moreover, news reports adopt and develop the discourse in the post Mao period. A "common sense" understanding of gender (e.g., emphasis on the physical attraction of the female sex and the male promiscuity) is used to sketch the storylines to convince the news readers. Based on "common sense", the news accounts portray crimes and perceived sexual chaos as threats to the PRC's family institution, the foundation of the Chinese society, through which the news stories have created a 'family crisis". This narrative is in line with the official condemnation of "keeping a second wife" and coordinates perfectly with the state efforts to reinforce the family. Editorial opinions, commentators, legal experts, marriage counselors, and government agencies repeatedly condemned "keeping a second wife" as a threat to "family harmony" and social stability. This led to the amendment of the marriage law in 2001, which aimed to restrain sexual relations out of wedlock.

Three salient themes are articulated in the news narrative of "keeping a second wife'. First, the family crisis suggests that one has to "manage marriage" in order to overcome

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Yin, Xuean,.2004. "*Zhiyuan lushi dianran tamen de xiwang"* (Voluntary lawyers give them hopes). *Yangcheng wanbo*, September 6.

challenges during the time of crisis; in particular, managing marriage is primarily considered the wives' responsibility, and hence the media, marriage consultants, and love experts all prescribe solutions that aim to "improve" wives' physical appearance and *suzhi* in order to manage the "nature" of male sex. Second, the ideological orchestration of gender apparent in the media discourse dictates that male promiscuity and the bad sexual mores of women lead to corruption that not only seriously undermines family harmony, but more seriously brings harm to the state. Third, the idea that sexual activity within the bounds of the marital relation is the only way to preserve morality is disseminated through stories of sexual chaos. These three themes will provide the interpretive keys used to discuss audience perception in the following chapters.

The origin of the term "keeping a second wife" reflects two salient issues in the post-Mao era: gender inequality and the emergence of China's new rich class. Gender relations in post-Mao China have been marked by a return to the emphasis upon femininity and biological difference. Moreover, the post-socialist regime has withdrawn affirmative policies of gender equality (*nannü pingdeng*); as a consequence, women's economic and symbolic status has deteriorated. For example, marketization and essentialist understandings of gender since the late 1980s have given rise to the discourses of "women's returning home" (Wallis 2006), "managing marriage", and "doing well is not as good as marrying well".[67] During the flourishing discourse of domesticating women, what has emerged in tandem is men's class, which becomes a primary condition for mate selection in terms of women's social upward mobility. The media borrowed this term, and while seemingly echoing these social concerns, encoded the narrative for

[67] "Seventy percent of women prefer marrying well to doing well". *China Daily*, November 30, 2011. Accessed May 23 2013: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2011-11/30/content_24040608.htm.

reinforcing an established gendered discourse and pushing individuals into family structures designed to "achieve social stability". The state and its media arm have filtered gender inequality and the issue of class out of the encoding process; instead, the media used "common sense" assumptions regarding gender to reinforce the established gender ideology for social control. Hall (1973) does not elaborate upon the complex encoding process in the case of British media. In an authoritarian state such as China, the encoding process regarding the narrative presentation of the practice of "keeping a second wife" may help to illustrate the ways in which encoding both orchestrates "reality" and deflects socials concerns.

The content analysis of "keeping a second wife" reveals that the state is still enthusiastic about intervening in the private sphere. The supposed retreat of the state (Farrer 2002, Pan 2006) from individuals' private lives is only partial. Intervention under the Maoist regime governed nearly every aspect of private life: mate selection, wedding ceremonies, marital life, family organization (women as "house managers") and sexual behaviours (penalizing sex outside of wedlock), whereas the post-socialist state has withdrawn these interventions in material regulations and laws. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the post-socialist state has no interest in managing individuals' private lives. On the contrary, despite the diversity of sexual practices prevalent in Chinese society, the state still attempts to maintain a degree of its former control, such as through the promulgation of the 2001 Marriage Law. The established discourse remains operative at present, attempting to direct men and women and their ways of living in terms of marriage and sexuality, providing clear echoes of the state's strategies for regulating sexuality and reinforcing the family.

The media creation of the family crisis indicates, on the one hand, the state continues to takes an interventionist approach (mainly within the domain of discourse and ideology) with

regard to individuals' private lives. On the other, it reflects emerging social changes in sexual culture that shake the dominant position of the established ideology. Reinforcing "family harmony" is a means of social control in a longstanding political tradition. Culturally, the concept of state (*guojia*) in the Chinese context literally combines two elements "*guo*" (state) and "*jia*" (family) that are tightly connected to complete the conception of the state. Therefore, the "family crisis" is a crisis of the state. It is no wonder that the state has made efforts to respond to the crisis. In this sense, it is impossible for the state to retreat from regulating the family, marriage and sexuality.

Chapter Four

"Managing Marriage":
Gender, Class and Modernity in Post-Socialist China

A middle class woman discusses what "managing marriage" means to her:

> Because of our societal structure, a man focuses more on his career. He knows he has a wife and a kid at home, and [his] major responsibility is to make money and to maintain [his] career. He does not have more attention and energy in this respect [of managing marriage]. Also, a man's heart is not as attentive as a woman's. Sometimes he has needs, but he is unable to pay attention to trivial things that need to be taken care of. But when the woman has done [things that nurture the marriage], he will feel it. Therefore, managing marriage must be the woman's responsibility. [She] must constantly give him fresh feelings and non-stop surprises, and then he will feel interested, and he will feel that he can't wait to return home after work.
>
> (ZhengZheng, thirty-one years old)

A woman factory worker, on the other hand, understands this differently:

> As some people said, you must manage marriage. It is not right if a woman always yells at her husband. Some of my coworkers are like that and they feel good about it. What do they say? "I let you (husband) stand, you don't dare to sit down". I feel it's not right. A man wants to keep 'face'. At least a couple should have mutual respect.
>
> (Huangjie, forty-seven years old)

The two excerpts are expressions of the ways in which a woman may choose to maintain a good relationship with her husband. The first excerpt, from an interview with a "middle class" woman, emphasizes a woman's imperative to cultivate her own mental and physical "self-improvement" in order to capture her husband's heart. The second excerpt is derived from an interview with an urban factory worker. It illustrates a different understanding of how a woman should treat her

husband, highlighting an atmosphere of "mutual respect". These two excerpts also present two types of masculine figures in the domestic space, presenting two very different contexts, through which middle class and working class women "manage marriage".

In this chapter, I draw upon in-depth interviews to examine interpretations of "managing marriage" in terms of class identity. The interviewees include 19 middle class women, 8 urban workers. The "middle class" women I interviewed are from Chongqing, a metropolis in the South West of China that used to be an industrial city where the old "proletariat" gathered during the Maoist era and became a site of massive layoffs throughout the 1990s. Eight urban working class women I interviewed were from Chongqing included former laid off workers and workers in state-owned factories.

In my interviews and focus group discussions, many women employed the term "managing marriage" (*jingying hunyin*), an understanding colored by class distinction. In this chapter, I ask two questions: how do women make sense of "managing marriage"? And why is it performed in a class-coded way? I argue, first, that the discourse of "managing marriage" is a strategy of domesticating the social, unloading the state's the state's responsibility for social welfare onto the shoulders of family members. Second, audiences' understandings of managing marriage are class specific, illustrating the targeted nature of China's modernizing process, which has focused upon the middle class as its primary subject. Moreover, building upon Judith Butler's conceptualization of "gender performativity" (1988) and West and Zimmerman's study of "doing gender" (1987) through everyday interaction, I argue that class position dictates different "gender performances" within the sphere of intimate relations. Different ways of "performing gender" between middle class and working class women derive not only from

material and performative aspects of identity but also from the type of masculinity (winners and losers of the market economy) present within the household.

In this chapter, I begin by examining the discourse of managing marriage in the media's creation of a family crisis, and subsequently link it to the state's "harmonious family" project. Audience members' responses to and negotiations of this "managing marriage" discourse compose the majority of the chapter. Hence, subsequently, I examine how middle class women interpret managing marriage and their ways of performing gender within the household. In the third section, I present a contrasting way of managing marriage from working class women. In the final section of the chapter, I summarize three concluding remarks in relation to the intertwined relations between gender, modernity and class in the post-socialist China and the complexities of audiences' negotiation reflected through the site of "managing marriage".

The Context: "Managing Marriage" and the "Harmonious Family"

Managing marriage (*jingying hunyin*) is advice given to wives in the media creation of family crisis. It is also one of the issues that the audience members focused on when discussing "keeping a second wife". The terminology appears in the media as a cohesive strategy for a family crisis, and is also in popular use as an element of the discourse concerned with mastering one's happiness. The term also contains echoes of the state-affiliated ACWF's "harmonious family" project, which is a component of the state's larger harmonious society project. Indeed, the phrase managing marriage carries a wide range of social, cultural, and political meanings.

The family crisis is one of the major themes of the media narrative of "keeping a second wife". It is culturally and ideologically linked to a larger discursive context that presents crisis as a threat to the foundation of social stability. The importance of marriage/family within Chinese

society is culturally understood as an essential element of individual identity; furthermore, the PRC has preserved the understanding of family as the "basic cell" of the societal structure.[68] Marriage is seen as a social norm that helps individuals to understand their place in the larger community, making it a vital bulwark of social stability. The family crisis is created through the media's narrative of "keeping a second wife", which is presented as a practice that disintegrates monogamy, causes sexual chaos, and even leads to homicide, injury and property disputes. When viewed through the lens of gender, the family crisis is constructed as a disturbance caused by unrestrained masculinity, rooted in the male's promiscuous nature. The open-market economy is presented as responsible for reviving a promiscuous masculinity that had been restrained (or emasculated) by the Maoist state (Zheng 2009). Masculinity, empowered by money, is likened to a runaway horse, undoing the shackles imposed upon it by the Maoist state. Moreover, the transactional paradigm for heterosexual relationships (Haram 1995, Wamoyi 2010) has a particular reference to the Chinese culture (both prior to and since the advent of the CCP's marriage law and family reforms), within which sexual relations have often been understood as transactional in nature. This view underlies the media's narrative presentation of middle aged men who have accumulated wealth and are driven by male promiscuity to have sexual relations with younger women, thereby triggering a crisis in the PRC's monogamous order. In short, family crisis is a crisis of masculinity and sexual mores, an effect of the shift to a market economy that has the potential to crumble social stability.

Prescriptions for enhancing the PRC's family institution and the public's sexual mores and subsequently achieving social stability come into focus via the state's key "solution" or counsel to "manage marriage". This strategy is proposed as an antidote to the family crisis, and is

[68] The state authorities often express this idea. See Chen 2010.

particularly offered as a strategy for mastering promiscuous masculinity. It refers, on the one hand, to the meanings of a modern, rational, scientific attitude towards marriage that are supposedly managed as a business of ups and downs. On the other hand—despite its implied modernity—the term also marks a return to a traditional understanding of marriage, which treats the institution an "investment" in well-being regardless of an individuals' happiness. More importantly, the meaning of managing marriage is characterized as a gendered task, primarily loading responsibilities onto women's shoulders, due to persistent understandings of gender roles in the PRC.

Managing marriage is both personal and political. The discourse does not emerge from thin air. As discussed in Chapter Three, the state and its agencies, such as the ACWF, have actively responded to the family crisis. The state has not only applied ideological propaganda, but has also implemented policies to reinforce cultural understandings of family. For example, the Marriage Law has always functioned as one of the most important benchmarks of China's political transition in the PRC history. The 1950 Marriage Law marks the triumph of the Communist Party's accession to power. Whereas the 1980 Marriage Law demonstrated the launch of the reform and opening period, the 2001 Marriage Law is a statement of the re-articulation of the ideology to maintain control over increasing pluralism within the private sphere. The importance of marriage/family for the state comes from two approaches, which may contradict each other: first, the continuing project of familial modernization, established during the Republic of China (ROC) is intended to disrupt the traditional family institution. However, the re-arranging of family and marriage is also aimed at "stabilizing society", which harkens back to a Confucian tradition which Chinese modernizers (the KMT and the CCP) rejected. The common denominator between these approaches is the understanding of marriage and family as a

means of achieving social control. The current social problems represented as part of the family crisis endangering society are identified as problems of morality in the state's discourse, which characterize contemporary transgressors as victims of a "profit-before-everything mentality, money above everything else, cohabitation out of wedlock, pre-marital pregnancy, keeping mistresses, divorce as one pleases".[69] Morality is always the target in the state's discursive understanding of social problems in Chinese political history (Thornton 2007). The project of re-establishing the "harmonious family" emphasizes human relations within the family as a means of solving social problems. Hence, the Confucian language of family once again becomes available to and re-appears in the CCP's discussion of a "harmonious society"

> If a father is loving and a son shows filial obedience, there will be fewer abandoned children and fewer homeless old people; if there is fidelity between husband and wife, there will be fewer tragedies and homicides caused by extramarital affairs; if an older brother is friendly and a younger brother is respectful, there will be fewer disputes over property, and in consequence, society will be much more in harmony. [70]

Second, the concept of a happy family/marriage conventionally connotes one's well-being and social security. This idea is particularly important to the post-socialist state. The strategy of reinforcing human relations within the family as a way of solving social problems and achieving a "harmonious society" is integral to the post socialist state's project of social control. Because of the regime's overall withdrawal of social welfare measures that used to be attached to work units during the Maoist period, and because of its inclination toward neo-liberal governance (Xu 2008), the move to strengthen family/marriage as the site of social security becomes a familiar and available strategy for "domesticating the social" (Clarke 2004, 2007),

[69] This statement was made by Zhou Wenzhang, the vice principle of the Chinese Academy of Governance— a training center for middle and senior government officials. See Zhou 2010, in Hong 2010, p 303.
[70] ibid, page 297.

unloading the state's responsibility for social welfare onto the shoulders of family members, which can be easily retrieved from the Confucian ethics and an easy method of catering to the masses' consent. Unlike the neo-liberal policies which have taken hold in Western societies, such as the United States, "domesticating the social" is a taken-for-granted process that is clearly rooted in Chinese culture and Confucian ethics, which may partially help to explain the state's recent enthusiastic move toward reintroducing Confucian tradition to the CCP's discourse. Hence, the family has been reinforced as a site of welfare, well-being and security in post-socialist politics. The existing Confucian ethics, which are re-evaluated as the essence of high Chinese culture among intellectuals, academic circles, the government and popular culture, are utilized as social engineering tools for "privatizing" welfare, social security, well-being, and care. All of these responsibilities are key doctrines of Confucian ethics and hence "domesticating the social" is perfectly consistent with the revival of Confucian modes of thought/governance in the party's discourse over the past two decades, with the costs of social welfare "naturally" shifted from the public to the private sphere.

Managing marriage is also a gendered discourse. Within the historical context of family projects in the PRC, the "harmonious family" initiative is associated with the state's past efforts to manage the family (*dangjia*) (Manning 2010, Wang 2006) during the 1950s and 1960s. The state's gendered labour policies defined women as "household managers" under the Maoist regime (Wang 2006). "Diligently and thriftily managing the family" (*qinjian chijia*) and "five goods family" (*wuhao jiating*) were defined as wives' responsibilities, and women's primary tasks were located within the domestic sphere. Like "managing the family" during the 1950s and 1960s, the task of maintaining a "harmonious family" at present is considered "woman-work". In order to synchronize with the party's larger goal of building a harmonious society, the ACWF's

harmonious family project begins with the understanding that "family is the smallest cell of society and thus family harmony is the groundwork for social harmony". [71] The ACWF claims that there is continuity between the "woman-work" of Maoist times and the contemporary task of managing marriage:

> Our party and government have been taking family construction seriously, which has been regarded as an important matter for state governance and social harmony and stability […].The ACWF has a good tradition and irreplaceable advantages in the domain of family work (Chen 2010, 2).

In order to naturalize gender roles, the ACWF has declared that the task of maintaining a "harmonious family" is primarily a job for women (wives), just as the "woman work" "diligently and thriftily managing the family" and the "five goods family" was focused on women in the 1950s.[72]

Interestingly, while it does derive much of its public appeal from a revival of Confucian ethics, the theme of managing marriage is also a modernizing discourse that produces new subjectivities, in which society members re-construct the self as the "subject of value" (Smith 1997, 222) and become particular agents of gender and modernity. Naturalized gender roles are attributed to a "scientific" approach to the question of gender (Evans 1997). Because of the assumed "modern" knowledge of the sexes, the "harmonious family" initiative is a project based on the tangled relations between gender and modernity. It plays an important role in the party-state's modernizing project, bringing two aspects of civilization into play: material (*wuzhi*) and

[71] Hu Jintao's speech on the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, in Hong 2010, p 2.
[72] A good family with the following five aspects: respecting the elders and caring the youngsters, equality between husband and wife, diligently and thriftily managing the family, and united neighborhood. See Wang 2006. The continuity of "woman work" in the gendered territory of the family in Hu Jiintao's administration was also claimed by Chen Zhili, the chairperson of the ACWF. See Chen 2010, p 2-3.

spiritual (*jingshen*). As Borge Bakken (2000, 54) points out, "roughly, material civilization represents the growth aspect of the model, and spiritual civilization the social control aspect". The material side of civilization is accounted for through China's economic growth, whereas "spiritual" civilization is expected to be fulfilled via society members' commitment to values and behaviours that will produce a high "quality" (*suzhi*) population, so as to strengthen the nation (Tomba 2009, Yan 2003). As a part of the modernity project, ACWF's "harmonious family" initiative combines "women's role" in the family, which is understood as a scientifically (and modern) defined truth in harmony with gender nature, and the continuing effort of modernizing *the* family adapted to the "neoliberal" context. As Chen Zhili, the ACWF chair person, states:

> [Every level of Women's Federation] must mobilize women in family construction, and extensively advocates modern ideas of family construction and styles of civilized family, such as managing family with virtues, scientifically establishing family, building a civilized family, learning for family prosperity and harmoniously guarding family (Chen 2010, 2).

The strategies for building a "harmonious family" introduced by the ACWF center on three key concepts: love, scientific knowledge and women's virtue, all of which are proposed as means of empowering women (particularly wives) to manage marriage. As part of the "harmonious family" project, the ACWF includes detailed sub-projects, such as " the green family" that emphasizes environment friendly(*lüse jiating*), and " the learning family" that emphasizes modern knowledge (*xuexi jiating*), aiming to bring "advanced" and "modern" concepts into "family construction", as well as to educate "not so advanced" women in the art of managing marriage.

The discourse of harmonious family provides the primary social context in which female subjects are formed. It introduces the challenge of the family crisis, caused by male promiscuity,

which the media's narrative presents as "natural", and suggests the strategy of managing marriage as a way for women to take control of their own happiness and well-being. In addition, as the desirable masculinity in the post Mao regime is marked by economic status, male sexual nature is understood to be unrestrained among the new rich, while working class masculinity is deemed to be emasculated by the process of marketization. Hence, class is brought into the site of managing marriage. The following sections explore the ways in which gender and class converge in the perception of managing marriage.

Middle-class women manage marriage

CONSUMERS WITH *SUZHI*: MIDDLE CLASS IN CHINA

Class used to be the major political discourse and strategy for identification and exclusion of the population in Maoist period (Cai 2001). Nevertheless, despite social inequality which existed as a function of distinctions between rural and urban households, between the Han majority population and ethnic minorities and between a minority of high rank cadres and the masses, the economic gap was not a visible phenomenon in the Maoist egalitarian society. Along with Deng Xiaoping's reform policies, which aimed to "let part of people get rich first and lead others towards common prosperity afterwards" [73] , China's economic reform has ushered in a period of stark social and economic polarization and inequality. Ironically, as Marc Blecher (2009, 114) points out: "the reformers shelved class politics precisely at the time that [their]

[73] Deng Xiaoping said this in the meeting with American journalist Mike Wallace in September 2, 1986. See *"Da meiguo jizhe hualaishi wen"* (Answer the US Journalist Wallace's Questions). *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan* (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping), 1993. Vol.3. Beijing: *Renmin chuban she*. 167-175.

policies were actively and purposefully promoting the rise of new classes, the differentiation of old ones, and the increase of inequality among them." With China's successful economic growth, Chinese society has endured a surge of inequality. Class has been erased from the current state discourse for achieving a harmonious society, but it has returned with a vengeance as the reality of class division becomes more acute than ever.

China's economic development has polarized the population's access to economic resources. Sharing the benefits of an open economy, party cadres, government officials, and entrepreneurs are the most privileged groups, enjoying unprecedented upward mobility and material pleasure thanks to the market reforms (Goodman 2008). Some professionals and managers of state-owned enterprises (including cultural industries such as the news media) are also on the list of higher income earners (Wang and Davis 2010, Li 2010). Together these social groups are loosely identified as middle class, through the discourse generated within media, government and academic circles (Goodman 2008). On the other hand, while busily creating an economic landscape of losers and winners, the party-state has systematically withdrawn social welfare measures—education, Medicare and "the iron rice bowl" (secured employment) for workers in state-owned enterprises, in order to forcefully impose an incomplete capitalism on the population (Frazier 2011, Lee 1999, Park and Cai 2011). The party-state has created millions of redundant workers in the state-section enterprises, and most of them are female workers who used to be protected by their "work units" and by social welfare regulations (Cai 2009, Rosenthal 1998).

Research into China's middle class, to date, has been uneven, and the terminology is loosely employed and inconclusively defined. In China, middle class does not have exactly the same meaning as the concept does in the rest of the world, particularly in Western societies

(Goodman and Robison 1992, Robison and Goodman 1996), and its development is an on-going phenomenon that requires further observation. A middle class status in the Chinese context is primarily assigned to social groups which have gained economic benefits from the party-state's economic policies. These groups' income and consumption patterns provide a means for distinguishing their social class (Goodman 2008, Tsang 2013, Tomba 2010). Therefore, as a corollary of the emergence of the new rich in the post socialist period, middle class identity in China is formed primarily via consumption, through which the measurement of one's social status is gauged.

The rise of the middle class in China has led to a radical change not only in patterns of consumption, but also in perceptions of the self; and both of these developments are associated with the process of modernization in China. Thanks to the party-state's wealth creation programs, the subjectification of the middle class has been achieved through consumerism and furthermore through the discourse of modernity, in which *suzhi* discourse (human quality) has become one of the "technologies of self" (Foucault 1988). A series of "scientist-rational measures and programs" have been developed for the construction of "civilized" and "modern" selfhood (Liu 2008). China's proclaimed modernization project, closely tied to the introduction of a market economy and the state's project of opening up to the world, has produced a neoliberal regime that requires the subject to cultivate self in the construction of identity (Liu 2008).

Citizens have actively participated in the process marking the self and others with *suzhi* discourse, which has become a collective narrative in shaping class identity (Hsu 2007). This modern selfhood is defined as the source of high *suzhi* (quality) subjects that constitute the most qualified population within the nation (Kipnis 2006, Yan 2008). It describes a disciplinary

measurement to evaluate citizens' quality as human beings (primarily in terms of expected behaviours, values, education and life styles) and gauge their preparedness to become subjects of modernity. *Suzhi* is associated with a highly mobile, educated, and professional group that shares the potential or the experience of enhanced access to resources (Kipnis 2006, Yan 2008). Social groups with high *suzhi* are acclaimed as the "backbone" (*shehui jiliang*) of building the "harmonious family", and deemed essential to further enhancing harmonious communities that are the base for a "harmonious society"—the party-state's objective in order to achieve social control of emerging contingencies (Tomba 2009).

The middle class is the subject of modernity and associated with the *suzhi* discourse. Members of the middle class—urban, educated and capital-rich—constitute the most important actors in China's modernization process. The role of the middle class in the state's triumphalist project of achieving the "great revival of the Chinese nation" [74] (*zhonghua minzu de weida fuxing*) is, as Tomba (2009, 593) points out, to

> help to make China one of the world's most powerful nations […] they appear as the most desirable type of subject for an authoritarian state: politically docile, but willing to participate in an ethical and moral community in the name of social stability, consumer rights and virtues [...] they are being engineered, stimulated and rewarded, coddled in the arms of the economic opportunities, empowered by a rhetoric that justifies their privileges and highlights their responsibilities.

NARRATING THE "SELF": GENDER AND MODERNITY

Studies of China's new middle class, by and large, have focused on two themes. First, much research has been done on the socioeconomic characteristics of wealthier groups and on the question of the boundaries of the middle class—how large it is and what defines middle class

[74] Academic circles have echoed the state authorities to elaborate Jiang Zemin's idea. See Luo 2001.

status in comparison with the rest of society (Buckley 1999, Donald and Zhang 2008, Goodman and Zhang 2008). Second, fragmentary research in recent years has moved forward to focus on the relations between the party-state and the new middle class, investigating the subjectification of middle class individuals in China's discourse of modernity (Liu 2008, Tomba 2009). These fragmentary studies have addressed the processes of class formation and have provided observations of the characteristics of China's middle class. In this section, I pay attention to the ways in which the formation of the middle class affects the subject's position, or assessed the impact of class formation on the perception of the middle class self. In particular I examine the interplay between gender and class. How do middle class women perceive themselves in class terms? And how do they make sense of upward mobility on the class ladder in terms of marriage? These questions may broaden our understanding of the emerging middle class in China and provide new insights into the process of class categorization with a gender perspective.

Through my personal network and a process of snowball recruitment, I interviewed nineteen middle class women in Chongqing. Two women were personal friends, and after I interviewed them, they introduced their friends to me. Of the 19 women, 17 were professionals and two were housewives.

The self of the middle class informants lies in the subjectification of the emerging middle class during China's modernization process. On the one hand, middle class women have pursued careers and most of them have claimed that they wanted to "feel independent"; they earn a relatively high income and subsequently have become more prominent consumers of material goods and cultural production. On the other hand, they are the "subject of gender" (Evans 2008), subscribe to the post-Mao discourse of gender roles and biological difference and thus their sense

of class identity is tightly affiliated with their husbands' social status, through which they obtain access to a "middle class" state of being in China.

One's understanding of the self is intimately related to the social-cultural context in which one's life is embedded. At the beginning of each interview, I let the interviewee talk about herself. Their narratives about themselves often include terms such as education, occupation, particular taste as consumers and lifestyle, all of which help to constitute middle class identity in China today. These women often began to talk about their educational and career backgrounds. All of the middle class informants have university degrees (two of them have master's degrees), one of the prime social engineering tools provided to advance one's self and to distinguish the self from the rest of the population. It also implies one's *suzhi*, or status as an "advanced" subject, with further possibilities for upward mobility, in comparison with the "backward" uneducated masses. Moreover, a university degree is also considered one of the keys to enjoying a better material and richer spiritual life. Traditionally education has been a prime means of entering "elite culture", which is one of the most important social identities in Chinese society. Higher education for a woman (to a certain extent), in particular, adds to her value on the marriage market.

The sense of self as a subject of modernity is explicitly expressed through a person's narrative of the self. The self often highlights the temporality and spatiality in which a being lives, with an emphasis upon the term "modern society", in which certain values and behaviors are privileged vis-à-vis being "traditional"/ "conservative". In fact, many of the informants employ the term "modern" to describe the world in which they live when discussing what is occurring in the society. Some of them explicitly employed the term "traditional" to refer to "other" women who stand on the opposite side of the modernization process. The comparison

between the "modern" being and the "traditional" "other" truly shows that the self is not constructed in isolation; rather, it is located in a complex of relationality. The middle class woman as a modern subject is likely to connect herself to *suzhi* through her open-minded attitude and approach to the world, as contrasted with "conservative" and thus "narrow minded" other.

The modern self also is the subject of consumer culture. Don Slater (1997, 1) argues that "consumer culture is a motif threaded through the texture of modernity, a motif that recapitulates the preoccupations and characteristic styles of thought of the modern west". Middle class identity shapes the consuming patterns (Ho 2008, Elfick 2008) and leisure habits of the modern subject. When I began to contact middle class informants, each of these women expressed a preference regarding interview locations. Most of the middle class women I interviewed chose a quiet, nicely decorated space with air conditioning. In the end, the location generally turned out to be a western style café or restaurant. In comparison with most Chinese style restaurants, these locations are characterized by a clientele that speaks with lower voices that blend into the light music background and behave in a "civil" manner while eating. This kind of place highlights the ongoing process of modernization and attracts higher income consumers (with higher *suzhi*), seeking to distance themselves from the working class behaviour seen in lower-end Chinese style restaurants.

After the interviews, I also spent time with many interviewees as friends, and this gave me opportunities to engage in further conversations and to observe their lives.[75] "Being cultural" (*you wenhua*, educated and thus civilized) and being modern and global in consumption are central to a women's sense of identity. For example, one of my informants explicitly reveled in

[75] They were aware of my research when I was hanging out with them.

the distinction of having a middle class consumer identity when she talked about the coupon for a fashion show she received in the street: "the coupon wasn't given to anyone in street. It was given to someone who looked like that kind of consumer." By "that kind of consumer", she meant someone who was fashionably dressed, demonstrating not only access to money but also a degree of "taste." Many middle class women participate in tea culture, both in high end tea houses and within their tastefully decorated homes. Middle class "tea culture" is not a thirst-based enterprise, but rather a form of luxury consumption that demonstrates cultural identity. I was invited to sample tea culture by two informants at their beautiful homes and had the chance to see their exquisite tea equipment representing many different styles, regions and aesthetic tendencies. One informant claimed that all of her tea came from a small village in Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province, a place in South East China traditionally producing a small quantity of *longjing cha*. She makes the three hour flight at the beginning of every April, the period of the year when the tea achieves its optimal taste, freshness and genuine quality. She pays 60 to 100 US dollars per 50 gram of this precious tea.[76] Another informant told me that she was obsessed with an expensive type of silk made with the help of a complicated ancient technique that produces a distinct fabric that used to be the symbol of the evil "landlord class" during the Maoist period. She claimed all her clothing was made from this type of fabric. She revealed that this type of fabric had become a favorite with the male party cadres and officials in that region.[77]

Some of them travel internationally as tourists for pleasure. Owning a car is also a statement of class identity. Each member of the household has at least one car. Moreover, the brand of car is crucial to demonstrate one's class identity. One informant told me that all of her colleagues drove better brands of cars than she did, and that this made her feel inferior and

[76] Informant Kunkun.
[77] Informant Ruru.

provided her with a motivation for finding a higher status husband. Many housing projects in urban areas have manifested evidence of the development of class status and privileges, as well as the ideological process of achieving self worth (Li 2010, Pow 2011). Most of my middle class informants live in relatively high end residential areas, with large size apartments or detached houses in gated communities with alert security guards.

The desire for material goods and the taste of for luxurious pleasures are justified as the common pursuit of all members of today's Chinese society, despite the major income gaps which shape actual patterns of consumption. Class identity generally links to the patterns of consumption in China as the scholars suggest (Cartier 2010, Tomba and Tang 2010), but how does class identity affect media consumption in particular? My fieldwork findings reveal that middle class women in China are likely to consume non-official media (e.g. foreign films, news from internet sources and social media, new consumerism magazines and the like), which indicates a "taste" oriented choice. The media resources of middle class women are taste-orientated and go beyond the official structured frame (i.e. local party press and official TV channels). These women consume media in a way that shows the diversity of the media industries within a consumer culture that opens up choices that diverge from the official channels. Interviewees spent a considerable amount of time discussing their media consumption—movies they like to watch, magazines they read, websites they went to and the like. Cultural consumption for middle class women, particularly for younger middle class women, becomes a means of class distinction. Bourdieu (1984) states that taste is determined by one's cultural capital and is often internalized as a marker of class identity. Middle class Chinese taste is produced by the pushing force of modernizing discourse that distinguishes the middle class from the rest of the population.

All of the thirty-something middle class informants I spoke to are internet shoppers, and many of them have blogs and/or micro-blogs (*weibo*) for social interaction and for recording their feelings and everyday lives as consumers of materials, cultural products and tourism. Most of these micro-blogs fall into the category of consumption diaries that provide a way of sharing their experiences of new food, new clothing, new home decorations, and new adventures as tourists, or allowing them to comment on new movies consumed via the internet or on DVD. When the modern women speak, they use English terms that are fashionably circulated in the media and social media. Moreover, the types of cultural products they consume constitute a crucial distinction for middle class identity. Many informants I interviewed in Chongqing read a local women's magazine *The New Woman* (*xin nüxing*) that provides fashion, brands, tourist information (both domestic and international), cuisines, discussions of feelings and love. By alluding to a "new woman", the magazine refers to a different language of the gender from that of the ACWF's state feminism, advocated through its institutional journal, *zhongguo funü* (the Women of China), which is seen as out of fashion in what McRobbie (2008) calls the " aftermath of feminism". Internet and pirate copies of foreign cultural products have successfully eluded China's censorship of foreign cultural products, despite the state's lack of commitment to its promise to the WTO that it allows borderless cultural production exchanges. Rather than consuming Chinese films, most of the middle class women claimed to have a preference for watching foreign films (Korean, Japanese and Western) that symbolize their taste and modernity.

Moreover, the modern subject is the subject of gender. China's middle class women cannot be understood without taking their male partners into account. The concept of self is tightly attached to marriage and the husband's status. The perception of class identity is connected to marital status and, in particular, the husband's social status. The middle class

women only perceive themselves as middle class via their connections to their husbands. They are aware of these connections between the middle class self and their male partner's status. Without a middle class man to anchor her identity, a woman may easily drop out of the middle class category. With their income alone, they could not maintain their life style. Consequently I engaged in conversations with them about their husbands. Below are four excerpts exploring the ways in which women make sense of the relationship between middle class life and the husband's earning power. These four women (Zizi, Peng, Nansan, Zhuzhu) are professionals in their middle thirties, whose husbands are either management staff of the state-owned enterprises or successful private businessmen.

> [As a woman] your income alone can't support you and the child. You will also have to cover your car's expenses. It costs a lot you know. You are already used to that kind of life. Think about it. Can the money you are making now maintain your living standard? If you don't have working experience, as a woman, in a place like Chongqing, although you have a university diploma, we can see how much money you will make.
>
> (Zizi, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

> Two people (the wife and the husband) must be middle class. This is very important. It is something to do with what kind of home you live in and what kind of residential area you live in. [It is also something to do with] whether you have financial capability to take good care of your parents, to afford medical costs when [someone in the family] is sick, and to pay the mortgage when you want to buy a house. It relates to too many things. I think [the husband's] economic power is so important. It is too important at present when everyone is responsible for his own social welfare. Now the hospitals are very corrupt. If you are sick, you will pay at least 100,000 [yuan], and you are required to pay it immediately [before you see a doctor]. You have to manage all of these. We are supporting four parents, and they all will be old and sick. If two of them are sick at the same time, we will have to pay 200,000—300,000 [yuan] for the sick elders at once. What will you do? At the same time, if your kid is in school, [you can't cope with these]. How can one manage these things without economic foundation?
>
> (Peng, a 35 year-old middle class woman)

> If [my job] is going to get too demanding, I will retire. I will focus on taking care of my [future] child. My pension won't be enough [to cover living expenses], so it is very important to have my husband to support the family […]. I won't be working again [even if my child grows up]. Staying home is fine with me. I can develop some hobbies, [such as] learning piano, reading books and practicing tea culture. I have a bunch of friends too. There is a problem in Chongqing—it might be better in Beijing and Shanghai—that is, there doesn't exist a circle. For example, if I am surrounded by a social circle in which everyone is staying home to take care of children, and we have some activities within the circle, such as going trips and communicating, that would be better [for women to stay at home].
>
> (Nansan, a 34 year-old middle class woman)

> According to [my husband], the work I am doing now is just to entertain myself and to have fun. We don't need my income at all. I just need my work to enrich my life. I don't need to be home every day, so I choose to keep my job. Money never has been an issue between me and my husband. We hire two nannies (*baomu*) to take care of the housework. I am the one who pays for the nannies. My income alone is enough to pay the living expenses for my family. [My husband] gives me a large sum of money once in a while or buys luxury stuff. Because of his economic status, I have no worry about living expenses. He makes me worry free about money".
>
> (Zhuzhu, a 31 year-old middle class woman)

These reflections reveal that having a middle class husband is the key factor to maintaining a middle class life, due to gender inequality in access to economic resources. The four informants above confirm that women's income cannot maintain a middle class living standard; the husbands are the "backbone" of middle class households. All middle class women claimed that their husbands brought more income into the household. Informant Peng confirms that the process of domesticating the social has devolved responsibility for social welfare onto family members and has consequently enhanced the value of marriage, furthermore raising the potential for transactional sex, which is seen as a key cause of the phenomenon of "keeping a second wife".

Moreover, women's social identity is an elusive category, which is always attached to and determined by their husbands' social (and class) identity. This is particularly evident in women's approach to narrating the self. Through the husband's economic status, the women complete and secure the desired conception of self as the subject of modernity and become middle class beings. The husband's status plays a dominant role in the emergence of a sense of middle class selfhood in women's class identity. This selfhood remains unstable at best if it stands alone. A woman's profession, education, and income (individual income and contribution to household income) cannot reduce the degree of her need to rely on her husband's economic resources in determining the self. All of the middle class informants confirmed that their husbands (or boyfriends whom they intended to marry) are men with higher social status than themselves. One of the informants lived with someone she liked for a while, but she chose another man simply because the first person's earning power was relatively low. She said: "even my parents said he would be a perfect husband if he had a better job".[78]

Studies of wives' class identification in Europe and North America have shown that a woman's degree of involvement in paid work and her education appear to be important determinants of the extent to which she relies upon her husband's social class for status (Davis and Robinson 1998). Individualism in Western industrial societies manifests itself through women's participation in the labour force, declining rates of marriage, lower fertility, and men's diminishing responsibility for women and children; hence, women have gained greater independence from men in their class identification and class awareness (Davis and Robinson 1988). However, in the case of China, despite some gains in terms of career options and income earning potential, middle class women feel insecure in their class identity without a male partner.

[78] Interviewee Yuanyuan, a 33 year-old middle class woman.

"The borrowing model" of social class (Baxter 1994) between husband and wife that is employed to test the societies in which women have much lower employment rates still exists among China's middle class women, even among those who have empowered themselves by pursuing their own careers. Women in middle class occupations by no means identify themselves as middle class unless they confirm their class identity via their husbands' (always higher) status. Hence, marriage becomes a means of attaining class identity.

My findings on the identity of middle class women add some gender specific insights to the scholarship on the emerging middle class in China. First, in comparison to western societies, the middle class women's sense of self remained tightly dependent upon the husband's class position, revealing that the marriage pattern in China still conforms to a model of "marrying up" in which women, including middle class women, choose to marry men whose social status (economic, educational, and political) is higher than their own. Second, the hidden power of gender ideology, which posits men as the breadwinners, remains an article of faith in middle class households, which confirms that the most desirable aspect of masculinity in China today is the man's economic prowess. Because of these entrenched gender roles, China's middle class women are a long way from achieving true independence, both economically and ideologically. When asked what an ideal husband for them is, many middle class informants pointed out that they had witnessed the failure of many marriages caused by the factor that wives had a higher income, referencing the symbolic/psychological injury to a man whose wife has more powerful position. Informants clearly expressed their disapproval of marriages in which gender roles "go upside down". For examples, two middle class women (Zhenzi and Kunkun) said:

> I am in favor of this opinion [that husband should make more money than wife]. I am just following my instinct. We are not living in a vacuum. It is the reality of China. You feel it not a problem if you make more money than your husband does, but what about

> your parents and other people? [All of them] will constitute every element of your marriage. There is no such a man who has made me admire him but needs me to support him. My own life is by no means in a high standard. If he is not better than me [in terms of earning power], or at least his capability is not as good as mine, [I wouldn't marry him]. I haven't met any man whose capability is high but makes little money. I think [capability and money] generally are in direct proportions.
>
> (Zhenzi, A 33 year-old middle class woman)

> [A woman] has her own capability of making a living, but [she] mustn't make more money than her husband. I have seen too many cases that a wife makes more money than her husband and hence leads to an unhappy marriage. Because, in China, even though the man doesn't mind [his wife makes more money than he does], what about the people surrounding him?
>
> (Kunkun, A 35 year-old middle class woman)

Third, although China's "state feminism" (Wang 2005) has advocated "men and women's equality" (*nannü pingdeng*) over the past six decades, women are clearly disadvantaged in comparison with men in terms of their access to well-paid employment, political representation, social status, and education. Particularly in the post-socialist period, the state withdrew affirmative policies of gender equality (Stockman 1994, Cai and Wu 2006). Middle class women's continuing tendency to seek security through marriage illustrates that the current context still places serious obstacles in the way of women's ability to achieve middle class status without the borrowing model. In a society in which men have the absolute power to control resources, as Jaschok (1988) points out in her study on concubines and bondservants in the "old" China, their access to social status and resources depends upon their relationships with men.

DOING *SUZHI*, DOING GENDER

In my conversations with middle class women, I discovered that they derived much less happiness from career satisfaction than from marital satisfaction. This is rooted in the society's lower expectations for women's career success, along with a correspondingly higher expectation of marital success for women. As the popular axiom makes clear, for a woman, "working well is not as good as marrying well" (*gan de hao buru jia de hao*). Also, women's chances for promotion in their careers are much lower than men's; therefore, a woman's occupation becomes the cultivation of a high *suzhi*, which provides her with access to higher status men in the marriage market. A woman's success in life depends primarily upon her success in mate selection and maintaining a good marriage that will secure for her the benefits of "modern" life.

How is the self of middle class women related to their marriage? In other words, how do women articulate the self when seeking to make sense of managing marriage? Women's approach to this problem reveals much about relations between the self, the discourse of modernity and gender ideology in contemporary China. The "technologies of the self", in a gender perspective, offer women a means to manage their marriage. Managing marriage is a discourse of modernity, and middle class women buy into the idea as subjects of modernity. Distinguishing themselves from working class women, middle class women locate the self in modernity, a strategy that employs "modern" terms, such as love, communication, caring and nurture to strengthen their intimate relationships, which they understand as the keys to master the marriage. Some informants used the term "strong box" (*baoxian xiang*) to describe a "traditional marriage", in which a woman makes no effort to preserve the husband's fidelity. Against this construct, they counter with the idea of a "modern" marriage, which is no longer secure during the period of opening up. The market economy is understood as the only means of achieving

modernity, and this has a pronounced psychological impact on the perception of marriage. For example, Zhuzhu used her cell phone as an example to illustrate how to manage marriage:

> The marriage must be managed. I give you an example. You like a cell phone at the time when you just have bought it. However after you have used it for a couple of years, you will have the desire to use another kind of cell phone. If you have the old cell phone to get the cover changed, and change some parts too, you will feel that you don't have to buy another cell phone. [A woman] must manage [marriage]. [She] must let her life full of fresh feelings.
>
> (Zhuzhu, a 31 year-old middle class woman)

The mixed metaphor in this reflection echoes the media's description of the "family crisis", which is primarily deemed to be caused by masculine nature (e.g. "off with the old and on with the new").[79] It also complies with the media prescription that advises women to improve themselves both physically and "culturally". Performing these concepts in intimate lives is a matter of *suzhi* for middle class women. These concepts of modernity in intimate lives (Giddens 1991, 1992) pervade with middle class women providing key words to be performed in the erotic sphere.

The ways of managing marriage are understood as part of a modern woman's *suzhi*, providing the tools which empower women to master the nature of masculinity, namely promiscuity, and to enter the complex of human feelings with a particular reference to heterosexual relations, and subsequently to satisfy men's physical and psychological needs. Hence, *suzhi* is essential to a woman's capacity for overcoming the challenges posed by masculinity. In performing love and communication, women understand the importance of

[79] Fan, Yanping. 2008. "*Hushang jiang xian taitai peixun ban*" (Wife-training workshop will appear in Shanghai), Qingnian bao (Youth Daily), July 14, accessed Sept. 2009: http://why.eastday.com/y/node41459/userobject1ai449470.html

"wisdom" – the *suzhi* of the "modern self". For example, Fong expresses how a woman with "wisdom" can maintain her attractiveness and confidently master her marriage:

> [A woman] should give [her husband] different kinds of feelings. She can make the man feel that she is his wife as well as his lover. She can MAKE herself his bosom friend, and meanwhile, she is a good mother of his child…for a woman, wealth is not important, but wisdom for her is as important as her youth and beauty. But a women's beauty is defined differently in every stage. Speaking of youth, age is a hard index, but speaking of beauty, a twenty something has her beauty of that age, and a thirty something has beauty in her way too. The key is whether a woman is clever enough to show her beauty in every stage.
>
> (Fong, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

Often middle class women compare these "qualities" with the image of "traditional" wives who are unable to bring these qualities into play for the purposes of managing marriage. The failure of marriage is attributed to the woman's traditional (low) *suzhi*, which is defined as "backward", "conservative" "narrow minded", "uneducated", and "irrational". In the women's perception, male promiscuity is deemed to be the cause of "keeping a second wife"; however, the wives also bear the responsibility by virtue of their *suzhi*. By contrast, middle class women, as "modern" beings, have the *suzhi* to cope with the family crisis, and to achieve a triumph over promiscuous masculinity, as Zhuzhu eloquently expressed:

> "Keeping a second wife", in my opinion, is not a bad thing as a challenge to wives' *suzhi*. I stand in the position as a married woman. When you have a family, for many women, perhaps 80 of percent women, she doesn't know very much about exploring what the man exactly needs. For a traditional Chinese woman, she feels that marriage is a "strong box". Many women think that way. In fact, the thing called feeling can't be secured in any way. But traditional women always ignore this. So when men have money or become government officials, they may start to have supporting relationships. But more importantly, for a rich man or a government official, after all, he has much pressure from his career. If his wife cannot provide what he needs both physically and psychologically, in particular psychologically, he always will step out of the track (*chugui*). He has feelings, and he will seek [these feelings] both physically and psychologically from younger and prettier women. Nevertheless, I feel, a woman with good enough *suzhi*, as a

wife she can master whatever the man needs in his heart at every step, and thus this man will not seek a second wife ever."

(Zhuzhu, a 31 year-old middle class woman)

Suzhi is also a gendered discourse, in that it assigns particular qualities to males and females. It emphasizes gender roles based on biological difference between men and women, through which the marriage is invariably forged. When describing the ideal masculine qualities within marriage, middle class women tend to emphasize "the motivation of upward mobility" (*shangjin xin*) and "a responsible heart" (*zeren xin*), referring to the man's capacity and awareness of constantly providing a middle class material life. Meanwhile, the ideal feminine qualities are listed as attentiveness (*xixin*), thoughtfulness (*titie*), tenderness (*wenrou*) and supportiveness (*zhichi*). These feminine qualities are understood as the qualities needed for managing marriage, and hence through *suzhi* discourse, women are relocated in the domestic sphere and managing marriage becomes woman-work. Below is an excerpt illustrating the ways in which gender roles are played out within marriage by Juanzi who claimed that she was in a happy marriage:

Question: have you ever thought about quitting your job?

Answer: In fact, my husband doesn't want me to completely become a housewife. He feels that a woman should have her own career and her own circle of friends. He supports my work, but he doesn't want me to spend too much energy on my work. He wants me to have enough energy to focus on the family… I put more energy on my family responsibility although I want to have a career. My husband says that there exist 2:8 portions between him and me. It means that I spend 20 percent energy on my work while as a woman I ought to spend 80 percent energy on the household. We think this is more scientific.

Question: in contrast, he spends 80 percent energy on his work and 20 percent on the household?

Answer: Yes. Because he is a man, (stop to think). Before we got married, we discussed this. [Considering] his personalities as a man, we agreed that we ought to differentiate the

> role between managing the inside (*zhunei*, household) [as my job] and the outside (*zhuwai*, career) [as his job].
>
> (Juanzi, a 34 year-old middle class woman)

Tichenor and Jaris' studies (1999 and 2005) on the relationship between income and marital power in the Eastern United States challenges resource and exchange theory, which argues that husbands' resources and income decide their marital power over wives within the household. Instead, the authors argue that the hidden power of gender ideology plays a powerful role in forcing wives with higher incomes to continue "doing gender" in bearing the larger burden of domestic labour and in bearing responsibility for their success as wives and mothers. They show how normative gender expectations constrain interactions in order to construct appropriate gender identities and to maintain men's dominance within marriage.

My study of middle class women in China confirms that "performing gender" prevails, although middle class women do not need financial support to run the household. Nevertheless, a belief in men as breadwinners still firmly exists among middle class women in China. However, the key difference here is that middle class female informants in China accept as axiomatic the creed that women must seek out higher status husbands, both as a means of upward social mobility and in order to ensure a middle class identity and their life style. Therefore, performing gender can be interpreted on the two aspects in China: marital satisfaction is culturally prescribed (with the model of "men as breadwinners"); it also entails the performance of ideologically scripted gender roles.

Emphasizing gender perfomativity as acted within regulatory norms, Judith Butler (2004, 1) argues that one does not "do" one's gender alone, instead, one is always "doing" it with or for another. In West and Zimmerman's (1987) empirical study, their conceptualization of "doing

gender" also highlights the relationality of gender performativity. Gender is displayed and constituted through everyday interaction, in which gendered identity is naturalized and validated (West and Zimmerman 1987), thereby allowing it to maintain asymmetrical power relations. The relationality of performing gender can be illustrated by the ways of middle class women's interaction with the masculinity within the household.

Because of the ways in which middle class women perceive themselves as subjects of modernity (i.e. their sense of entitlement to class identity) and the masculinity in the household (as the economic winner), they adopt particular ways of doing gender within marriage. Gendered labour both at work and within the household is an ongoing social practice. Hochschild's conceptualization of "emotional labour" (1983 and 2003) refers to the exploitative and subordinating nature in feminist studies, which centres upon the socially reproduced, gendered commodification of emotion in organizations as well as in the sex industry and domestic housework. Xiao's study (2011) on the "second wives" phenomenon in China reveals that in order to secure their financial resources, the "second wives" perform emotional care that wives with secured marital status are not necessarily eager to perform. However, my interviews with middle class women reveal that middle class wives (whose husbands are the primary group that is accused of keeping a "second wife") perform the same emotional care as the "second wives" do, yet they are convinced by the discourse of modernity that this is the *suzhi* of a modern subject.

While gendered labour within marriage exists in most societies, dictating that women undertake childrearing and housework, most middle class women in China have given household chores to different types of domestic workers (*baomu, ayi and zhongdian gong*), primarily rural migrant women and former laid-off women workers in the state sector (the new and old working

class women). While domestic work (childcare, cleaning, grocery shopping, cooking and laundry, etc) is primarily given to lower class women (Yan 2008), middle class women no longer need to perform domestic care tasks; instead, they focus specifically on "emotional care", which is defined as work particularly related to feminine "nature", in order to perform gender within marriage. The "emotional care" that middle class women perform is undertaken as a management strategy, a device for mastering the promiscuous masculinity of middle class men, success in which endeavour is deemed essential to marital satisfaction, the "natural" route to a woman's success. For middle class women, performing the role of good wife and good mother, as one informant says, no longer refers to managing domestic chores; rather, it refers to "understanding" and "communication" that is linked to middle class quality (*suzhi*). Fong's elaborating a particular routine between her and her husband illustrates how middle class women do "emotional care" in managing marriage:

> First you have to make him feel you are a good wife. [For example], my husband is very busy. When he comes back home from work, he is too tired to say a word. Before he heads home from his office, he always gives me a call. [Having received his notice], I put his towels and house robe in the bathroom, then make his favorite tea. He doesn't say a word when he steps into the door. He first goes to have a bath, and gets changed. Afterwards, he goes to lie down in his chair for about 20 minutes and drinks the tea I have made for him. A moment later, he comes to me and starts to chat: how the capital is, how the business meeting has gone today, and tells me about his day. Then he asks about our kid. This has become a routine before we go to bed. I think this whole process contains a lot of [meaning]. When he goes to have a bath, I make the tea for him; this MEANS I am a good wife. When he doesn't want to talk, you mustn't feel he is turning cold to you. He is just tired. Wait until he recovers, he will tell you everything as if you were his good friend. Sometimes, I give him advice and my ideas for solutions. When his day has not gone well, I always comfort him. We will talk like friends. Afterwards, when he asks about our child, I tell him something funny about the child to amuse him….you can't generally conclude that because you cook and do laundry that you are a good wife. A good wife means more than that. A high quality marriage needs the woman to be very smart….the wisdom in a woman. She understands everything that the man needs. If you give him whatever he feels, he won't keep a second wife….I have made [my husband]

> feel that he must tell me everything. [For example], if he is stuck on a contract in a meeting, he'd go to a washroom to talk to me on the phone….yes, the management of marriage is very important. "
>
> (Fong, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

The "emotional care" performed by the middle class wives illustrates that "emotional care" is not only rooted in the discourse of modernity (through concepts such as *suzhi*) and gender ideology, but also is something that correlates with a type of masculinity (economic winners). As West and Zimmerman (1987) point out, gender performativity is relational, and thus the "emotional care" of middle class wives is linked to the performance of masculinity. Many middle class women are satisfied with their husbands' "qualities". They employ the same vocabulary to express their satisfaction with masculine performance within marriage, using concepts like "*chengsu*" (maturity, a mature man is expected to be a breadwinner and to take the responsibilities of supporting the family), "*shangjin xin*" (the motivation for upward mobility) and "*shiye xin*" (career oriented), which positively describe qualities of the desirable masculinity that is able to bring a better life to family members. Zhuzhu clearly explained the characteristics of desirable masculinity as follows:

> The first condition that we should talk about is a realistic question. Economically he must let me feel rich; then I will have no worries about material life. This is the most basic security. An ideal husband at least should let his wife not worry about where to eat the next meal.
>
> (Zhuzhu, a 31 year-old middle class woman)

In addition, gender performativity in the case of middle class women's "emotional care" also has a specific cultural context, which explicitly engages with the socialization of women into appropriate gender roles that correspond to varying definitions of "family". This may help to elucidate Butler's conceptualization of gender performativity. Many informants attempted to

highlight culturally defined aspects of Chinese marriage by using the term of "*en qing*" (kindness and gratitude) in order to distinguish the relationship from the western-imported term "love", when asked to describe the intimate relations between a wife and a husband. Within this context, women not only perform as a good wife/lover/mother/a woman with *suzh*i, but also must perform as a good sister-in-law and a good daughter-in-law, by taking care of the in-laws and the husband's family members. In return, she receives long term gratitude from the husband and his family members, which is valued as the strongest human relationship that can develop between married couples. This particular cultural context is utilized more intentionally as a strategy for managing marriage in the middle class household.

"Diligently and thriftily manage the family"

THE URBAN WORKING CLASS

The eight urban workers I interviewed individually include both urban factory workers and former redundant workers from the Chongqing Steel Iron Company, a gigantic state-owned enterprise established during the Great Leap Forward on the basis of the Maoist ideology of the "strong nation" and the "leading working class". I recruited some of my interview subjects through a relative (also a former laid-off worker). After the first round of interviews, the group introduced me to their friends whom I also recruited. Their ages ranged from 29 to 55. The particular context of China's Marketization, privatization and globalization processes has created a majority of losers while providing opportunities for the new rich to gain status (Hurst and Sorace 2011). During this period, the material conditions of working class life have deteriorated, and the repression of workers' rights has been the inevitable consequence of the rapid polarization of society. As Weil (2006) puts it, "rampant corruption unites party and state

authorities and enterprise managers with the new private entrepreneurs in a web of alliances that are enriching a burgeoning capitalist class, while the working classes are exploited in ways that have not been seen for over half a century".

The devaluation of China's working class coincided with an ideological transition which relegated that same class (formerly a central actor in the revolutionary struggle) to a marginal role in society. Linguistic formulations play a key role in these political events, as it has throughout the CCP's history (Schoenhals 1992). For example, in order to minimize the impact of massive layoffs, the official discourse defines the layoff as *xiagang* (off duty) and laid off workers as "surplus workers" (Lei 2009), convincing the workers of the necessity of the lay-offs in the state's grand scheme for pursuing modernity, which requires a more "advanced" and more efficient work force. China's economic reform has ushered in stark social and economic polarization, inequality and unrest; but, ironically, as Marc Blecher (2009, 114) points out:

> The reformers shelved class politics precisely at the time that their policies were actively and purposefully promoting the rise of new classes, the differentiation of old ones, and the increase of inequality among them.

The discourse of modernity, once again, appears as a 'taken-for-granted' tool to marginalize working class, and thus, the class ideology of the Maoist regime has been "naturally" replaced with a binary distinction between the middle class with "modern" *suzhi* and the "traditional/conservative/backward" "other" in the dominant discourse. The capitalist class and middle class are categorized as the "modern" beings, whereas the "other" has been cast out as a backward and "traditional" population. With Jiang Zemin's "three representatives", capitalist class has been defined as the representative of "the most advanced productive force" (Li 2011), which has fully overthrown the Maoist ideology of the working class. The Maoist

understanding of the working class/proletariat (*gongren jieji*) as the leading class of the state has given way to an ideology which relegates that class to the fallen position, which are subject to a "symbolic annihilation" (Tuchman 1978) in the current state's modernity project. The working class' sharp loss of political power is camouflaged with the binary distinction between "modernity" and "tradition".

In contrast to middle class as the higher *suzhi* subject that is "placed on a higher step of the civilization ladder" (Tomba 2009, 597), the working class, has been dislocated as low *suzhi* population that is the barrier of the state's modernization trajectory (Sun 2009, Tamara 2006, Yan 2009). The working class is represented as having "very low ability to represent and pursue their own interests" (Tomba 2009). The discourse of *suzhi* functions as an agent of alienation among the working class, and furthers an agenda of class oppression that covers up class struggles and social conflicts in China's polarization today. *Suzhi* discourse also converges with the state's project of building a harmonious society to tackle social contingences when resistance arises to challenge the state's authority.

When I interviewed working class women, informants expressed a hopeful wish for their children's upward mobility: I want him/her to become "a useful person in society", a common expression derived from the dominant discourse which refers to individuals with high *suzhi* (and who are therefore useful). By comparison with the "useful" social groups, working class women obviously felt they were disposable and had little value. Compared to middle class women's enthusiasm for locating themselves within the discourse of modernity, working class women surprisingly identified themselves as "traditional" and "conservative". Informants were recommended by my networks as the ones who know "how to speak" and they did speak eloquently, but often qualified their opinions as "conservative" and "no longer fashionable". In

her ethnographical study on Hangzhou silk workers' narrative of the self in relation to the "post-socialist allegory of modernity" (Rofel 1999, 217), Rofel points out that younger working class women who came of age since the end of Maoism enthusiastically embraced consumer-oriented domestic preoccupations generated in the post-Mao's modernization discourse. Rofel's finding is based on her fieldwork in the 1990s. During China's accelerated modernization process in the past decade, the population has been more dramatically divided into different social groups based on their relationship with the market that links to other types of resources. As the loser of commodity capitalism, the working class no longer finds a place in the modernity discourse that it had been previously drawn to. The working class women I interviewed seemed to feel that they had been cast aside during China's quest for modernity. In sharp contrast to the confidence displayed by middle class women in narrating the middle class self, working class women were hesitant when they spoke of the self. Their attitude toward speaking of the self reflects their dislocation of identity in the context of the modernity, in which class struggle has been erased and class identity is replaced by the binary distinction between "modern" and "traditional", which represses what Rofel (1999, 128) calls "socialist nostalgia" as a resistance against the post-socialist scheme among the working class women.

MEMORY AND LANGAUGE

In contrast to middle class women's taste-orientated media consumption, working class women have tighter relations to the official media (e.g. news from local dailies and CCTV or local TV channels supervised by the party's propaganda departments), which indicates a structured choice. In comparison with middle class media menu, the working class is media poor. Working class women in the state section I interviewed in Chongqing claimed that there were no

newspapers or TV provided in their dormitory by the work unit (*danwei*) although these used to be available to workers during the pre-market reform era.

The CCP has articulated workers' interests and class leadership in its discourse since the Maoist period (Hershatter 2007), and some of the vocabulary has been employed in popular culture (e.g. films and TV dramas) and official media. As Ching Kwan Lee (2007a) points out, the urban workers employ the discourse provided by the regime and speak with the vocabulary available to them. There has been a radicalization of working class consciousness during the process of marketization and privatization (Chen 2006, Lee 2007b, Li 2011, Nang and Pun 2009). Contrary to middle class women exposed to the subjectification of modernity, working class women locate themselves on the "traditional" side. However, their self identification as "being traditional" comes from a class consciousness that arises from their everyday life experiences. Their everyday life experience in their class position provides the available language, which is often quoted from Maoist working class ideology, to perceive the relations between themselves and other social groups.

Urban working class women demonstrate a strong class identity which informs their subject position. The Maoist legacy of the "leading working class" has provided a strong sense of class identity and an awareness of their marginalized position among the state-sector workers, including both redundant workers and current workers. The Chongqing Steel and Iron Plants used to include immense factories, with more than 100,000 workers and their family members living on the plants' land. In the late 1990s, a large number of workers were laid off. Most of them were women. One day, when I was searching for informants via my networks, my contact told me that several women were convinced to accept interviews, but they felt uneasy about "not knowing how to speak". They understood the interview in "formal" and "official" terms, such as

those conducted by official journalists, and they assumed that I as the interviewer would speak from within the dominant discourse. After a series of explanations, they recommended a young woman who "knew how to speak". One evening, accompanied by her aunt, 29 year old Tangtang, working in the coking factory of the steel company came to me and eloquently began her conversation in the following manner:

> I am just a LITTLE (she used emphasizing tone here) worker (*xiao gongren*) in the factory […].The policies just come to our masses no matter whether you like them or not and no matter whether you understand them or not. For example, when they needed people to participate in the discussion of raising the price of price, the qualified people were teachers and civil servants (*gongwu yuan*). You (referring to workers) don't have the eligibility. We have no place to speak. Even if we were allowed to speak, time would be too tight for us to participate [in this kind of activity]. In order to pursue high efficiency, each worker [in the factory] is doing a job that is supposed to be done by two workers. The days of working leisurely and carefree are gone[…]Those civil servants and teachers have much higher income and leisure time, and also their accountability is much bigger. The power of workers is so poor nowadays. Now, workers (*gongren*) are located down to the bottom of the society in light of their income and other aspects. Although they used to say that the proletariat (*gongren jieji*) was the leader of this country, I have never felt that was true. In terms of economic status, the proletariat is in the bottom of the society […] The conditions of we industrial workers (*chanye gongren*) now are the worst in the society. What they let us have is enough rice porridge to fill up the stomach.
>
> (Tangtang, a 29 year-old factory worker)

Tangtang grew up in a family in which three generations (including her parents, her parents' siblings and her late grandparents) had worked in the plant and lived on real estate owned by the plant. During the Maoist period, the plant functioned as a *danwei* (work unit), which was a social-spatial organizational model for the urban population that functioned as an enclosed social and economic space that structured the productive, social, and domestic activities, and livelihoods of the workers and their family members (Bjorklund 1986). Before the urban reforms Maoist socialist doctrine ascribed structuring functions to the *danwei*, which

helped to organize labour, spatial concerns, urban status, and welfare (Lu and Perry 1997). During post Mao period, the dismantling of the *danwei* system and the subsequent political and economic fall of the working class have affected the collective memory and shared past experiences among workers (Lee 2007a). These memories are related to the group's shared class identity as the "leading working class" in the Maoist period, which contrasts sharply with their present "low *suzhi*" social status. Tangtang repeatedly used the term "we", as did many other working class women.

The Maoist terms Tangtang applied were erased from the dominant discourse when she came of age, but she employed these terms as if she was a member of the old proletariat. Some of the terms were retrieved from the Maoist class ideology including proletariat (*gongren jieji*), industrial workers (*chanye gongren*), and the power of workers (*gongren de liliang*). Scholars have observed that urban workers in the post-Mao period use Maoist vocabulary to defend their interests (Hershatter 2007, Lee 2007a, Rofel 1999), and the continued usage of Maoist working class discourse, drawn from the collective memory, shows the oppositional position of the present discourse of modernity. Hence, the Maoist vocabulary of working class challenges the deceptive binary of "modern" and "traditional". Moreover, the claim of "not knowing how to speak" can be understood as a rejection of speaking within the present modernity discourse and as a sign of the confused social position of working class people in China. Over the course of the conversation, Tangtang's aunt, a 48 year old worker in a different factory of the plant, sat beside her, watching the TV, without uttering one word. At the end of the interview, she commented about her niece: "she is really smart, but fate has been unfair to her. She shouldn't be one of us". With this concluding comment to her niece, the strong sense of class consciousness once again

gives way to *suzhi* discourse, which undercuts class consciousness and further terminates the collective action of class struggle.

The sense of injustice was often expressed during my interviews with former laid off workers. The informants often began their discussion with memories of the redundancy throughout the 1990s when they were only in their 30s—the age that was considered old enough to return home for women from the work force. What they have lost includes their material livelihood (the Medicare and pension that used to be attached to their "work units"), political privilege, and social status. Their psychological injuries were comforted by the Maoist slogan, "we the working class have the strength"—utilized by the post socialist state as a strategy for the massive lay-offs. Traditional family values also were reinforced to prevent workers' resistance during the lay-off waves. For example, a popular song— called "starting over" appeared frequently on the state TV channel the CCTV—sung by an iconic pop singer in China and intentionally written to lessen the impact of the massive redundancy, formulated a new discourse that combined the Confucian ethics of the family with the Maoist ideology of "the leading working class" to encourage laid off workers in their struggles to survive. During the layoffs, more than 30 million workers lost employment and social welfare protection in the name of modernity (Cai 2006). Nearly half of the workers were laid off in the Chongqing Steel and Iron Company alone.[80] Women's memories reveal bitterness and a sense of being unfairly treated, along with a strong consciousness of the devaluation of the working class. Often they began to speak from their identity as redundant workers. Wong, a 48-year old former redundant worker who used to work in a factory and now has a tiny booth in a grocery market began her talk this way:

[80] See *Zhongguo 2002 gangtie gongye nianjian* (China Steel Yearbook 2002). 2003, Beijing: *Yejing gongye chubanshe*, p233.

> We are "surplus workers" (*xiagang gongren*), so we always pay attention to any news that is good for us. […] Now this society's distribution is so unfair. The government officials have money and power; the leaders of state run enterprises have money and businessmen too. What about us? I am working very hard with my bare hands to make a hard living. I am having a very hard (*xinku*) life. Both I and my husband are unemployed workers (*shiye gongren*). Our income is unstable."
>
> (Wong, a 48 year-old former redundant worker)

Like Tangtang, Wong listed the advantaged groups in comparison with her own life experience. She interchangeably employed the state's definition of *xiagang gongren* (surplus workers) and *shiye gongren* (unemployed workers), a term that is erased from the state discourse but circulates widely as an alternative expression in everyday life. The alternative term contests the state's discourse by revealing the working class' reality. The class consciousness rising from everyday life experience challenges the state's "harmonious society", which utilizes Confucianism to obscure the increasing tension between classes.

MANAGING MARRIAGE IN THE WORKING CLASS HOUSEHOLD

The interactionality of "doing gender" determines a different way of managing marriage for the working class women. In contrast with the middle class women's emphasis upon self-improvement in order to attract exemplars of desirable masculinity (both in terms of physical appearance and the added self-worth born of "cultural cultivation"), working class women claim that they have no worries about a straying husband because the bearer of masculine identity in a working class home has been emasculated by the market economy. Chaoming, a former redundant woman worker expressed her point of view of men's extramarital affairs:

> "Keeping a second wife" happens among government officials and businessmen. They have money. My husband doesn't have money to do that. He can't even support himself, so who would hook up with him? […] if he wants to flirt with someone, once the woman finds he has no money, he can't go on anymore (laugh). The world is so realistic, and

> everything costs money. Going to the cinema? It costs about 100 Yuan. Dinning out? It costs a couple of hundred. […]. You know a Chinese saying? "One has no thought of lust until he is rich and powerful; one does not become a thief until he is cold and starving". Extramarital affairs would only last for a couple of days with poor men.
>
> (Chaoming, a 47 year-old former redundant worker)

Because of their class position and their self-understanding as "being traditional", when working class women use the perceived modern term "managing marriage", they refer to particular ways of running the household and "performing gender" in relation to working class masculinity. Hence, unlike middle class women perceiving "managing marriage" as a site of self-worth and *suzhi*, managing marriage becomes a different site for working class women. While middle class women embrace the discourse of modernity to perform "emotional labour" to cater to desirable masculinity at home, working class women tend to employ the discourse inherited from Maoist ideology to manage marriage. The working class has been subjected to the erasure of their identity from the public consciousness, and thus it faces the impossibility of searching for an available language in post socialist discourse; in consequence, the Maoist ideology and language justify the continued viability of a working class.

It is intriguing to look at the vocabulary that working class women employed in talking about "managing marriage". They used many of the same words that middle class women employed, but they applied them with different meanings pertinent to their class identity. Middle class women described middle class masculinity as "a responsible heart" (*zeren xin*), "motivation for upward mobility" (*shangjin xin*), sense of humor (*youmo gan*) and "funny" (*youqu*). Working class women often shared the use of terms with their middle class counterparts, for example, "a responsible heart", but this term carries different meanings in relation to working class life. While for middle class women, "a responsible heart" is tightly linked to the term "motivation for

upward mobility" (referring to the ideal masculinity which gains access to financial resources that will maintain the life of modernity), working class women disconnect "a responsible heart" from "motivation for upward mobility", (an impossible quality for the emasculated working class men to have). Instead, they connect it to the concept of "*jia*" (home and family), a cultural yearning of one's belonging. "A responsible heart" as a quality of masculinity always refers to men's financial support to the family for both middle class and working class women. However, for middle class women it preliminarily refers to a man's potential for acquiring financial resources to maintain the middle class life style, while working class women employ it as an emphasis of the husband who plays a role as a part of the family (the emphasis is not his financial capability). For example, Mingming described the working class women's understanding of "a responsible heart" as follows:

> A husband does not necessarily make a lot of money; rather, he must have a responsible heart (*zeren xin*) to the family (*jia*). [For example], if [he] has children, he should support the family no matter how much he makes. He must be caring to the children and family members, such as the elders.
>
> (Mingming, a 46 year-old former redundant worker)

Because masculinity in the working class household is understood differently, working class women use other descriptive terms that are absent from the middle class women's perception of "managing marriage". "Equality between men and women" (*nannü pingdeng*), a term addressed by the ACWF's gender policy formulated during Maoist regime, is often emphasized by the working class women in talking of "managing marriage. The language employed by working class women often embodies the idea of "equality between men and women". Although women play the primary role in doing housework in a working class household, sharing domestic chores is more often emphasized by working class women. While

middle class women emphasize the importance of the economic power of the husband within their intimate lives, working class women attempt to dismiss the husband's earning power by employing the ideology of "equality between men and women". The belief in men as breadwinners is not as strong in working class households as it is in middle class households; instead, contributing equally to the household's income is privileged by working class women. For example, Huangjie expressed her opinion about this question in the strongest possible terms:

> At least [a husband] should take the responsibility for the family. [He and the wife] share the responsibility together, right? I feel that it's not right if [he] can make money and then he sees nobody in his eyes. I don't agree that a husband must make more money than wife [….] maybe you (refers to a husband) make more than I do, or maybe I make more than you do... you are laid off, but you have tried. For example, [if] I make 3,000 *yuan*, you have tried, so it doesn't matter if you only make 2,000 *yuan*. Adding together, 5,000 yuan is enough to support our family. That's OK. Then I would be satisfied. I would never require you to make 3,100 or 3,200 yuan, and then you are a real man. I wouldn't think you are better than me if you make more money.
>
> (Huangjie, a 47 year-old factory worker)

There are other two terms employed exclusively by working class women in managing marriage, "mutual respect" (*xianghu zunzhong*) and "diligently and thriftily managing the household" (*qinjian chijia*). "Mutual respect" is a term that the ACWF employs to discuss "equality between men and women" within marriage, but it is also a way of defending working class masculinity. Masculinity at home is emasculated by the market ideology (Zheng 2009, Xiao 2011), but many working class women claim that "men have their dignity", through which they justify working class identity and their intimate lives. Their justification is achieved via the Maoist ideology of gender and marriage and through an essentialist understanding of the sexes which posits that "men know things that women do not know". While middle class women perform "emotional care" and contribute a "modern quality" and gendered "wisdom" to the

marriage, working class women highlight their particular way of managing marriage with a "traditional" quality for a woman , *xianhui* (genial and prudent) , a term often used to describe wives' quality in "diligently and thriftily manage the family" (*qinjian chijia*). For example, Wong described her perception of managing marriage as follow:

> [A woman] must diligently and thriftily manage the family (*qinjin chijia*). It's true. This is the most essential for being a good wife. It seems that more than 60% women are in charge of households in our country. Men hand in their salary to wives every month, and they keep a little pocket money [to spend on themselves]. Most of the husband's income is handed to the wife, and [the wife] arranges expenses for the family. So women must diligently and thriftily manage the family. You can't spend it all in the first half month after getting the money. What about the next half month? Starving?
>
> (Wong, a 48 year-old former redundant worker)

"Diligently and thriftily manage the family" (*qinjian chijia*) was a major theme as a part of the party's political campaign of " diligently and thriftily building the country" used to mobilize women promoted by the ACWF in 1957 (Wang 2006). The ACWF repeatedly has emphasized it as "woman work" in different political times, and it has become a widely circulated slogan. It carries two layers of political intentions. First, it advances the gendered notion that women are the primary carers and "household managers" (Manning 2010, Wang 2005). Second, it aims to mobilize women's labour as contributions to the collective economy (work units in urban regions and the People's Communes in rural areas). The poor economic conditions during Maoist times hampered any attempts to modernize the family institution any more than this and subsequently barred the further development of "women's liberation" (*funü jiefang*). Hence, the function of the traditional family as an economic unit continued under the collective economy of the Maoist regime (Croll 1981). The usage of the Maoist slogans in the working class women's discussion of managing marriage reflects the cultural understanding of "*jia*" (home/family), an essential place for one's belonging. In addition, the model of collective economy during the Maoist period

remains essential in the working class women's way of managing household—by pulling all the family resources together, with the wife as the "manager" who treats the family as a work unit and distributes these resources within the "unit". This way of "managing the household" in the eyes of middle class women is rather out of fashion (traditional/backward). Working class women's use of a residual model drawn from the collective economy in the context of managing the family reveals both the continuity of Maoist gender ideology and the troubling economic condition of working class households under the post-socialist regime.

Concluding remarks

China's economic development has ended the Maoist egalitarian era and polarized the population's access to economic resources (Goodman **2008)**. The rise of the middle class reflects that China has entered a consumerist era on the one hand; on the other, it is closely associated with the process of modernization in the post-Mao period. Within the party-state's wealth creation projects, the middle class is seen the backbone of the state's "harmonious society" project (Tomba 2009). In contrast to the middle class subjectification within the post-Mao era's modernity discourse, the working class (the Maoist proletariat in state section and the rural migrant workers in private sections) has become the "losers" in China's rapid economic development. While the middle class is categorized as the "high *suzhi*" group in the state social engineering discourses of the self (Liu 2008, Tomba 2009), working class has undergone a process of symbolic annihilation, defined as " low *suzhi*" population that is seen a barrier to the nation's modernization effort.

The site of managing marriage is intertwined with the discourse of gender, modernity, and the emerging phenomenon of class, all of which reflect the gender politics, modernization initiatives and the class formation processes of post-socialist China. The different understandings

of managing marriage and varied discourses employed by different social groups indicate that the current discourses exist across a wide range of media resources and cultural formations. Competing discourses and ideologies are interpreted by different social groups according to their own interests and social identities. Both middle class and working class women believe the common sense notions of gender that prevail during the post Mao period, but perform gender in different ways. Middle class women focus on "emotional care" in relation to middle class masculinity within the household, while working class women use Maoist vocabulary to understand their role in the family and their relationship to their working class husbands. My interpretation of the class distinctions within managing marriage discourse attributes divergences in large part to the subject-forming aspects of China's modernization process, under which the middle class has become the major target of the post socialist state's modernity discourse. By contrast, working class subscribes to the Maoist discourse that these subjects employed to speak of managing marriage and to justify their class identity. Moreover, class position dictates different gender performances. While middle class women perform "emotional labour" in their intimate lives, working class women emphasize the importance of "diligently and thriftily managing the family" (*qinjian chijia*), a Maoist slogan that derives from the family campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. Managing marriage is both gendered and class-coded, a situation that reflects the complexities of gender politics, modernity processes and class formation in the post socialist China. These different ways of "doing gender" help us to understand the material conditions of these women's lives, and are extremely pertinent to an analysis of the subject positions characteristic of each class.

Gender and modernity are intertwined subjects. With reference to a feminist perspective, "modernity is gendered not just in the sense that male and female subjects experience it

differently, but in how its discursive terms are constituted" (Jolly 1998, 3). Modernity is also a global and conjunctural phenomenon. The modernity process in China has developed in conjunction with the outside world interacting with its own political, cultural, and historical characteristics. The modernity discourse in the PRC has shifted between two political eras (i.e., Maoist collectivism, which used to be a way of modernizing the nation, has been redefined as "traditional" in the post Mao period, which now equates modernity with "market ideology"). Thus the subjectivity of gender is shifting accordingly. The "iron girls" of the Maoist period presented physically strong and mentally determined icons of femininity as collective heroines (Jin 2006, Manning 2010). This image is no longer desirable in the post-Mao period. The gender ideology in contemporary China increasingly converges with gender norms in other parts of the world. Feminist discussion of gender and class in relation to neoliberalism and postfeminism (Gill 2008, McRobbie 2009, Skeggs 2005) illustrates that many contemporary societies define femininity according to middle class values that emphasize wealth and life-style as well as subject formation and individual agency. Talbo (2010, 138) refers to this "consumer femininity", a construction that "enters into women's daily lives in the material and visual resources that they draw upon to feminize themselves". "Consumer femininity" now prevails in contemporary China as well; providing a point of convergence between the discourse of modernity and gender. In short, consumer femininity has become the *sine qua non* of "modern" female subjectivity. Moreover, consumer femininity in the Chinese context links to a neoliberal style of agency that encourages women to "creatively" manage marriage and thus to master their destiny of a higher class.

Agents with reflexive bodies are able to question and shake the gendered dichotomies of the modernity discourse (Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe 2003). However, to what extent are the

agents able to negotiate the structure, and/or can the agents be completely "free" vis-à-vis the structural factors? In what conditions can the agents be free? These questions are related to the binary debate surrounding the question of "active/passive" audience that animates audience studies. The understandings of managing marriage expressed by both middle class and working class women in this chapter may help to complicate the active audience, which proposes an audience that acts as a collection of free agents. Nevertheless, this chapter does not claim that audiences' resistance is impossible, but rather shows the complexities of active audience performance in relation to the gendered structure with which audiences (both middle class women and working class women) feel comfortable (e.g. the "common sense" of gender constructed as "scientific knowledge" based on biological differences). Hence, middle class and working class women understand and perform the activities associated with managing marriage in gendered ways constructed by patriarchal modernity. During both the Maoist period and its sequel, women have been situated in the domestic sphere—and yet, middle class and working class women conceive of managing marriage in different ways that correspond to their positioning of self within relation to China's modernizing process. Hence, gendered modernity should not be seen a deterministic structure, but rather as a power that provides certain constraints while inviting agencies to interact with it.

Moreover, within the structure, there exist multiple discourses within official media and other non-official media resources. While middle class women engage with vocabulary such as "*suzhi*", "love" and "wisdom", working class women often employ different language retrieved from the "woman work" lexicon of the Maoist period term such as " diligently and thriftily managing the family". The different vocabularies employed by these social groups indicate diverse discourses of marriage and family and thus reflect diverse media resources that carry

competing messages adopted by audiences in relation to their interests and position. Middle class women are comfortable with the discourse of *suzhi* emerging in the social engineering projects of the post-socialist period, while working class women stand inside of the previous discourse that continues to appear in the current official media to defend their interests and class identity. Multiple discourses and diverse media resources have offered choices to audiences. Employing different vocabulary from the given discourses shows the constraints of the structure while illustrating audiences' subjective interaction with the media resources that furnish their vocabulary corresponds with their ideological allegiance and economic condition.

Chapter Five

Changing sexuality: the dominant, the residual, the emergent

In the spring of 2010, Wang, a fifty-three year-old associate professor at a university in Nanjing city, Jiangsu Province, was charged with the "crime" of "organizing licentious activities"(*juzong yinluan*).[81] Many Chinese news media outlets focused on this lawsuit and initiated discussion about the morally deleterious effects of his behavior. According to the media, Wang had actively organized sexually licentious parties for as many as 27 male and female adult participants, recruited through internet forums (*luntan*) and social media. These individuals met 35 times in various private locations in Nanjing during 2007 and 2008. In May 2009, Wang decided to end these gatherings. However, in the summer of 2009, after receiving a number of incriminating reports, the police arrested Wang and 22 other people who were alleged to have participated in these sexual activities. The media mocked Wang and the other accused for failing to withstand the temptations of "advanced thinking" (*xianjin sixiang*): corrupt Western ideas of pursuing sexual pleasure.

Professor Wang came under the spotlight for two reasons: first, he was no longer young and hence was expected to subscribe to a more "traditional" morality; second, he was an educator, and therefore conventionally entrusted with the responsibility of "summoning morality and introducing good knowledge" (*chuandao shouye*) in accordance with the Confucian

[81] Tianyi. 2010. *"Nanjing yi fu jiaoshou huanqi bei qishu*" (An associate professor in Nanjing prosecuted for organizing wife-swap activities), *Xinhua wang*, March 11. Accessed March 5, 2013: http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2010-03/11/content_13148701.htm

tradition. Wang's failure to live up to these responsibilities vis-à-vis the maintenance of public order cast his behaviour in a shocking light.

The statute concerning "crimes of hooliganism" (*liumang zui*), an umbrella term that denotes a wide array of sexual behaviours out of wedlock, was removed from the Penal Code in 1997 (Lou 1998), but "*juzong yinluan*" ("organizing licentious activities "or participating in "collective sexual behavior") remains in the PRC's Criminal Code. This second statute covers behaviour construed to be in "open defiance of the state laws and disciplines and social morality and subsequently gathering men and women to collectively have licentious activities".[82] The penalty for this offence ranges from one to five years in jail. "Immoral sexual behaviour" ("*yinluan*", or licentious behaviours) can apply to any act that violates heteronormative monogamous sexuality, allowing the government to police sexual activities which could potentially undermine the dominant social mores. Wang's case is by no means the only one involving a charge of "collective sexual activities" that has found its way into post-socialist Chinese courts. Wang's case helps to illustrate the current relationship between the dominant articulation of societal norms, the emergent pursuit of sexual pleasure, and the re-appearance of Confucian tradition. Together, these elements reveal the complexities of a changing sexual culture in contemporary China.

The scholarly debates concerning sexual culture in the PRC focus on a binary argument over whether the post-socialist state's approach to sexuality is oppressive or indicative of a policy of "open-door sexuality" (Jeffreys 2006). Studies focusing on sexual discourse and the state's policing sexual behaviors lead toward the former (Evans 1997, Kristof 1993, Ruan and Bullough 1989, Ruan 1991, Sigley 2006), while recent research on the subject of sexuality

[82] Ibid.

focusing on commercial sex, a growing gay and lesbian scene, extramarital affairs, pre-marital sex and pornographic literature and recent sexual discourse in the form of call-in radio, telephone hotlines and internet chat rooms all seem to demonstrates the latter (Braverman 2002, Erwan 2000, Hershatter 1996). Neither of these arguments provides an adequate portrait of the sexual landscape in today's China.

"Reinventing governance" is a catch-phrase which covers liberalizing Chinese policies that have been introduced to accommodate the country's shift towards market-centric social relations (Jeffreys 2009, Larner 2000, Newman 2005). This strategy has caused the post-socialist state to retreat from its tightly controlling approach to the private sphere (Alford 2004, Farrer 2002), and has opened up a space for new sexual cultures to emerge. Indeed, penalizing "abnormal" sexual behaviors and the punishment of sex out of wedlock—previously labeled as "*liumang zui*" (the crimes of hooliganism) — have been largely withdrawn. Nevertheless, as Wang's case demonstrates, some sexual behaviors are still punished by the penal code; moreover, other types of behaviours that are not written into the penal code, such as "viewing pornography" (*guankan yinhui luxiang*) in a private location,[83] can still be punished during politicized anti-vice campaigns, such as police "wiping out the yellow" (*saohuang*) raids. At the institutional level, strategies for intervening in private life tend to focus on policing youth sexuality, through an officially-approved adolescent sex education that views youth engagement in sex as forbidden. For example, in October 2002, two 19 year old college students at Chongqing University of Post and Telecommunications were expelled for engaging in premarital sex, after their relationship came to the attention of educational authorities, due to the female

[83] *Yan'an fuqi zaijia kan huangpian bei zhua* (a married couple in Yan'an was arrested when watching a porn movie at home), Xinlang wang News, March 26, 2010. Accessed March14,2013: http://sc.sina.com.cn/news/z/2010-03-26/143055854.html

student's pregnancy and subsequent abortion (Pan 2003). These penalties do not apply to most individuals in Chinese society today, but their occasional enforcement looms large as a symbolic gesture of the state domination in sexuality.

In a Foucauldian sense, the state's dominion over sexuality remains very much present within the realms of ideology and discourse, indicating that the state never has and never will withdraw its power to control sexuality. Therefore, while sexual practices have become quite diverse in reality, traditional ideological language still prevails in the media, serving as a tool for social control. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that private life has been gradually diverse in tandem with China's open market policies. Other types of ideologies and cultures have come to prominence through global interchange over the past three decades, and these ideologies and cultures have pushed sexual culture toward emerging practices in opposition to the party-state's ideology. However, these emergent forms of sexual culture are not entirely cut off from the dominant forms. The roles of sexual mores derived from the Chinese tradition, especially gendered sexual mores imposed on women, cannot be underestimated in today's sexual culture. These longstanding attitudes and gendered sexual mores still exercise a great deal of sway over China's new "sexual freedom".

The data for this chapter are drawn from in-depth interviews with 19 middle class women, 8 working class women, and 8 female college students. This chapter deals with audience members' diverse responses to media discourse of sexuality. This chapter also incorporates elements from interviewees' lived experiences, through which past beliefs, dominant discourse imperatives and emerging sexual practices converge to sketch a fuller picture of sexuality in China today. My argument aims to build upon and move beyond the binary debates surrounding sexual culture in the PRC by providing a different interpretation of

contradictory phenomena found within sexual cultures in today's China. Drawing upon Williams' concepts of the dominant, residual, and emergent elements in cultural evolution (1958 and 1977), I show that the changing sexuality in contemporary China as a process within which different forces and beliefs co-exist and compete. While the media narrative of "keeping a second wife" speaks within the established idea of monogamous sexuality within marital status as the only legitimate and moral form, audiences respond to it in diverse ways. Some of them speak in line with the media discourse whereas others either provide oppositional ideas or employ more "conservative" ideas about sexuality. These differences indicate the changing process of sexual culture in China's social transition. I argue that the process contains multiple and overlapping forms of sexual culture, in which the party-state's ideology, emergent sexual cultures and traditional Chinese beliefs intertwine and struggle. Without examining these competing forms, no understanding of sexuality within the PRC and its evolving processes can ever be anything but fragmentary and partial. Moreover, in addition to age-based differences in attitudes towards sexuality and sexual practices within studies of youth culture, I intend to incorporate class-based variables into my account by arguing that the "middle class", the subject of modernity, is absorbing more globalized attitudes through non-official media and thus shows more tolerance toward emerging sexual practices than their working class counterparts.

With reference to Williams' notion of culture, this chapter first identifies the dominant, the emergent, and the residual elements of the sexual culture in contemporary China. Subsequently, it moves to examine the ways in which how audience members discuss sexuality. The examination of audiences' responses focuses on their interpretations of the term "keeping a second wife", extramarital affairs practiced by some of the middle-class women, different

attitudes toward “sexual freedom” between mother and daughter cohorts, and gendered “sexual freedom”.

The dominant, the emergent, and the residual

Raymond Williams (1958a and 1977) speaks of cultures in the plural, emphasizing power relations between the specific and variable cultures embraced by different social groups. He particularly conceptualizes culture(s) as processes of social change (1958b), arguing that a culture consists of a set of relations between dominant, residual, and emergent elements (1977). Williams’ conceptualization of culture contains an epochal analysis of history from a Marxist perspective, characterizing an epoch as a dominant formation of the times. For Williams, a culture has a dynamic and shifting quality which courses through the historical moments. However, the dominant formation contains different moments that consist of different variations and stages; hence, each epoch incorporates dynamic, contradictory relationships engaged in a complex interplay between dominant, residual and emergent elements. The dominant element in the evolution of culture is an “‘epochal analysis, a cultural process is seized as a cultural system, with determinate dominant features. This emphasis on dominant and definitive lineaments and features is important and often, in practice, quite effective” (1977, 121). The residual aspect of cultural change “has been formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all an element of the past but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue —cultural as well as social—of some previous social and cultural institution or formation.” (1977, 121). In referring to the emergent element, Williams argues that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships are continually being created.

This tripartite understanding of cultural change offers valuable insight into the role that subversive and oppositional cultures play within dominant culture, showing how these elements become intertwined during the process of social change. These concepts can be applied to the current state of the changing sexual culture in China. The next step, then, is to identify and parse out the residual**,** dominant, and emergent elements within the process of changing sexuality of China**.** What is won and lost during this re-staging of the sexual landscape? How are these changes being perceived? How do these dominant, residual and emergent aspects play off against each other? These questions may deepen our understanding of sexuality and social change in China. Within the current scholarship, both discourse analysis approaches to sexuality and ethnographic studies of youth culture have failed to treat these questions in depth. Different approaches lead to different portraits of the sexual culture. For example, an analysis of the official discourse might lead the researcher to conclude that the dominant culture of sexuality is still monopolized by the party-state's discourse. However, the dominant culture no longer has a monopoly upon Chinese thought and social relations—in fact, it could very well lose its dominant position. How does the dominant culture of sexuality interact with other types of cultural forms in contemporary China? As Williams (1958b) argues, new systems of production create new culture(s), and emergent social groups develop new cultures and ideologies. Hence, Williams' approach to culture deemphasizes the discursive practices of heteronormative and monogamous sexuality during a period of globalization and individualization, in which the pursuit of personal desires has prevailed among some social groups, especially the younger generations examined by youth culture studies (Farrer 2002 and 2003, Pan 2000 and 2004).

In Williams' conceptualization, "epochal analysis" refers to the abstracted epochal dominant culture as a "static type" and a social norm against which real cultural process is

measured. For Williams, cultural process incorporates variations and stages through which abstractions manifest themselves over the course of a particular period. The dominant culture of sexuality in the PRC is defined by state discourse from both the Maoist period and the post-Mao periods, each of which has contributed aspects of the epochal abstraction. However, sexuality in China is not governed by a homogenous culture defined solely by state discourse/ideology, particularly during a time of transition that is increasingly more open to global cultural exchange. Hence, as Williams points out, the importance of an "authentic historical analysis" that is attentive to the dynamics of sexual culture at this particular moment. As Williams argues: "We have certainly to speak of the 'dominant' and the 'effective', and in these sense of the hegemonic. But we find that we have also to speak, and indeed with further differentiation of each, of the 'residual' and the 'emergent', which in any real historical process, and at any moment in the process, are significant both in themselves and in what they reveal of the characteristics of the 'dominant'" (1977, 121-122). Williams' distinction between dominant, residual and emergent elements provides the analytical tools for a survey of sexuality in China that incorporates both the dominant official *discourse* and the celebratory claims of "sexual freedom" that draw upon the emergent phenomena of sexual culture. This heterogeneous approach to culture highlights the multiple tendencies and forms of changing sexuality in China today, wherein sexuality becomes a dynamic site of regulation, negotiation and contestation.

Given that the official articulation of marriage and sexuality that has long existed remains powerful in Chinese media, and linked to the continuity of sexual mores within the state's cultural heritage and cultural typology, it is no surprise that the dominant cultural approach to sexuality still exerts a strong pull upon the country's citizens. The party-state remains the dominant power in the social and political spheres, and its ideological presentation of sexuality

and marriage cannot by any means be ignored. Sexuality was strictly monitored by legal and administrative regulations until the state's recent overall withdrawal from intervening in personal matters such as sex out of wedlock (Ruan and Bullough 1989, Sigley 2006). And yet, these dominant forms do not erase the many heterogeneous sexual practices operative within Chinese society. Past beliefs offer a set of values derived from traditional Chinese culture. As Williams points out,

> The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residual—culture as well as social—of some previous social and culture institution or formation (1977, 122).

This chapter does not aim to explore the complex history of these values; rather, for current purposes, I will focus on some elements of this value system that retain a hold upon quotidian life and thought in contemporary China, such as the cult of female virginity and the larger constellation of gendered sexual mores, which to some extent have been integrated into the dominant discourse. For example, the news media narrative of "keeping a second wife" has employed these past beliefs to illustrate the importance of marriage and family. These residual forms derive from a Confucian tradition that remains not only "actively effective", but has also been absorbed into the party-state' ideology (e.g. the state's project of "harmonious family"). Moreover, the sexual culture has also been the site of emergent forms embodying new beliefs and practices in opposition to the residual and the dominant. Williams defines the emergent as "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created", while warning that "it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture… and those

which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it" (1977, 123). In short, this chapter identifies the emergent forms of sexual culture that many studies have pointed out in recent narratives of "sexual freedom" and accounts of the sexual practices prevalent within youth culture (Farrer 2002, Pan 2006), which are located in the social settings of 'advanced' urban regions and other sites of westernization/globalization. The emergent forms include youth culture, subcultural practices such as homosexuality and sex out of wedlock (premarital sex, extramarital affairs, cohabitation without marriage registration), all of which are practiced by certain social groups.

The dominant is engaged in a continuous struggle to sustain and extend its dominance through a variety of strategies—the official media, education, legal forms and administrative and party sanctions. The residual element can be found in the Chinese tradition, but somehow it also appears within the dominant discourse. The emergent element is practiced by certain social groups and justified through their preferable discourse and other types of media resources. This struggle for dominance shows that the positions of the three elements and their cultural meanings are not fixed and remain in constant flux. The current sexual culture has been recuperated in a new articulation of officially sanctioned PRC sexuality: a mixture of traditional mores and Maoist sexuality. A re-articulation of marriage and sexuality in post-Maoist times, along with the unexpected emergence of new cultures of "sexual freedom" together help to flesh out the story of changing sexuality in contemporary China. Instead of being treated merely as disconnected variables, these elements must be understood to have multiple and overlapping tendencies that affect the landscape of changing sexuality in China. This requires careful attention to the terms of their co-existence, with an emphasis upon the present as a cultural moment containing multiple overlapping temporalities. The co-existence of cultural forms

suggests that China's changing sexuality should be treated as an ongoing, rather than a completed, process.

Talking sex and sexuality

When asked questions regarding sexual mores, sex out of wedlock (questions covering subjects such as female virginity, premarital sex, cohabitation without marriage registration, extramarital affairs and attitudes toward homosexuality), the informants' responses revealed diverse attitudes. Some of them complied with the dominant discourse, while others articulated their advocacy of and tolerance toward sex out of wedlock. As will be shown, these views of sexuality showed a high correlation with the informants' subject positions in terms of generational difference and class distinctions. Moreover, some parts of their understandings accorded with the dominant (or the residual) discourse, while other parts incorporated elements of the emergent culture. The following sections examine women's perceptions of sexuality focusing on their interpretations of the terminology associated with the practice of "keeping a second wife", the practice of engaging in extramarital affairs, generational differences towards notions of sexual freedom and views of female virginity. The disparate range of approaches to these themes illustrates that all three elements of sexual cultural discourse continue to affect women's lives in varying degrees.

STRUGGLE FOR MEANINGS: READING THE LABEL

Women's interpretations of the meanings of the language formulation, "keeping a second wife", tell us a great deal about the degree of their tolerance towards extramarital affairs. Roland Barthes's work (1977, 1983, and 1990) focuses on cultural semiotics, advocating an approach that explores meanings and ways of making meaning through an analysis of linguistic signs, in

which deep meanings are often hidden behind the surface meanings communicated by mass media. Moreover, Barthes discovers that the hidden meaning is historical and culturally constructed within the framework of dominant ideology. Barthes claims that linguistic signs (or pictures) are never value-natural, but are always intended to serve ideological purposes by convincing audiences to consent the dominant discourse. The term "keeping a second wife" has been widely circulated through news media narratives and popular culture. Because the party-state propaganda depends heavily upon terminological and definitional stratagems (Schoenhals 1992), the signifier of "keeping a second wife" points to a myth (in Barthes' terminology), confirming that the term is intended to convey ideological meanings. The denotation of the term is the product of the surface meaning, which derives from an old institution. However, the term's deeper meaning or ideological function serves to tar extramarital relationships with the brush of a stigmatized institution and threaten monogamous sexuality and established sexual mores that is part and parcel of the family crisis narrative.

However, Volosinov (1973) argues that words have ideological agency. Individuals do not use words passively, but actively employ them to transmit meanings of their own, as well as to engage in ideological interaction. Ideological phenomena penetrate deeply into everyday life in the words (or gestures and sounds) which describe the material world. The dialogic nature of utterance always involves an open relation between the speaker and listener. Hence, the listener is conceptualized as a responsive, autonomous agent whose actions flow through a process of dialogic interaction, and in consequence, individuals are able to manipulate or exercise control over their utterances. Volosinov's perspective provides the grounds for an examination of various terminological interpretations put forth by the informants. The term "keeping a second wife" is a dynamic social sign, which carries different meanings for different social groups (e.g.,

especially as defined by class and age). The meaning of the term is not subject to passive understanding, but depends upon the active participation of the audience. The meaning of "keeping a second wife" takes shape within an arena of struggle between the dominant discourse and individual audience members, resulting in a range of accented meanings that can be interpreted in multiple ways.

The return of the term "keeping a second wife" (concubinage) from China's ideological back-inventory indicates a re-articulation of the established ideology of marriage and sexuality that defines heteronormative marital relations as the only legitimate place for sex. The encoding process tends to refer to extramarital relationships as the condemned "feudal vice" (concubinage), and moreover stigmatizes women in this kind of relationship as "concubines". Audience members' impulse to comply with or contest the monogamous idea of sexuality comes to the forefront when they are asked to interpret the meaning of these terms. It is evident that audience members interpret the term heterogeneously. If the evidence derived from a case study of forty female interviewees provides any indication, factors of age and class do play roles in women's interpretations of these ideologically loaded terms. For example, younger women and middle-class women are likely to disconnect the terminology from concubinage. Nevertheless, these factors are not the sole determinative indicators of women's perceptions. There is unquestionably some degree of generational difference and class distinction, but women from the same demographic categories often reacted differently. Investigating the factors which determine the informants' interpretative tendencies may require quantitative research on a larger scale.

When I asked what "keeping a second wife" (*bao ernai*) meant for my interviewees, some women referred to concubinage-like relationships and extramarital affairs interchangeably.

Nevertheless, for most interviewees, these two terms (extramarital affairs and concubinage) express very different meanings. When women referred to these practices as extramarital affairs (*hunwai qing*) and attempted to avoid using the officially sanctioned terminology, they also expressed much more tolerant attitudes towards "keeping a second wife". Other women explicitly linked the practice to the old institution, a strategy which allowed them to express a moral judgment toward the individuals involved. Many women employed the terminology, but what they referred to was extramarital affairs, therefore, demonstrating moral neutrality toward the term of "keeping a second wife" when they employed it to refer to extramarital affairs. Informants who linked the terminology to the old institution were unlikely to tolerate it. In general, Chinese "common sense" condemns the institution of concubinage, while sexual practices out of wedlock are tolerated without moral contamination. For example, Guoguo, a thirty-three year old woman interchangeably employed the two meanings of the terminology to illustrate different attitudes when she attempted to distinguish between "acceptable" and "unacceptable" behaviour, and she made it clear that while extramarital affairs treated as purely personal affairs in today's society, the institution of concubinage was not "acceptable":

> For ordinary Chinese, "keeping a second wife" is not acceptable. If two people want to be with each other, (stops to think), for example our parents' generation always wants to stay together no matter whether they have feelings for each other. Therefore, people would feel hatred toward "the second wives" and the ones who "keep a second wife". Now I am more objective. For example, if an acquaintance of mine is "keeping a second wife", I would think first why he is doing it. Perhaps these two are in love, so I feel that's all right. It's his personal affair, so I wouldn't care that much.
>
> (Guoguo, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

These terms are understood heterogeneously. Two main types of interpretations often appear in the informants' discussions. Neither type of response was the exclusive property of a particular

social group (as defined by factors such as class and age), and women within the same demographic groups often expressed mixed meanings in different contexts.

First, the informants interpreted these activities as extramarital affairs, demonstrating a willingness to question the terminology and an awareness of the negative meanings associated with the terminology (the stigmatization of women promoted by this usage). Generally, these women expressed hesitation, confusion and a questioning attitude toward news reports that refer to all women involved in extramarital affairs as "second wives". They often highlighted the social transformation that has occurred during the course of the past decade, bringing an increasing degree of tolerance towards the idea and the practice of sex out of wedlock. For these interviewees, the traditional understanding of the practice of "keeping a second wife" needed to adapt to a changing social context. Below are three excerpts from responses in which the informants questioned the use of the term: "keeping a second wife":

> Keeping a second wife? (Laughing). The term is from Hong Kong and Taiwan in 1990s specifically referring to Hong Kong men and Taiwanese businessmen back then who "had a mainland mistress". It is a Cantonese term actually. It can't include other types of extramarital affairs. Now here we use the term "*xiaosan*" (little third) more often. It is a term more close to the reality.
>
> (Kunkun, a 35 year-old middle class woman)

> That was in high school when I first heard the term and I hated the whole idea of it. I thought how could it exist? Now I feel it's normal. It's common now. Some people I know are doing it. …..now it's not called "keeping a second wife", it's called "the little third", referring to "the third party", which is more neutral than the term of "keeping a second wife", in my opinion. It's not like, (stop), "second wife" is like a "minor wife" and "concubine", but "little third" is relatively morally neutral, and it sounds better for me.
>
> (Juanzi, a 31 year -old middle class woman)

> I really can't understand why it is called keeping a second wife. Keeping a second wife means a married man has an affair and supports the woman. You provide me with

> materials and I live with you. But sometimes, I am confused. I've met so many women who don't want money from men in their affairs. I can't understand.
>
> (Dashen, a 47 year-old factory worker).

Second, the transactional nature of heterosexual relationships is particularly visible in some cultures (Wamoyi et al. 2010). Escaping from poverty and accumulating capital are given as primary motivations for women's need to engage in sexual relationships with "sugar daddies" (Wamoyi et al. 2010). In two different studies on young women's sexuality in KwaZulu-Natal and Durban of Africa, Hunter and Leclerc-Madlala point out that women's agency plays an important role in transactional sex (Hunter 2002), in which women use sexual power as a negotiating tool to fulfill their desires for the commodities of modernity (Leclerc-Madlala 2003). These findings are illuminating for the Chinese context of "keeping a second wife". There is a longstanding tradition of material negotiations between the families of the engaged parties (Baker 1979, Ebrey 1993, Mann 1991, Watson 1991). In traditional Chinese society, marriage (and concubinage) provided women with access to material well-being, as in the old saying "clothing and food all depend upon the man you marry" (*jiahan jiahan chuanyi chifan*). Although this was interrupted by the CCP's family reform and "women's liberation" project during the Maoist era, the cultural legacy has persisted and continues to play a dynamic role in the operations of the marriage market. Young women's sexuality is still shaped to a large extent by macro-level factors (e.g., economic resources, policies aiming at domesticating the social, consumerism, and gender norms), and post-socialist politics have promoted an intensified return of the transactional nature of sexuality, complete with a re-discovery of and renewed emphasis upon female physical appearance as a key aspect of women's upward mobility at the micro-level which is very consistent with traditional Chinese culture.

The return of this approach to femininity in post-Maoist gender politics, together with a particular construction of masculinity emphasizing men's economic resources, have activated women's agency in the negotiation of sexual relationships. The construction of femininity and masculinity in the market economy bears significantly upon current perceptions of the practice of "keeping a second wife". When asked about the meaning of "second wife", informants generally referred to a woman with youth and physical attractiveness in order to qualify for the part. Interviewees did not disapprove of transactional sexuality in the case of "keeping a second wife". For these respondents, the physical attractiveness of young women qualified as an asset that ought to be used as a tool for accumulating wealth and achieving social security. This tolerant attitude toward transactional sexuality was more commonly expressed by middle class women than by working class women. Working class women showed more of an inclination to accept the media's suggestion that a "second wife" is "concubine-like", a term that carries meanings of "shame" and "disgrace". The difference between middle class women and working class women may derive from the fact that the middle class women expressed their tolerance and openness as a statement of middle class identity, whereas working class women remain more attached to the Maoist legacy.

In short, the informants complied with the media narrative to a certain extent, but disagreed as to the artificial linkage between "keeping a second wife" and the old institution of concubinage. Negotiation of the terminology shows that, for many women, sexuality is no longer rigidly restrained by the traditional monogamous framework. The state ideology is not prepared to leave room in its discourse for sexual behaviour that defies monogamous ideas, but various social groups have nevertheless opened up a space to accommodate these practices. This negotiation also indicates that transactional sexuality has strong cultural roots and is currently

embedded in very amenable soil (i.e. the market economy), providing reasons for audience members to begin tolerating this behaviour. It is important to note that the social meanings of these terms are still shifting according to the changing dictates of cultural sexual processes, and thus the terminology itself has become a site where the dominant, residual and emergent cultures converge.

LOVE, DESIRE AND THE SELF

While middle class women view China as a modern nation, most working class informants emphasize the "traditional" nature of the country. Class position not only dictates the nature of the informant's relationship to modernity, but is also associated with particular views about sexuality. With the "openness" of the middle class as the subject of modernity, middle class women tend to express tolerance toward extramarital affairs—some of the middle class informants had engaged in affairs, describing them as part of the search for "love" and "feelings", and openly discussed their intimate affairs during the course of the interview. However, working class women construed extramarital affairs as serious moral lapses. While middle class women emphasized "love", "desire", "feelings" in extramarital affairs, working class women were likely to single out the transactional factor between the new rich and women. For example, they often link extramarital affairs (and "keeping a second wife") to moral weakness. Hence, they show less tolerance toward extramarital affairs. In their view of society, the new rich are deemed to be "the polluted". Many working class informants claimed that extramarital affairs are stimulated by the new rich corrupted by money. Employing "morality" and asserting their moral superiority is a way of defending working class identity.

Working class women also show less tolerance for women who become "second wives": they often employ Maoist terms to refer to second wives as "parasites" (*jisheng chong*) and the ones "gaining without working" (*bu lao er huo*) whereas middle class women tend to understand the "second wives" as either aiming for survival or for love. Working class women also point out the survival strategy for women in transactional sexual relationships, but at the same time they are likely to express a reflection on their unwillingness to become "that kind".

In her discussion of public homosexuality that has become increasingly visible in China, Rofel (2007) reveals that tolerance towards homosexuality and statements of gay rights, to some extent, are linked to the identity of cosmopolitan citizenship in the public culture. Echoing these findings, my middle class informants were eager to express their tolerance to "difference". They claimed to accept homosexuality (some of them have made friends with people who have a different sexual orientation), pre-marital sex, extramarital relationships, and cohabitation without a marriage license. Unlike official state discourse, which condemns these behaviors as threats to social morality, middle class women advocate these activities as a way of expressing a demarcation between "being modern" and "being traditional", thereby performing a middle class identity that is defined as the "civilized" and "high quality" (*suzhi*) as I discussed in Chapter Four. Interestingly, *suzhi* is duplicated in such a way that diverges from the state discourse. Tolerance and practice of "new" things is a signifier of modern *suzhi*. For example, Zhenzhi , a thirty-three year old middle class informant, laughed at a question that she thought too "out of fashion" (*guoshi*) for her, when I inquired about her opinion of pre-marital sex:

> [Cohabitation before marriage] is so trendy today. It's not a new thing anymore that one can boast about. [It] is a good thing for your marital life later. You wouldn't know what life as a couple is like without [cohabitation before getting married]. It would be a good

> thing for a couple to practice before getting married even though they just live together with not cooking three meals a day but only eating out.
>
> (Zhenzhi, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

This middle class "openness" extended to the practice "keeping a second wife". Because the term "second wife" is no longer synonymous with "concubine", but is understood as a woman with the assets of youth and physical attractiveness, none of these informants condemned the "second wives" as "morally fallen"; instead, they rejected the moral discourse in the media's construction of "second wife" and interpreted this behaviour either as a realistic strategy or as evidence of "love". With this rejection of the moral discourse, these women expressed a perception of extramarital affairs that does not comply with the media's moral tone. Their approach to extramarital affairs often demonstrated their "openness" as modern subjects:

> I just told my colleague this morning about what I had read online. It is about a young wife having sex with a boy who was born post-1990. She and the boy were caught in bed by the husband. That is what I read online. I said to my colleague that I never had believed in the idea of being "caught in bed" before. Who could be so STUPID? Being STUPIDLY caught like that? But when my neighbor was caught in bed in front of my eyes, I began to believe [people are really STUPID].
>
> (Zhengzheng, a 31 year-old middle class woman)

Sexual mores advocated by the official discourse are seen as "traditional" by middle class women. "Unconventional" sexual practices are seen as new trends brought on by the process of modernization. One's acceptance of new trends is a sign of modernity, and performing modernity has become something of a signifier of one's modern *suzhi*. The understanding of modernity is likened to the appreciation of a fashion show, accepting that things constantly appear as the new and disappear as the old, helping to indicate one's subscription to the subject position of modernity. Many middle class informants employ the term "*chao*" ("fashionable

waves") to describe homosexuality, extramarital affairs, and premarital sex. Formerly, this term applied only to trends in food, clothing, magazines, and styles of films. Being "*chao*" (fashionable) refers to one's performance of a modern *suzhi*. For example, when comparing the different meanings of "extramarital affairs" and "keeping a second wife", one middle class informant Zhuzhu said: "[these two terms] actually refer to the same thing, but the word "keeping" (*bao*) seems to come out of a more fashionable (*chao*) way". Nevertheless, despite their tolerance and embrace of sexual liberalism, all middle class women expressed a belief in the importance of marriage. Cohabitation without marriage registration is a temporary behaviour for couples who intend to marry. These informants considered remaining unmarried throughout one's life as a failure.

Four of the middle class informants, Jojo, Jin, Yuanyuan, and Mei showed no reluctance to discuss the details of their extramarital affairs in a guilt-free manner. In Farrer's (2003) and Chang's (1999) studies on extramarital affairs in Shanghai and Taiwan, both scholars found a double standard in sexual mores which applied differently to men and women. The news narrative of "keeping a second wife" also echoes this double standard in sexual mores. These four informants challenged that kind of double standard by criticizing the cultural script and spoke out regarding their own experiences as participants in extramarital affairs. For these women, the discourse of love and romance is an accepted fact of modern life, and thus pursuing love and desire triumphs over gendered sexual mores. In her discussion of Ding Ling's female characters, Barlow points out that "love", "romance" and "desire" are understood as important conceptions of modernity in the early twentieth century of China (Barlow 2004). If these conceptions have lent strength to women in the May-Fourth period to challenge traditional mores, they also are employed by the middle class women to justify their personal affairs in

contemporary time. With the concepts of "love" and "romance", the decision to become involved in affairs triumphantly expresses one's modernity (as opposed to being a captive of traditional morality). All four women employed these concepts to justify their "cheating" against gendered sexual mores. For example, Fong, a thirty-one year old middle class woman, criticized a common description of "sexually loose" women in the following way:

> "Red apricot flowers climbing out of the wall"? What do you mean? This is a modern society now. How could you use this traditional standard to judge women in extramarital affairs like that? This saying is so ridiculous. I wouldn't bother to criticize it.
>
> (Fong, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

In justifying their extramarital affairs by employing the codes of modernity, these women demonstrated that the cultural codes that Farrer (2003) discovered in his study on extramarital relationships in Shanghai, such as family responsibility and guilt, no longer dominate in women's narratives. Unlike the women in Farrer's study who ended their affairs due to the cultural codes, two informants had ended their affairs due to disappointment with their lovers and decided to permanently keep the affair unknown to their husbands. One had divorced her husband and started to live with the man with whom she had an affair and the fourth divorced her husband, married her lover but later divorced again. These stories reflect an oppositional attitude towards official discourse and the evolution of sexual culture in China.

Women's extramarital affairs in the cultural codes are defined as moral weakness. How is this cultural imposition on women dismantled and why do women become guilt-free in pursuing their sexual desires? Farrer (2003) examines the "rhetoric of motives" within the cultural context, but the underlying causes of these motives remain unexamined; in particular, the scholarship provides no analysis of the ways in which the self plays a role in women's

justification of their extramarital affairs (turning the representation of "bad women" into "modern women" who are expected to yearn for love and self-fulfillment).

Anthony Giddens' work (1990, 1991, and 1992) on modernity and intimate relationships helps us understand the changing nature of sexuality in contemporary China—what tensions, forces and experiences dominate individuals' lived experiences and how they cope with them while pursuing a good life. For Giddens, one of the consequences of modernity is liberation, autonomy and empowerment (1992). The growth of capitalism in China has radically transformed individuals' experiences of their lives, and social relations have been globalized to some extent, while "old" practices and meanings (both material and psychological) have shattered. Life ruled by emerging knowledge and information rather than previously established rules and orders becomes reflexive, always subject to uncertainty, revision, and subversion in accordance with new conceptualizations. In particular, intimate relationships are no longer embedded in local communities/structures of authority and kinship networks, patterned by traditional meanings; instead, they are created by mutual strangers through "a mutual process of self-disclosure" and sexual experimentation (1990, 121-122). Gidden's conceptualization of modernity also sheds light on the relations between modernity and the idea of self (Giddens 1991). His central idea regarding the interconnections between modernity and the self is that the replacement of traditional orders creates opportunities for freedom and self-actualization through a series of life-style choices, rather than being "given" or "discovered". Moreover, love relationships take on heightened value as the principal means of creating self-identify, achieving authentic being and restoring emotional security (1991). Liberated sexuality can be touted as the key to personal meaning and social context.

Drawing attention to the self is a salient trait of modernity. As Giddens (1991) states, one of the most important hallmarks of modernity is not only related to institutions, but the reflexive self (1991), a free agent pursuing its own desires. The four middle class informants who made a point of discussing their extramarital affairs all perceived the self in modern terms. Their age ranges from 30 to 55. They discussed "feelings", "love", and sexual desires that they found hard to obtain within the bounds of their marriages, a situation which freed them to pursue their desires with other people. The guilt-free manner in which they expressed these ideas depended upon a justification of their extramarital affairs as means of pursuing "love" and "feelings" and the modern self, and thus evidently shows that modernity discourse of the self emerges in opposition to the established ideological position on marriage and sexuality. Women's extramarital affairs are associated with a quest to understand the self that is embedded in modernity. Love and feelings become keywords in women's accounts of their extramarital affairs. Having an extramarital affair was interpreted in a positive manner—as a means of getting in touch with one's emotions and feelings. Feelings are the immediate expression of the self in extramarital affairs, offering a powerful argument against the official messages of monogamous sexuality.

The concepts of love, feelings and romance take the aforementioned form in women's understandings of extramarital affairs as presented by Frith and McRobbie (1990, 378) in their analysis of the media's impact upon women: "girls are encouraged from all directions to interpret their sexuality in terms of romance, to give priority to notions of love, feeling, commitment, the moment of bliss". Jojo, who had an extramarital affair in the mid-1990s, recalled her love affair by employing these concepts in the following manner:

> Back in the mid-1980s, my mother liked [my ex-husband] and insisted that I must marry him because he was talented and established in his career. So I married him. He was fifteen years older than me. I married him for my mother. Later in the mid-1990s, I met a younger man, much younger than me actually. I had such a strong feeling for him, so I ran away with him. I was a bad woman in the view of the society because I left my family and my duty as a mother behind. But I was determined to do so for myself. I was thirsty for love".
>
> (Jojo, a 54 year-old middle class woman)

In pursuing love and romance, sexual pleasure is no longer men's privilege, but becomes an experience that women desire. The informants expressed no shame in speaking of their sexual desires and pleasure during the course of these interviews. They talked openly about orgasm and sexual experience. For example, here is what Jing and Mei said:

> I thought I was asexual and frigid before I had sex with Yang (her lover). Now I can come five times when he makes love to me. It's amazing. It is a wonderful feeling having sex like that. But with Liu (her husband), I feel nothing. I just lay back to complete my duty, hoping to get it over with as soon as possible.
>
> (Jin, a 30 year-old middle class housewife)

> [My husband] had premature ejaculation; he didn't want to talk about it. He felt embarrassed when we went to see a doctor. You can compare this thing and you know obviously who is better in bed. With LuLing (her lover), sex is much more enjoyable.
>
> (Yuanyuan, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

In sum, these women have rejected gendered sexual mores and have embraced sexual liberalism in their pursuit of love, feelings and sexual pleasure. They deploy concepts of love, feelings and romance as ethical categories in order to justify sexual desires that have previously been depicted as signs of "bad women" in the cultural scripts. Modern discourse plays a major role in the altering the landscape of sexual culture. Nevertheless, despite their guilt free attitude towards their affairs, two of the informants whose husbands had higher status claimed that they

would rather keep their marriage for security reasons, both materially and psychologically. Both women also used another concept derived from Chinese culture to justify this decision: *qinqing*, which refers to a familial connection between husbands and wives that should not be sundered.

NOW AND THEN: MAKING SENSE OF TIMES

Zhuzhu reflected upon the different attitudes towards premarital sex expressed by three generations of women—herself, her mother and her grandmother:

> It's not a big deal if I live with my boyfriend for a while and later for some reason we break up. For my mother, she may think that it's better if I live with someone whom I will marry in the end. My grandmother would think I have lost some value for a girl (virginity) in the cohabitation.
>
> (Zhuzhu, a 31 year-old middle class woman)

Generational difference in the perception of marriage and sexuality remains significant. How do women make sense of the shifts in the perception of marriage and sexuality between different generation cohorts, and what are their attitudes towards these shifts? The data for this section are from a focus group interview I conducted in Chongqing that happened to include four middle class mothers whose daughters were coming of age. The data are also drawn on some informants individually interviewed including both middle class women and working class women who also happened to have a daughter coming of age. Older informants compared their youthful experiences with their daughters' lives at present, particularly with regard to mate selection, courtship, marriage, and virginity. Conversely, the younger informants that I interviewed individually and in two focus groups of female college students compared their own lives with the cultural context experienced by their mother's generation.

Evans (2007) explores mother-daughter relations by reflecting on gendered meanings perceived by women in relation to their subjective perceptions of gender. Subjective positioning of women in different political moments of the PRC is closely linked to their discursive environments; nevertheless their own experiences often challenge the discourse. Evans' discovery is helpful for analyzing the changes as well as the liaisons between mother and daughter cohorts. Over the course of conversation with my informants, the perceptions expressed by the older cohort evidently shows that the dominant discourse has shaped their lives. However, this group's attitude towards the time of "sexual freedom" expresses a complex rather than a simple disapproval of the emerging sexual culture to which their daughters are subjected.

The mothers sighed for the fun they missed during their youth and envied the "good times" that have grown out of the expansion of "freedom" and choices available to their daughters. Although mothers reflected that their generation was too conservative and had no fun, they also attributed positive values to their girlhood: for example, being conservative in courtship, shame of premarital sex and adhering to the view that dating is only for marriage. By using the words "pure", "naïve" and "innocent", these women made clear their feelings about how "a girl ought to be". Despite the "envy" they felt for their daughters' generation's "freedom", they nevertheless expressed the sentiment that "public morals are declining day by day" (*shifeng rixia*). Hence, the mothers worried about the negative impact of "sexual freedom" upon their daughters. On the one hand, the older cohort expressed worries about the younger cohort's safety in the changing sexual culture, based on an understanding of weak and passive female sexuality. On the other hand, the mothers' cohort was willingly subjected to current social morals (*shehui fengqi*) in order to keep pace with contemporary society, and have had no choice but to try to adapt themselves to the changes in the current sexual climate. For example, many

informants said that they did not approve of the fact that their college-aged daughters were living with their boyfriends, but they turned a blind eye to it and made an effort to tolerate the fact. The mothers' cohort was aware of the wave of modernity, a trend toward distinguishing one's *suzhi* as part of the superior segment of the population; therefore they expressed a passive tolerance of and contradictory attitude towards sexual liberalism.

By way of contrast, the daughters' cohort reflected on their lives by emphasizing the modern subjectivity which distinguished them from their mothers. They advocated in favour of the sexual freedom that the mother cohort deplored. "Sexual freedom" is understood among the daughters' cohort within its social, cultural and historical contexts. Premarital sex is no longer taboo; instead, it becomes a normative part of female maturation and development. Female virginity has lost the importance that it held for the mothers' generation. Remaining single throughout one's lifetime is no longer considered abnormal, although it is seen as a lost opportunity for happiness. Divorce, seen as a moral weakness in the past, is accepted as part of "China's moving step forward" (*jinbu*), based on the consideration that marriage ought to derive from "love" instead of mere responsibilities.

Nevertheless, different from Giddens' conceptualization of autonomous individuals in modern society (1991), sexual freedom is neither understood primarily as an aspect of individual autonomy and independence nor an equal right for both sexes; rather, it is generally interpreted as a phenomenon related to positioning the self in line with the pushing force of modernity. The daughters' cohort's rejection of sexual restraints that used to be placed on the mothers' cohort is not exactly identical to conceptions of free love during the 1960s in the West. Sexual freedom during the 1960s generally went hand in hand with a women's consciousness-raising movement and the pursuit of a brand of autonomy and independence that challenged ideologically

prescribed gender roles (Wheeler 2013). It was a desire for autonomy that embraced the new urban youth culture (August 2009). Young women in the 1960s breaking out of traditional restrictions, seeking independence and sexual freedom and challenging male dominance grew common in Western societies (Lehman 2011).

By contrast, sexual freedom in contemporary China derives from conceptions of modernity and life style considerations. Although transformations within institutions, cultural codes and social contexts are forces of changing sexuality (Farrer 2002, 2003), the understanding of modernity plays an important role for both the mothers' cohort and the daughters' cohort. The mothers' cohort is seen as representative of "tradition", while the daughters' cohort represents modernity. Hence, the mother-daughter relation is a metaphor for the liaison between "tradition" and "modernity" and between the emergent and the residual. Nanshan, a young middle class woman, described the liaison in this way: "our parents' generation is still with us, so our tradition is with us too". Hence, the daughters' positioning of the self and their identification of the liaison not only demonstrates their self-identity a subjects of modernity, but also reveals the interplay between the residual and the emergent aspects of culture.

GENDERED SEXUAL FREEDOM

The previous social and cultural formation of sexuality is a set of social norms based on oppressive patriarchal norms. The traditional family/marriage institution contains a whole set of norms designed to regulate a sexual landscape rigidly differentiated by gender (Ebrey 1991, 1993, Levy 1968, Watson 1991). The enforcement of sexual mores fell far more heavily upon women, while men, by contrast, were often granted sexual license (Hsu 1971)—and this practice is still supported by the social construction of male promiscuity as I discuss in Chapter Three.

These residual ideas of female sexuality have persisted over time (and have been integrated into the dominant ideological view of marriage and sexuality). Female virginity and sexual restrictions imposed primarily on women reflect a set of values from the Chinese tradition—what Williams (1977) describes as "some previous social and culture institution or formation" but still "in effect" at present. This cultural inheritance from the Chinese tradition has been a constant through many different historical periods and political regimes as a residual force upon the changing landscape of sexual culture. These past beliefs continue to exert an influence upon contemporary Chinese sexual culture.

The residual life of these past beliefs is evident in institutional practices as well as women's everyday life experiences. It is actively advocated through institutional channels such as the media and educational programs. The media narrative of "keeping a second wife" offers a textbook example of the institutional dissemination of gendered sexual mores. Sex education has recently become a signifier of modern education that is seen to be part of "joining the trajectory of the international community" (*yu guoji jiegui*), but it is understood as a way of reinforcing biological difference and is carried out through "female chastity courses" for girls, while boys' courses emphasize a particular conception of masculinity associated with the term "machismo" ("saving masculinity", *zhengjiu yanggang qizhi*) (Fang 2012). Examples which trumpet the importance of female virginity continue to appear once in a while. Campaigns for protecting female virginity and chastity are organized by female university students who aim to preserve female virginity as a significant token to be offered in exchange for a husband's love (Li 2012). In 2011, a female representative of the People's Congress claimed that "a girl's virginity is the

best bride's gift to the husband's family (*po jia*)".[84] She claimed the idea while serving as a VIP guest host at a Shanghai TV station. In 2012, Satellite Television of Hubei Province ran a show for public interest promoting traditional morality, inviting an internet celebrity, "the goddess of chastity", to lecture upon the importance of female virginity.[85]

These advocates for female virginity have enjoyed a great deal of success in public discussions. The "effectiveness" of these "residual elements" is confirmed by some of my informants. They identified its impact and have admitted that while not all men are concerned about their wives' virginity, some of them do indeed mind if their female partners (girlfriends and wives) are not virgins. Female virginity is seen as something that can add to a wife's value in a symbolic way, signaling that the husband receives her complete devotion, both physically and mentally. Some informants cited the statement written by Eileen Chang, a well known Shanghai writer during the 1940s, to illustrate the importance of female virginity for a husband: "a man conquers a woman's full heart by taking her virginity". Below are two excerpts from accounts by two women discussing the importance of female virginity for marriage:

> I gave my virginity to my husband. So did he to me. We got married afterwards. Everything was perfect for us. He often talks about the issue [of virginity]. He feels that he would mind it if [I had not given my virginity to him]. I wouldn't mind [if he wasn't a virgin] as much as he would. For example, his friend's wife was not a virgin when this woman married [his friend]. My husband despises her. He feels that this woman doesn't deserve matrimonial happiness. In fact, I feel that female virginity is a factor that protects the marriage. It works in this way that husband respects you more.
>
> (Juanzi, a 34 year-old middle class woman)

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[84] "*Shanghai renda daibiao Bai Wanqing: zhencao shi nuhai zuihao de jiazhuang*" (a Shanghai representative of the People's Congress Bai Wanqing: viginity is the best bride gift), *Changjiang ribao* (*Changjiang Daily*), March 4, 2011.

[85] *"Hubei weishi tui gongyi lei jiemu, yao zhencao nusheng jiang daode"* (Hubei Satellite TV plans to launch a program for public interest, and invites the goddess of chastity to lecture morality). *Changjiang ribao*, March 28, 2012.

> [People's taking female virginity seriously] is because of thousands-years Chinese tradition. In fact, people do think [female virginity] is important. How do I put this? The society may no longer care [whether a woman gives her virginity to her husband or not]. The majority of people do not care if a woman has kept her virginity until marriage. But if it happens to a person himself, a husband definitely will be upset about the fact that [his wife didn't lose her virginity to him].
>
> (Kunkun, a 35 year-old middle class woman)

The celebratory accounts of "sexual freedom" do not deny the fact that the "freedom" is practiced in a gendered way (Farrer 2002, Pan 2006). Both qualitative studies (Farrer 2002, 2003) and quantitative studies (Pan 2004, 2006) on "sexual freedom" note that many past beliefs and gendered assumptions concerning the sexual natures of men and women remain unchanged and continue to affect women's lives. Consequently, although changes in sexual mores have generated much progress in terms of sexual equality and women do enjoy more sexual freedom than ever before, the space of sexual freedom left for women is much more restricted than it is for men. In general, men benefit far more than women from China's extremely gendered interpretation of "sexual freedom". The evidences of gendered sexuality add an ironic account to the statement of "sexual freedom" and require an interpretation moving beyond the statement.

In my informants' accounts, female virginity is no longer viewed as an oppressive social norm by which every woman in the society must be judged; rather, these concerns are more likely to play themselves out within marital relationships (i.e., virginity becomes either a source of happiness or discord between husbands and wives). Often, the informants identified the place where they live as an "open" and "tolerant" society, in which the old norms have been forsaken; however, they claimed that the past norms are still valued in personal relationships. This may indicate that the residual element appears in a transformative way, and it is the transformation that allows the residual element to persist. Nevertheless, the core of residual elements remains

constant and carries with it the content of past beliefs. For example, female virginity played out in marital relationships retains a traditional symbolic meaning as a token of a woman's physical and mental devotion to the male partner. Many of the informants, including both middle class women and working class women, have claimed that husbands take far more serious interest in their wives' virginity than women do in their husbands'. On the one hand, the persistence of female virginity as an attribute to be valued in marital relationships may reveal the continuing importance of a cultural emphasis upon a "harmonious" unity in marriage, rather than as a partnership between two individuals with equal sexual rights. On the other hand, women's open discussion of unequal sexual rights between husbands and wives may paradoxically derive from the fact that women have gained a greater awareness of sexual inequality within marriage. This awareness may indicate that the residual elements are undergoing rapid changes.

Concluding remarks

Sexual culture in the PRC is characterized as repressive by discourse analysis and policy studies (Dikotter 1995, Erwin 2000, Evans 1997, Hershatter 1996), or seen to be undergoing a process of sexual liberalization by youth culture studies (Farrer 2002, Pan 2000 and 2004). These claims and discoveries each contain some elements of truth, but neither presents a complete picture of sexual culture in the PRC. By building upon and moving beyond the previous studies, this chapter argues that sexual culture in China is a changing process that contains multiple and overlapping forms of sexual culture. Moreover, while age difference continues to be significant in attitudes towards sexuality, class emerges as a variable to examine degree of adherence to the official ideology of sexuality.

Along with dramatic social changes in the economic and political spheres, in contemporary China, Chinese sexual culture is undergoing a profound transformation, in which the discursive practices of the dominant ideology concerning marriage and sexuality, past beliefs regarding sexual norms and an emergent sexual liberalism co-exist, overlap, and compete. The dominant ideological (and legal) view of marriage and sexuality—which has framed the heterosexual marital unit as the normative place for sexual relations—is challenged by the increasing practice of premarital sex and extramarital affairs, cohabitation without marriage registration and sexual behaviours previously defined as "abnormal". Some of these emerging practices are subverting sexual norms and usurping the dominant position, such as premarital sex. Although marriage is no longer the only place for sex, it remains essential to the Chinese common sense understanding of happiness. All interviewees, including middle class, working class women, and college students, aged between 18 and 55, expressed the importance of marriage and viewed remaining single as a failure of life. Premarital sex often occurs among women who intend to marry their male partners. The past beliefs concerning female virginity still exist at the level of the private sphere, and sometimes can play an important role in determining matrimonial happiness. This indicates that the residual element remains in effect, but in a transformative way that makes it persistent. The effectiveness of this past belief suggests that the advent of "sexual freedom" does not grant equal sexual rights between women and men. It is, at best, a highly gendered "freedom". These forms of sexual culture help to define the complex parameters of sexuality in China today.

There are several different attitudes towards this sexual freedom. Generational difference continues to play a significant role as an indicator of these attitudes. Members of the younger generations are likely to embrace the idea of sexual freedom, lining up against their older

counterparts in exactly the manner that the youth culture scholarship suggests. However, my data collection reveals that members of the older generations are making an effort to adjust their views of social change in terms of sexuality. Apart from the indicator of age, my interviews with both middle class and working class women indicate that class may be added as an important determining factor with regard to attitude towards sexual freedom. Middle class interviewees showed more tolerance toward sexual practices outside of the dominant frame (such as sex out of wedlock and homosexuality), whereas working class respondents showed more attachment to the dominant discourse (and past beliefs). However, this claim would require a larger quantitative study before it can be generalized. These differences rooted in age and class helped to determine individuals' subject position vis-à-vis China's trajectory toward modernity. The younger generations and middle class respondents were more likely to see themselves as participants in a modern social order that defines individuals as "open", "tolerant" and "fashionable" subjects. In this understanding of modernity, concepts of "love" and "feelings" become ethical categories deployed by middle class women to justify their extramarital affairs, and thereby enable them to challenge the dominant ideal of monogamous sexuality.

The discourse of modernity plays an important role as a pushing force in transforming sexuality. This particular discourse derives from multiple utterances coming from different media resources. On the one hand, it includes state discourse as a part of the state's modernization of the family, which depends upon a monogamous idea of heteronomative sexuality and temporarily takes precedence as a dominant element. On the other, the modern discourse also incorporates many ideas derived from sites of global cultural exchange, which encourage audience members to adjust themselves to concepts of tolerance in opposition to monogamous and heteronomative sexuality. Interplay and struggle often occurs within and

between the multiple forces which make up the discourse of modernity. Embracing the monogamous idea is often seen as standing by modernity, while tolerance towards other types of sexual practices is also a signifier of being a "modern" subject. Interestingly, ideas derived from the state's "modern" discourse are often seen as "traditional" by audience members who have embraced an attitude of "sexual freedom". This may point the way toward a sexual culture in which the dominant ideas concerning marriage and sexuality will cede more space to other ideas, giving birth to a growing tolerance that will permit the sexual culture of the PRC to become much more diverse than it is at present.

Chapter Six

Gender and Corruption: The Cultural Script, Narratives and Contentions

In the spring of 2012, Bo Xilai, the potential candidate for the chief of the Chinese Communist Party, was suspended from his party posts after the police chief of Chongqing fled to the US consulate in Chengdu. According to an official statement from a party's leader's meeting reported by the state news agency (*Xinhua*), Bo stood accused of "corruption, abuse of power, bribe-taking and improper relations with women" (Patience 2012). The statement added pointedly that "Bo had affairs and maintained improper sexual relationships with a number of women" (Patience 2012). The scandalous nature of Bo's affairs became a hot topic and prompted the Chinese social media (blogs, BBS and micro-blogs) to conduct "human flesh search engine" (*renrou shoushuo,* doxxing), an exposure of identity and private information of those women involved in a scandal through internet search. Bo's wife, Gu Kailai, was mentioned as a "source of the trouble" (*huoshui*) and apparently played a key role in exposing Bo's corruption. Bo's case is a recent example of media's construction of official corruption. These political downfalls have occurred frequently during the PRC's history. While most casualties during the Maoist era were accused of failing to support the party line, allegations of corruption have accounted for the majority of these incidents during the post-Mao period. Often, the theme of the "keeping a second wife" (*bao ernai*) or the role of a bad wife has figured prominently in the narrative of these officials' corrupt practices.

Corruption has become an increasingly salient issue in politics during the post-Mao era, in tandem with the rise of the Chinese economy. Official corruption in China has caused severe

social animosity towards the regime and is perceived as an acute problem that could bring about the collapse of the political system (Zhou 2010). The literature on corruption in China often views the problem through the lens of the political economy of corruption, an interpretive framework that has enabled analysts to study the causes and consequences of corruption, along with the patterns, the scale, the perpetrators, and the measures enacted to curtail corruption (Holmes 2006, Manion 2004, Sun 2004, Yu 2008, Zhou 2010). "Keeping a second wife" (supporting a mistress) is included as one of the behaviors of corrupt officials in this scholarship (Sun 2004, 177).

This chapter aims to take a different approach to corruption. Instead of focusing on the factuality of these allegations, the official account of corruption in the media will be treated as a (re)construction for a discourse analysis. As a whole, it takes a cultural approach to corruption by engaging the lived experiences and perceptions of the message receivers. Moreover, it provides a gendered perspective of corruption, with an investigation of the media discourse of corruption vis-à-vis the audience's response to the discourse. The analysis focuses on audience members' storytelling and their methods of talking-back to the discourse of corruption centered upon "keeping a second wife" in the media's narrative. Drawing upon the data from interviews of both middle class women and working class women and the data collected from the social media in China—*weibo* and BBS—I argue that the media link between corruption and "keeping a second wife" has generated a very interesting (and vigorous) audience counter-narrative, on the one hand, which reflects the intensity of social animosity towards officialdom and provides palpable evidence of a political consciousness that the state has striven to erase. On the other hand, the political consciousness is largely diluted by the prevailed consumerism culture acting as a counter force.

In this chapter, I begin by displaying a cultural script employed to formulate storylines of corruption in the news media. Subsequently I examine ways of resistance to the cultural script by the audiences. The focus of my examination will focus on audiences' narratives and genres of their narratives.

The cultural script: good women and bad women

In his discussion on the British news reports of the Falklands' war, Hall (1984) employs the concept of "historical reconstruction", which he describes as a news narrative that is "derived from the longstanding British tradition of handling its own history" (1984, 2). Hall's interpretation reminds us that history often controls our perception of the present, following Marx's statement that "the tradition of the dead generation weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living*"* (Marx 1852*).* Hall's insight sheds light on our understanding of the media's narrative of corruption in China. Borrowing Hall's method, I show how the media's narrative of corruption is a historical reconstruction, in which a cultural script derived from the Chinese political tradition serves to camouflage a contemporary political crisis.

In the historical reconstruction of an official's downfall, the cultural script from the Chinese narrative tradition repeatedly appears as the key plot to illustrate the causes and outcomes of corruption, representing the political issue of corruption as an issue of sexual affairs out of wedlock. In educational textbooks and popular culture, dynastic political crises are presented as stories about seductive "witches" who enchant and distract rulers, triggering dynastic collapse. This tradition has produced a cultural script that reappears in modern PRC politics as a tool for making sense of and organizing reception of political incidents. One of the most important modern examples of "the witch" is the figure of Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, a central villain (or scapegoat) in the narrative of Mao's "mistakes", which caused national

catastrophes such as the Cultural Revolution (Terrill 1999). The common saying that "women are the source of troubles" (*hongyan huoshui*) figures prominently in the story of each dynasty's demise, and becomes a key plot point in the modern narrative of corruption. This persistent cultural script roots an inexplicable misogyny in the political storytelling tradition, stigmatizing women's participation in politics and/or women's involvement with men in politics. In this narrative tradition, dynastic dissolution is often attributed to the emperor's favourite concubine(s), who breaks the ruler's concentration on state affairs and plunges the state into chaos. Misogyny in narrating politics has become a subconscious aspect of popular culture, repeatedly inscribed in films, fiction and other types of cultural production. This tradition of political storytelling reappears in the treatment of the relation between an official's corrupt practice and his "second wife". The media narrative of corruption almost invariably positions corrupt officials within this narrative tradition.

In his study on corruption and criminality in Russia, Verdery (1996, 220) conceptualizes various anti-corruption campaigns as "talk of witchcraft", which blames problems on "evil phenomena" that plague the society through media reporting and scholarly writing on post-Soviet affairs. The symbolic gesture in talk of witchcraft is also evident in the Chinese media's reporting of corruption, in which rampant corruption caused by the political system are overlooked. Instead, the problem is blamed on extramarital relationships through the media's creation of family crises. Women frequently become the scapegoats during these narratives of corruption. Media accounts of corruption highlight officials' affairs with "second wives" as the triggering motivation of corruption. Morality, and women's "virtues or vices" in particular, becomes a crucial contributing factor in the discourse of corruption. News stories and commentary opinions repeatedly establish a magic link between corruption and fallen "witches"

(*huli jing*). For example, the following commentary is fairly a representative utterance in the discourse of corruption:

> Many corrupt officials have not yet sensed the truth that "a mistress is the source of troubles" (*huoshui*). These mistresses are blinded by lust for gain, and they collude with officials by way of their beautiful appearance, their extreme coquette and their scheming minds; in consequence, they become a blast fuse and an accelerator for officials' unbridled corruption as well as the transfer station and even may play a hand at money laundering.[…] if going through those corrupt officials' files on the purpose of [confirming the truth above], [we will find that] regardless of the level of corruption that officials committed, and regardless of their rank, indeed many tumbled as a consequence of engaging in lechery and those charming skirts. […] the Central Committee for Inspecting Discipline has regarded the eradication of cadres' keeping a mistress as an important project in the systematic fight against corruption. Here, we are warning those cadres who are still keeping a mistress, look out for your official career and the happiness of your family. [86]

Commentaries such as this formulate a discourse which aims to dominate the subject by supplying authoritative opinions to affirm a superior position in relation to the subject (Ang 1985). Related to the commentaries, news stories of corruption highlight the scandals of officials' extramarital affairs, and thus a cultural script involving stories with a "naturalized" understanding of gender, in which a dynasty's fate is "cursed" by a foxy "witch" (concubine), becomes a contemporary account of an official with a promising future who is ruined by a materially demanding woman (labelled as his "second wife").

There are two elements in the cultural script hardwired into the corruption narrative. First, culturally and historically, a man's ascent up the ladder of officialdom (*guanchang*) is understood as the elite man's ultimate goal and a glorious achievement for life. In return, he

[86] Hu, Jianbing, 2008, "*weihe da duoshu ganbu fubai yu bao ernai youguan*" (why is most cadres' corruption linked to keeping a second wife?). *Jinyang wang*, (originally from *Renmin wang*), November 20. Accessed Sept. 5, 2009: http://big5.ycwb.com/sp/2008-11/24/content_2016375.htm.

gains material rewards and mental satisfaction (honour, achievement, and masculinity) and further benefits his entire family members and relatives in the Chinese political tradition. This cultural understanding of the importance of being an official is reinforced in the news stories which show the fatal consequence of sexual relations with "witchy" women. This cultural script reflects the pre-modern nature of the political system in contemporary China. Second, women's sexual mores are understood as a crucial factor that causes the downfall and the rise of a regime/dynasty. The traditional Chinese narrative of dynastic politics always blames a woman who causes the state's collapse through her feminine charms. This woman is often condemned as a "foxy witch" (*huli jing*): an inhuman, wicked fox spirit who takes the form of a woman. The historical figure of the "foxy witch", a persistent temptation and danger to the men who compose the political elite, reappears as "the source of troubles" in the stories of corrupt officials.

In contrast to the "foxy witch", "a good woman" (either a mother or a wife), is culturally understood as the positive influence on the son's or the husband's political career, bolstering his sense of morality and affecting the state's fate during a crisis such as a foreign invasion. The cultural construction of "good women" was integrated into the CCP's political discourse well before the establishment of the PRC. For example, in the 1940s, when discussing women's role in the modern Chinese society, Zhou Enlai, the well-known CCP revolutionary and later the Premier for life under the Maoist regime, made a rather contradictory statement pertaining to the "new women" (*xin nüxing*) that had prevailed since the May Fourth Movement in the early 20s (which advocated liberating women from the family responsibilities). He repudiated the traditional meaning of "virtuous wives and good mothers" (*xianqi liangmu*) and revised the notion of the mother's duty for revolutionaries and later socialist causes (Manning 2010). The "mother's duty" in Zhou's interpretation actually emphasizes the importance of "good women"

in the communist context, which later became a part of the ACWF's discourse during Maoist regime.

This approach of good mothers (or good wives)' influence as a role model on the society appears in the neo-liberalist governance of the post Mao regime, such as "Ten Outstanding Mothers" campaign in recent years (Guo 2010). The idea of "good women" (wives and mothers) replicates itself in current political anti-corruption campaigns and has become a purposeful strategy used to deter rampant corruption. The morality of women is understood as an important issue for anti-corruption campaigns. The CCP's anti-corruption discourse criticizes "morally fallen" women and praises good women's virtues. For example, one of the projects of the state-affiliated All China Women's Federation (ACWF) is to mobilize women to combat corruption within the family. The ACWF's approach is to emphasize wives' morality in restraining the behaviour of their husbands (officials). In 2005, for example, the ACWF edited and published a book series—"managing an incorruptible family" (*lianjie chijia*)—and subsequently organized a nationwide "educational reading activity" described as "the family functioning to build a clean and honest government" (*jiating zulian*).[87] It targeted officials' wives.

The ACWF's campaigns focus on wives' virtues as positive influences on their husbands' behaviour and condemn wives with bad morals for motivating husbands to embrace corruption. In the ACWF's highly gendered interpretation of corruption, past and present are integrated as an illustrative reality, in which the task of restraining corruption throughout thousands of years of Chinese history has depended upon the virtue of "good wives". The ACWF's book series retrieves examples of good wives and bad wives from dynastic China to the Communist Party's

[87] See the Propaganda Department of the ACWF. ed. 2005. *Lianjie chijia qishi jinshi* (Inspirations and warnings for managing an incorruptible family). Beijing: *Zhongguo fangzheng chubanshe*.

PRC, and it ascribes the behaviour of good and bad officials alike to the influence of their wives. Hence, women's morality is the key to a regime's rise and fall.

The current media narrative also dwells upon the image of virtuous wives preventing corruption. For example:

> [The corrupt officials] did not cherish the happy family that they already had. Every established party member and cadre used to work hard and continually improved themselves when they were young. Every one of them was able to completely focus on his official career simply because there was always an industrious and virtuous wife standing behind him with utter and quiet devotion to manage a warm home for him. [This] has confirmed the fact that "there is always a great woman behind every successful man". When these men succeeded in their official career, the flower-like beauty of these great women had faded. However, wives were still waiting in the dim lamplight for you to come home. Thinking about this, how could [these corrupt officials] not cherish their wives and how could they be willing to desert their happy family? How could they have reasons to support a mistress and keep a second wife?[...] Party members and cadres who face lust should learn a lesson from them, otherwise, you will destroy your happy family and ruin your official career, and you will regret it to the end of your days.[88]

Corruption becomes inextricably linked to issues of gender and familial relations in the media discourse. In her discourse analysis of gender and sexuality in the PRC, Evans (1997) points out that the understanding of gender is based on an essentialist view that remains prevalent in Chinese public discourse. With reference to the cultural script, the ruler/official is characterized exclusively as male and is assumed to have the masculine virtues of strength, intelligence and rationality, all of which entitle him to "manage" the political realm. However, the male sex also has promiscuous tendencies (Chang 1999, Evans 1997), a weakness that can be taken advantage of by seductive women. Consequently, if the man is seduced, he becomes corrupt. Thus, as

[88] *"Si shenghuo wei shenme hui fangdao yixie dangyuan ganbu"* (Why has private life made some party members and cadres fall), *Jinyinwang*, December 4, 2008. Accessed Sept. 6, 2009: http://opinion.hunantv.com/x/20081204/84736.html

feminist scholars have pointed out, the female sex represents the "body" and "nature" (MacCormack and Strathern 1980, Ortner 1974) in many societies.

In the case of China, women are divided into two types, possessing "natures" dictating by their sexual morality: the "bad" and the "good". In this understanding of politics, "bad" women seduce promiscuous men and trigger corruption (damaging the stability of a regime), while "good" women exert a positive influence on their husbands and help to promote clean government. In this way, gender in the discourse of corruption functions as camouflage in political discussions. This manner of discussing corruption fails to target the real problems in Chinese political life. Under the aegis of this cultural script, news reports attribute corruption to officials' "keeping a second wife". News reports indicate that there always is a "second wife" (mistress) behind an official's corruption, and hence the strategy of the Bureau of Combating Graft in detecting any bribery and embezzlement cases is to rely upon catching the mistress in order to build a case. [89]

In short, the news discourse of corruption restages the traditional "talk of witchcraft" and blames political impropriety on sexual relations between naturally promiscuous men and "morally fallen" women. This narrative is facilitated by a cultural script that makes use of a longstanding misogyny in Chinese political storytelling. The essentialist construction of gender roles and sex natures is expressed as "common sense" (e.g. the "natural" way of living for men and women). The news construction of corruption appeals to "common sense" understandings of gender which remain operative amongst the Chinese people.

[89] Hu, Jianbing. 2008. "*Weihe da duoshu ganbu fubai yu bao ernai youguan*" (Why does most cadres' corruption link to keeping a second wife?). *Jinyang wang*, (originally from *Renmin wang*), November 20. Accessed Sept. 5, 2009: http://big5.ycwb.com/sp/2008-11/24/content_2016375.htm

However, cultural theorists have built a theoretical framework for audience studies that aims to explore the possibilities of negotiation and resistance (Hall 1973, Grossberg and Nelson 1988). Hall's model of encoding/decoding offers insights into the ways in which media messages operate through both media production and audience's interpretation (Hall 1973). By elaborating media message-receiver relations, Hall challenges the media effects model in which meaning is made only by cultural producers and simply received by the audience. For Hall, meanings embedded in messages are made in practice, and through the struggles of competing positions. In Hall's model, an audience faces three positions. The first is that the audience interprets representation completely within the dominant ideology as it is encoded. The second is a negotiated reading. The audience accepts the underlying framework of the ideology, but challenges some parts of it. The third is an oppositional reading against the ideology. This encoding/decoding model allows for a more process-oriented understanding of media production and consumption. In short, the encoding process reveals the relationship between media messages and ideology and shows how the representation embedded in the messages are naturalized through this process, whereas the decoding process illustrates the possibilities for contesting ideology inherent in the reception process itself (Hall 1973).

How do audience members perceive the linkage between corruption and "keeping a second wife"? The following sections are intended to reveal the possibilities of audience resistance and strategies of contention, obtained by opening up new narratives of their own and employing genres in response to the cultural script in the news narrative of corruption.

Talking-back: storytelling and genres

Corruption and keeping a "second wife" are seen as tightly linked issues, both in media narratives and audience's responses to these stories. While the media discourse emphasizes the

theme that many corrupt officials "keep a second wife", audience members also link "keeping a second wife" to government officials. However, despite this convergence between the media and the audience, audiences differ sharply from the media discourse in their interpretations of the causes and consequences of corruption. Most of my informants clearly disagreed with the cultural script that blames "fallen" women. In the women's interpretation, "keeping a second wife" is not interpreted as the cause of corruption, but, rather, as the consequence of corruption. A survey of 623 respondents from various cities in China conducted in 2007 reveals that 74% of respondents list governmental officials as the top group that is most likely to be corrupt, and only 0.2% of respondents agreed that "having mistresses" is the most socially damaging aspect of corruption (Yu 2008). The survey does not aim to focus on the connection between these two facts, but the statistics in the survey illustrate that the respondents' perception of corruption and "keeping a second wife" contests the media's presentation of the narrative.

My fieldwork confirms women's rejection of media stories about corruption and "keeping a second wife". When asked "who is keeping a second wife?" the majority of the interviewees named (without hesitation) government officials (*dangguan de*) as the group most likely to be guilty of this behaviour, in line with other social groups such as businessmen. If "keeping a second wife" is a signifier of bad morals, as the media claims, the linkage between government officials and "keeping a second wife" may reveal a strong social animosity towards the regime. Instead of linking women to bad morals, however, audiences identify the officials themselves as the source of bad morals, and most of the informants rejected the idea that "women are the source of troubles". It is this counter discourse which contests the media's narrative about the primary culpability of "morally fallen" women. With the sense that corruption systematically and collectively prevails (Gong 2006), having been asked "what kind

of woman is the second wife", audiences began to narrate stories of "second wives" retrieved from their life experience—stories that they had heard, witnessed and sensed. These counter-narratives constitute a method of talking-back or contradicting the media's narrative.

Official corruption and "keeping a second wife" is also a topic often discussed on blog sphere. As of 2011 is estimated that there are 181 million bloggers in China (Leibold 2011). The scholarship on Chinese Internet culture focuses on information control versus resistance, cyber-civil space, online activism and web based communities (Tai 2006, Xiao 2011, Yang 2009, Zheng 2007). Scholars in this field have pointed out the importance of the internet in China as an expanding space that is altering the discursive terrain of the party-state and challenging the party-state's domination (Yang 2009, Yu 2007). The blog-sphere, which includes blogs (*boke*) and microblogs (*weibo*), and community-based web forums (*luntan*/BBS) are of particular importance in providing a dynamic and communicative platform for netizens (*wangmin*), allowing them to either engage in political debates or indulge in personal expression and fetishism in a time of consumerism (Leibold 2011).

Corruption is one of the most widely discussed issues on the blogs, micro-blogs and web forums. Often, governmental officials' sexual scandals trigger netizens' interest. The theme of "keeping a second wife" and governmental officials appears repeatedly in BBS, blogs and micro-blogs. The equation of "governmental officials" with "corruption" has assumed the status of "common sense" among bloggers. These scandals have become online public dramas that provide netizens with the opportunity to ridicule the hypocrisy of powerful officials. Moreover, it allows bloggers and micro-bloggers to respond directly to the media narrative's cultural script.

Talking-back can be formulated in various ways, but the data I collected through the interviews with women and social media analysis focuses on two particular types of resistance:

interviewees' storytelling (offering narratives of their own) and the actions of bloggers and micro-bloggers that intervene to question the narrative of the relationship between corruption and "keeping a second wife". When the "common sense" of gender roles and sexual natures encounters the "common sense" of the official corruption, the cultural script can become destabilized by vigorous critique from both my informants and bloggers/micro-bloggers.

STORYTELLING AS RESISTANCE

When asked their opinions about women who fit into the label of "second wives", many informants started to tell stories that they heard or stories of their acquaintances, friends or relatives, with which they expressed their point of views. As Bruner (1986, 139) points out, "the stories we tell and the stories told of us give meaning to lived experience, shaping our identities, our sense of the world we live in, and our positioning within the world. In essence, we live storied lives". Stories are not opinion-neutral, but while public storytelling, such as the media's narrative, is—as argued by Ehrlich and King (1994), White and Epson (1990)—a social creation within specific cultural contexts, designed to serve the interest of power, private storytelling may serve as a healing process during the aftermath of traumas (Anzaldual 1999), a creation of meanings (Portelli 2000) or a revelation of the values of the marginalized (Mohanty 2003).The storytelling of my interviewees reveals that storytelling can serve as a form of negotiation and offer resistance against the dominant discourse.

In my interviews with women, the opportunity for them to express their opinions through storytelling has been a crucial element for them. For instance, they tell stories of ordinary women who are labelled as "second wives". Storytelling offers them a way to deviate from the available language provided by the dominant discourse and to make sense of things that have been

overwhelmingly defined by those in power. By telling stories that they have witnessed and sensed, they show their disavowal of and resistance to the dominant discourse, and subsequently construct a contradictory reality. Hence, this storytelling offers a framework that organizes personal consciousness and action into a coherent sense of reflective volitional perspective upon the things that they have witnessed. The media construction of "women as the source of troubles" in corruption is negotiated through rejection of the media narrative, as well as an affirmation of women's own storytelling. By re-telling the stories of "second wives", they reframe the media discourse of corruption. Moreover, their storytelling provides a means of resistance to the stigmatization of the "witch" women. In so doing, the enigmatic cultural script reappearing in the media narrative of corruption is deconstructed. Through disconnecting the "witch woman" from the cause of corruption, women's storytelling places the media's narrative in question and provides a counter-script that represents a sociopolitical reality which contests the cultural script.

There are two salient themes in women's own storytelling of corruption and "keeping a second wife", which I categorize as "the survival narrative" and "the morally neutral narrative"; both are in opposition to the media's discourse. In addition, many of the interviewees made reference to a serial TV drama, *Woju* (snail dwelling)—which was aired in 2009 and triggered public discussion about a variety of social issues (including corruption and "keeping a second wife")—to express their perception of corruption and "second wives". The talk of *Woju* reflects both narratives and, in addition reveals the impact of consumerist culture in China that has enhanced the "morally neutral" tone and meanwhile diluted political consciousness.

"She had no choice": the survival narrative

When asked their opinions about women who are labelled as " second wives", many women spent considerable time telling stories of their acquaintances, friends and relatives who may fit into the label of "second wives." As I listened, I began to gain a sense of how these stories construct a different narrative: one in which audience members define and perceive the story of "keeping a second wife" in ways that the media's narrative was not articulated. Their stories significantly reshaped the issue of "keeping a second wife" and acknowledged the inadequacy of the metaphor of "second wife" for a fuller description of gender reality. Contrary to the media's representation, "second wives" are frequently treated as vulnerable victims of gender inequality and the policies of marketization in women's storytelling. The figure of the "second wife" becomes a family supporter bearing hardship in the narrative of interviewees. Their stories offer a form of counter hegemony in response to the moral discourse that is mainly imposed on women. The stories below represent this kind of narrative.

> One of my female classmates had to become a "call girl" (*yingzhao nülang*). She had been with different men to get money after her work unit (*danwei*) was dismantled. Her husband's work unit was also bankrupt. They had a child in school. You know schooling is very expensive now. She had no choice. She had to do it for her child. Really, I don't want to judge her.
>
> (Luyan, a 46 year-old factory worker)

> I have a classmate. Her work unit (*danwei*) had ill economic returns, she was like that. She went to Guangzhou, hoping to make some money to support her family. At the beginning her life [in Guangzhou] was really hard until a man from Taiwan started to support (baoyang) her, and then her life became better. It's been ten years since she came back [to Chongqing]. That was ten years ago.
>
> (Mingming, a 46 year-old former redundant worker)

> Some girls, you know, twenty something, have to be with men in 60s just for having a meal. It is too sad. I have seen several. A relative of mine was like this. [She] was in her

> thirties, but had been with a man in his sixties. She did it for this reason. There are many of women like her. Her child was given to her after divorce. Her husband just left. Men are shameful. It was settled that he would pay child support, but he didn't. She had to raise the child, and [pay] to keep the child stay in school. At the same time, she had to pay the government for her pension plan every month. You know the unemployment rate is so high now. She had no choice, so she got involved with an old man. She had to pay her pension plan, pay her child's schooling and put food on the table. Now she has started to have a pension and her child has graduated, so she left [the old man]. Many girls who don't have a job have to depend on men. If she can't find a job, and if there's no way to make a living, she will look for a man [to support her]. If a [laid off] woman goes to do cleaning jobs, she may earn several hundred *yuan* per month, but if she has to support her child and pay her pension plan, then she can't survive. She has to find a man to help her. You know, the competition in the job market is so intense. If you don't have personal contacts (*guanxi*), no matter how capable you are, you can't find a decent job.
>
> (Liuliu, a 55 year-old factory account)

The three storytellers are from a plant in Chongqing, one of the largest state-section heavy industries established during the Great Leap Forward. The plant is not only the *danwei* (work unit) that they work (or worked) for, but the place where they grew up, joined the workforce and were laid off or witnessed their co-workers being laid off. All three told the stories of redundant women whom they knew as acquaintances, relatives and friends, and they justify these women's survival strategies within their circumscribed set of social and political contexts. The terms they employed, such as ill economic returns (*xiaoyi buhao*), dismantlement of *danwei (danwei kuale)*, pension plan (*yanglao jin*) and expensive schooling, reflect a much wider social and economic environment that they have been living with during the transition to privatization and marketization. In these three stories, the "second wives" are all redundant workers of the state-owned enterprises. Being a "second wife" is interpreted as a means of struggling through hardships; the protagonists in women's narrative are not identified as fallen "witch foxes"; instead, their narratives express sympathy and understanding towards "the second wives".

This storytelling illustrates that China's marketization has reinforced gender inequality and has increased the economic gap in terms of gender. In particular, women have borne the brunt of redundancy during the waves of layoffs during the late 1990s. In this narrative, social welfare initiatives established under the Maoist state, including schooling, pensions and Medicare are marketized during post-Mao period, greatly undermining women's economic status (Chen 2004). Also, Liuliu's story reveals that there is lack of protection for divorced women, placing this group in an extremely vulnerable situation when they are laid off. In Mingming's story, she used the term "call girl" (*yingzhao nülang*) instead of "second wife", and thus it shows the vagueness and confusion evoked by the terminology of media's use of the term "second wife". It also reveals a disagreement with the media's identification. While the media is likely to employ the term of "second wife" to refer to any woman in an extramarital relationship, the audience members tend to employ the term specifically in reference to officials' (and the new rich's) extramarital affairs. Hence, the moral condemnation of "keeping a second wife" becomes a social problem associated with the privileged classes.

Unlike the media discourse, women's narrative about their friends and relatives offers a complex portrait of reality instead of a simplistic reduction of women to the status "second wives". The figure of the "second wife" in the storytelling refutes the image of the "witch fox" that triggers corruption. Women narrate their stories about women from the standpoint of lived experiences, in contrast to the media's stigmatizing label of "second wife". Being a "second wife" is understood as a survival strategy of "second wives" whose lives are not in their hands. The theory of gender stratification presents gender inequality in economic power at both the macro- and the micro-levels in contemporary societies (Lenski 1966) The de facto gap in economic power between men and women affects women's life options (Blumberg 1984).

Gender inequality in earning power has deteriorated during the post socialist period (Shu and Bian 2003), reinforcing a tradition of mate selection that prioritizes the economic and social status of the male sex. Moreover, Chinese culture and society places a high premium on the sexual attractiveness of women, opening up a material and ideological option for women to achieve the economic status or pursue a survival strategy through their intimate relationships with men. The "storytellers" understand these particular social and cultural contexts, viewing them from a subject position that allows them to show tolerance to "second wives" and interpret their experiences differently from the media's moral condemnation of women. Kunkun, a middle class wife, points out critical issues that social actors have had to cope with during the period of marketization and spoke in a manner that offers resistance to the "moral panic" promoted by the media's creation of "family crisis":

> You see, we commoners (*lao baixing*) have to bear all the costs of social welfare, such as [the costs of] Medicare and education. So when you are young, you must earn as much security as you can. What [these young women] can take advantage of only is [their youth]. We won't get into the question that if there is affection between her and the man. As long as [these young women] can accept what they have to pay for, there's nothing we have to worry about.
>
> (Kunkun, a 35 year old middle class woman)

"Something funny": the morally-neutral narrative

In contrast to the moral condemnation of the "second wives" who bring about official corruption, many women tell stories of "second wives" with a morally neutral tone. This detached moral perspective about the practice of "keeping a second wife" reveals social tolerance towards extramarital relationships and, more importantly, it shows that audiences do not link a "second wife" to corruption. Audiences' understandings of "keeping a second wife" often take a position of moral neutrality in their storytelling. In fact, many of the interviewees

claimed that they had "no judgemental comments" towards "second wives". None of the interviewees made any effort to construct a link between this practice and the condemned pre-modern institution of concubinage. In contrast to the media's moral sensitivity, audiences sketch a morally neutral script which opposes the cultural script. It should be noted that I do not intend to indicate that moral neutrality can exist. What I aim to point out is that the audience's attitude towards "second wives" in their storytelling provides a point of resistance to the cultural script. This is clearly reflected in the following stories:

> I have a friend. She's been married for ten years, but she has been separated from her husband for nine years. They separated right after their child was born. This woman has a long term relationship with a married man whose wife is unhealthy and hence caused the problem for their "husband and wife life" (*fuqi shenghuo*, sex). So [my friend and this man] have kept a long term relationship purely for sex. Both of them need it, and it doesn't affect either of their families. At the beginning when I heard it, I felt it was bizarre. But she has been with this man for quite a while, more than two years. Now I feel I can accept it.
>
> (Yuanyuan, 33 year old- middle class woman)

> In most cases, "keeping a second wife" is very pleasant. Murders and disputes of property are very rare. In my social circle, my husband's friends are economically well off. I have seen it very often. All cases are like this: men have extramarital relationships. I dare to say that 80% or even 90 % of them have very pleasant relationships of "keeping a second wife". Both parties enjoy this relationship. It is like this: the wife doesn't know, so the wife is joyful too. Whenever the man has formal occasions, he still takes the wife to attend decently; the second wife is not known [by the wife]. The "second wife "is satisfied with her economic gains, or satisfied with the man himself. The man deals perfectly with both women. Several years later, their relationship ends. The woman walks away with money, meanwhile she finds a boyfriend. They get married in the end.
>
> (Zhengzheng, a 31 year-old middle class woman)

> A friend's cousin, about 31 years old, had been with a man from Guangdong province. They had a 5 or 6 year-old child. The man bought an apartment and a car for her in Chongqing. The car is worth 100,000-200,000 *yuan*. He came to stay in Chongqing for several days every month. It was like the form of "keeping a second wife". Last month, she received a call telling her that the man suddenly died. She was told to attend his funeral. She was also told like this: you were with him for money, so you were not

> entitled to the inheritance. She didn't work when she was with the man, and the man used to give her about 10,000 *yuan* every month. She went to Guangdong for his funeral, and after she saw things there she broke down. She found that she wasn't the only woman [in his relationship]. Besides the first wife, (laughing), there were three other women, and all of them had a child. We often talk about this as something funny. This is particularly normal in China at present if we compare this issue with other bigger issues, such as the sudden disappearance of a state-owned enterprise.
>
> (Nansan, a 35 year-old middle class woman)

These three storytellers are middle-class professionals. The extramarital relationships that they describe are practised by ordinary men and women and are narrated in a way that refrains from any discussion of corruption. This approach to narrative is frequently expressed in women's storytelling. Because of moral neutrality and tolerance toward extramarital affairs, the tone of the storytelling is diverting and whimsical as a comedy drama. The third story-teller, Nansan, ends with a comment that contrasts "keeping a second wife" with "bigger issues". With her word "normal", she characterizes other ongoing social issues as "absurd". In so doing, she reveals her rejection of the cultural script that blames political problems on extramarital affairs. In addition, she makes a point of identifying "the disappearance of the state enterprises" (g*uoying qiye*) that not only hints at the issue of marketization and privatization I mentioned in the "survival narrative", but also gestures toward the issue of official corruption. She certainly makes no effort to equate "keeping a second wife" with corruption, and shows no inclination to think of these issues as linked.

Talking "Dwelling Narrowness"" (Woju)

Dwelling Narrowness (*Woju*) is a popular serial TV drama that first aired in the fall of 2009 on national and later on provincial and city channels. The drama deals with social concerns about housing prices in urban regions and the social inequality between the privileged (e.g.,

government officials) and under privileged classes (e.g. the urban working-class). It also reveals the sense of entitlement of the rising urban middle-class through its aspiration of commodities. The TV drama focuses upon a sexual relationship between a married official and a young female office worker. This central storyline was later criticized by the state authority for its "negative impact upon society" (Hung 2011). *Dwelling Narrowness* gained huge audience popularity and flooded excitement on the internet and social media after it aired. "Mortgage slave" (*fangnu*), "second wife" (*ernai*), and "Song Siming" (the corrupt official in the drama) were the most popular online search terms during the discussion of the drama that occurred in the aftermath (Huang 2012).

I first became familiar with this TV drama through my interviews with women. During the interviews, my questions regarding the link between "keeping a second wife" and corruption spurred informants to discuss the drama. They re-narrated the story from their perspectives, focusing particularly on a storyline involving an extramarital relationship between the middle-aged official and a young woman. After I acquainted myself with this TV drama, I made a point of mentioning it to interviewees who did not allude to it. As it turned out, all of them had watched at least part of the series. I came to realize that the TV drama might be used to test the audiences' perception of "second wives" and corruption.

When I asked Wong whether she knew about the drama or not, she replied:

> I watched a little. Many people told me that it was very interesting. But when I started to watch it, it was nearly finished. I watched it on and off after I began to watch. It was almost over every time after I finished work at night.
>
> Question: Did you hear people talk about it?
>
> They did sometimes. Afterwards I read newspaper critiques about the drama. [People] were saying that the drama was written in a very bold way, and they said that the author

courageously wrote about official corruption. Government officials are corrupt, because they have money to support "second wives". If they didn't have money, how could they do it? [People] were saying that the language of the drama was very bold. After it was first aired, it is said that now it has been banned, so we didn't have a chance to watch it afterwards. It wasn't on TV anymore when they told me that it was necessary to watch. It's not aired on any channel now.

Question: Can you watch it online?

I don't use the Internet. My daughter said she would download it for me when I had a moment for leisure. Many people watched it online. I don't know how to use the Internet. Besides, I have little time for pleasure.

Question: Do you still want to watch it?

I think it is necessary to watch it. People said that it was written very well. The language in the drama is very bold. It is like throwing a heavy bomb to those men who keep a "second wife". Everything is brought to light. I think [the author] must know these characters in her life, so she wrote it excellently. It is very close to the reality as if it was the experience of "second wives" in real life. [The author] just concentrated all of their experiences on one person.

(Wong, a 47 year-old former redundant worker)

Wong indicates that corruption is a topic that people in society are exceedingly concerned about and attributes the drama's success to its ability to bring this staggering issue into the spotlight. In Wong's narrative, her desire to watch the drama is ignited by an approach to the political issue of corruption that resists the tabloid treatment of corruption and "second wives". By emphasizing the drama's bold language and the fact that it was banned after its first airing, she hints that the show speaks to political concerns that many citizens in contemporary China understand as the "unspeakable". Her resentment of government officials emerges when she alludes to illicitly obtained "money" and "second wives", two metaphors of "evil vices" that represent the image of government officials in the social reflection. She also acknowledges that, after the show was banned in the official media and TV stations, audiences still have an alternative means of

watching the drama. This reveals the degree of audience enthusiasm for the topic of corruption and speaks to the Internet's role in ending the official media's monopoly of communications. In the end, a metaphorical term she used, "heavy bomb" indicates the intensity of social animosity towards governmental officials. More importantly, the "bomb" is clearly aimed at the officials, not the "second wives". Wong's narrative provides a clear expression of resistance against the media's construction of "fallen witches" as the "source of troubles". The rhetorical figure representing government officials in the drama (*Song Siming*) triggered fury among audiences that consider it the character an authentic representation of the regime's ruling political class (Huang 2012). Wong's perception of the drama reflects this type of audience reception.

When I asked Fong what kind of cultural product she liked to consume, she mentioned the drama in her reply:

> […] I rarely watch Chinese films, but if I hear of some representative Chinese films made recently, those ones that are said to be classic serial TV dramas and I feel they have the significance of inspiration, I will watch them, such as *Woju*.
>
> Question: I've heard that it is relevant to "keeping a second wife"?
>
> Yes. It is about two sisters. The old sister lives with [her husband] in Shanghai after graduation. Both of them are university graduates who have nice thoughts about their future. However, because of the pressure of buying an apartment, [their life turns to be not so nice]. They can't afford to buy an apartment. They are already married and have a baby. Now here is the younger sister. After she graduated from a university, she becomes a white collar office worker. She has a very ordinary boyfriend who loves her very much. However, because of her work she accidently meets the mayor's secretary. He likes her very much, and then these two begin a relationship. He provides many conveniences for her. In the end—I don't feel it is a tragedy anyway—this girl splits up with [the secretary]. Her older sister has bought an apartment and opened her own school as she has wished. The young sister is pregnant when she broke up with the secretary. She has accepted this kind of supporting relationship. Then she has an argument with her lover—[the secretary], and has a miscarriage during their argument. The secretary died in a car accident on the way to visit her in hospital. Then she leaves for the US with a large sum of money given to her by the secretary.

(Fong, a 33 year-old middle class woman)

Fong also expressed her enthusiasm for watching *Woju*, but she did not perceive exactly the same issues in it that Wong did. In contrast to Wong's perception, Fong narrates the drama in a way that highlights its entertaining elements and the "spectacular accumulation in neo-liberalism" in urban China (Huang 2012). In her interpretation, the show becomes a melodrama focusing on the "love entanglement" between a young woman and a privileged man—the most desirable exemplar of masculinity in mate selection. Despite the miscarriage experienced by the female protagonist and the death of the male protagonist, she interpreted it as a happy-ending drama. Fong introduces two key elements in support of her "non-tragedy" interpretation. The first is that the older sister finally owns a condominium and becomes an entrepreneur by opening her own school. The second is that the younger sister receives "a large sum of money" from the official and leaves for the US, a signifier of a better life. Fong's narrative reveals the social values in the "market ideology" of China (Wang 2002) and what constitute a good life: property ownership, entrepreneurship, money, and arrival in the US. These elements are key words in the pop culture that reflects the pursuits and dreams of many people in China.

Like Wong, Fong does not employ moral condemnation when discussing the younger sister, the "second wife" of the mayor's secretary; instead, the younger sister is the heroine of the love story who has made the US her destination. Fong's experience of the drama exemplifies the morally neutral approach to talking about "second wives". Moreover, the theme of corruption in the drama is not Fong's focus in her re-telling of the drama. The link of corruption and "keeping a second wife" is largely diluted as "providing convenience", a term used for the purpose of everyday networking that society members perform in China. The money given by the official in Fong's narrative is no longer the metaphor of "evil vice" that it is in Wong's; instead, it becomes

a bridge to the "happy ending" of the drama—the US. The production of *Dwelling Narrowness* reflects the efforts of the Chinese media industry to produce "audience commodity" under China's party-state-led capitalism as it work to integrate into the global economy and neoliberalist paradigm (Huang 2012, Yu 2011). Fong highlights the aspects of the drama that help to solidify the "right kind of audience".

In short, if Wong attributes the drama's success to the exposure of officials' moral vices, Fong's re-telling of the drama reflects material desires in China's consumerist culture. Wong is a former redundant factory worker in the state section, while Fong is a professional and the wife of a successful businessman. The divergent highlights of the drama in their re-tellings reflect a profound divide between working-class and middle-class women in the materialistic and ideological formation of classes—the grievance of the disfranchised working class vis-à-vis middle class aspirations (obsessing on developing capital and being a home-owner).

Nevertheless, despite the divergence between these two views of the drama, both Wong and Fong express a rejection of blaming "second wives" for political corruption, and both offer resistance to the dominant discourse promoted by the official media. Evidently, audience members understand the complicity of "keeping a second wife" and perceive it in a way that subverts the media's narrative. At the end of the discussion on corruption, Wong specifically commented on the linkage between corruption and "keeping a second wife" in the media and pointed out how "keeping a second wife" becomes a camouflage for more deeply-rooted political problems:

> I often read revelations of officials in the newspapers. What I feel is that the Communist Party is a one party system (*yidang zhi*). [People] don't have a place to speak. There's no way to do anything about [corruption]. The maximum that the party does is to expose certain officials. That's it. But the situation in China now is corruption throughout the whole of officialdom. As someone excellently put it like this: if an official is to be

> purged (*xiake*), first his sexual relationships are to be exposed, and then his economic issues emerge. Finally his corruption is exposed.
>
> (Wong, a 47 year-old former redundant worker)

GENRES: IRONY AND RIDICULE AS RESISTANCE

Social media has changed the nature of communication and public discourse. Social media emerge as web-based services that allow users to build a public or semi-public forum within a system, in which audience growth becomes massive (Boyd and Ellison 2008). Jenkins (2006, 2) conceptualizes social media as "convergence culture", shaped by "media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence". These three concepts reveal social media's nature, in which audience members act as producers as well as consumers. This allows audiences to embrace "participatory culture" in social media in a way that had never been possible in conventional media forms (Jenkins 2006). In recent years, social media sites in China have drawn millions of internet users' attention and many of these blog producers and readers have become social media writers and activists (Yang 2009, Wallis 2011). Chinese blogs, micro-blogs (*weibo*) and BBS have shaped and transformed public discourse/public culture and helped to give voice to dissent and social unrest (Yang 2009). Blogs, Microblogs and BBS have opened a civic space for ordinary citizens to mobilize activism and to discuss sensitive topics that used to be dominated by the party-state's media apparatus (Xiao 2011, Zhou 2009).

Of all the sensitive issues related to political discussion, corruption is one of the most popular subjects raised by participants in social media. A large number of bloggers and micro-bloggers produce and circulate messages that expose and inquire into the increasingly rampant and systematic corruption within the state. Netizens, a popular term derived from the combination of "Internet" and "citizens" *(wangmin*), often refer to the denial of citizens' rights in physical social space and advocate the practice of citizenship through participation in political

activities within the cyberspace. These technologically-enabled activists have employed many ways of talking corruption, constantly questioning the regime's anti-corruption strategies and expressing their disappointment and anger at the failure of anti-corruption initiatives. Their questioning reveals a vigorous rejection to the "talk of witchcraft" and places the blame squarely upon a political system that is the nexus of corruption. Netizens advance their critique through the genre of talking corruption. In his discussion on the genres pursued by "netizens", Yang (2009) describes satirical verses mocking corrupt officials, through which he points out that genres of contention shape the narratives employed by netizens.

In response to the linkage between corruption and "second wives", bloggers and micro-bloggers have generally employed the genres of irony and ridicule in talking back to the media's cultural script. These genres play an important role in deconstructing the official media's discourse about corruption. This playful use of language usage and narratives makes a rhetorical impact by interrupting narrative continuities, disabling aesthetic recuperations and systematically suspending utterances (Newmark 2012). In the case of Chinese social media responding to the linkage of corruption and "keeping a second wife", irony consistently culminates in revealing the errors and follies of the official discourse. The genre of irony in the audience's responses to narratives of corruption and keeping a "second wife" reflects audiences' political resistance towards the "witchcraft talk". It is a disruption of the media's official narrative. The genre of irony and ridicule is also a practice of resistance, through which audience/producers (blogger and micro-bloggers) strategically deconstruct the media discourse. Moreover, the genre formulates a satirical counter-narrative by reproducing "second wives" as the heroines of anti-corruption. In so doing, netizens ridicule the party's feeble anti-corruption campaigns.

The case of "the sex diary" in 2010, a sexual diary presumably written by the chief of the Bureau of Tobacco of Guangxi Province that was exposed on the Internet is an excellent example of the netizens' genres. The diary reveals the chief's extramarital relationships with various women. It immediately stirred up mocking commentaries and circulated widely on BBS community boards, blogs and micro-blogs. It became a hot topic on the Internet, targeting governmental officials' moral failings. After the diary was exposed, the chief was dismissed by the party. In response to the party's decision, netizens satirically concluded that the chief was a "good cadre" by citing the diary. Bloggers and micro bloggers revealed that in comparison with the majority of party cadres and officials, the chief spent much fewer public funds on banquets and expensive drinks and took fewer bribes than an average official. These posts accused many party cadres and officials of gambling, banqueting and organizing extravagant drinking parties paid for by public funds; while also levying charges of embezzlement, bribing the higher-ups, keeping "second wives" and visiting prostitutes. In comparison with these activities, netizens ironically concluded that the exposed chief was a "good cadre" of the Party.[90]

In this case, it was the moral conduct of government officials that was targeted, rather than the moral failings of "bad women". In contrast to the media's narrative of sexual scandals as a result of witchcraft talk, the netizens strove to expose the hypocrisy of the official media discourse. The talk of officials' sexual scandals in the social media does not emphasize moral judgements upon sexual relations out of wedlock; instead, the audience's moral judgement specifically focuses upon officials' extramarital relationships. By exposing party cadres and officials' sexual scandals, netizens deliberately contradict the images of party cadres and

[90] Hanhan, 2010, "*dang de hao ganbu*" (a good cadre of the Party), March 4. Accessed March 24, 2013: sina.com.cn/blog/hanhan.

officials as powerful authorities; in so doing, they question the legitimacy of a regime that is composed largely of similarly morally lax individuals.

In particular, in response to the media's narrative about the close link between corruption and "second wives", (such as the Bureau of Anti-Corruption's strategy of "catching a mistress to break though a corruption case" reported in the news),[91] netizens deliberately represent "second wives" as "heroines" of anti-corruption. For example, a picture of a "second wife" drawn by (an) anonymous micro-blogger(s) emerged after the collective sexual scandal of Chingqing officials was exposed in 2012. The sexual affairs of several officials in major posts in Chongqing were taped by businessmen and used as leverage to secure lucrative business projects. The name of the woman involved in the scandal was *Hongxia* (red glow), which was transformed into a different meaning with the same sound in Mandarin: *Hongxia* (the red woman warrior). In this picture, she is dressed as a woman soldier of the CCP's Red Army in the 1930s. The title of the picture sarcastically mimics the official campaign of "the Backbone of China" organized by several state media and state agencies in 2011 that aimed to select "model citizens" (Figure 3, page 231). Netizens comment upon the phenomenon as offering the only hope of wiping out corruption. By mimicking the party's declaration of anti-corruption, netizens express their emotionally loaded resistance toward the talk of "second wives" in corruption. Moreover, netizens utilize the party's propaganda terminologies to illustrate how the "second wives" become "heroines" in order to ridicule the party's anti-corruption mechanism and the party's repeated commitment to anti-corruption over the decades, all of which have been mocked as jokes by the netizens. In this narrative, bloggers and micro-bloggers act as skillful proponents of a counter narrative. Genres act as codes that provide ironic effects for resistance. Below are two excerpts from *tengxun*

[91] *"Chaoguo 80 percent de tanguan bao ernai*" (More than 80 percent of corrupt officials have kept a second wife), *Jinyang wang*, August 6, 2006.

weibo, one of the popular social media websites in China*,* revealing recent netizens' responses to recent events pertinent to the narrative of corruption and "second wives":

> Title: Eight women lodge an accusation with their underwear [92] against the county party chief
>
> Dangcang of Gansu Province is an impoverished county at the national level. Wang Xianmin had been the county party secretary for 1212 days, but he had accumulated wealth amounting to 15,000,000 yuan, equivalent to one tenth of the whole county's GDP and 5,000 years of a peasant's income. However, his downfall is due to eight women's joint appeal that bypassed the immediate leadership and presented to the higher levels. "Second wives" once again become heroines of anti-corruption by putting a corrupt official down with their underwear. Pay respects to the "second wives" fighting in the frontline of anti-corruption! [93]
>
> The Chinese character of anti-corruption! These beauties are agents deeply hidden away who endure humiliation in order to carry out an important mission. We pay respect to you! You have greatly helped the Disciplinary Committee and the Judicial Organs. The people thank you! [94]

Two micro-bloggers here first employ the effect of comparison with the numbers that illustrate the appalling fact of corruption: numbers reflecting the official's tenure in office and the amount of funds that he stole (while offering an instructive comparison to the average peasant's income). Also, the number of women who had intimate relationships with the official is used to reveal the absurdity of the corruption drama. Moreover, sardonicism is employed to ridicule the party's failure to pursue a genuine anticorruption campaign. The micro-bloggers use the language of the party's propaganda and eulogistic style to achieve the sardonic grin, such as "heroines of anti-corruption", "frontline", "deeply hidden agents" and "endure humiliation in order to carry out an

[92] Underwear here means "an intimate relationship".
[93] Lu Guoping. 2012. *Tengxun weibo.* March 30. Accessed April 1, 2012: http://url.cn/1tgB3e.
[94] Yangguang999. 2012. *Tengxun weibo*. March 26. Accessed March 27: http://url.cn/1tgB3e.

important mission", all of which derive from the common lexicon of the party's propaganda machine and have become part of everyday vocabulary in China.

Thornton (2007, 204) points out that the Chinese state, historically constructed as a moral agent, produces a normative vocabulary to guide mass conduct. Monopolistically controlling political meanings has been the Party's tradition (Schoenhals 1992). The rise of the Internet offers a chance to breach the closed structure of the Party's propaganda and ideological work (*xuanchuan he yishi xingtai gongzuo*). Sarcastically mimicking the party's language in response to the news media's "witchcraft talk" about corruption thus is a direct refutation of the party-state's narrative. Below are three excerpts from BBS and *weibo* sites that illustrate the genre of irony and ridicule which mimics the party's propaganda vocabulary.

> A "second wife" once again renders meritorious service. The party chief of Wuxi City has been "doubly disciplined". The members of the party committee of Wuxi City have been entirely disciplined. This is due to a mistress's report. This is one more case of anti-corruption and a second wife. Mistresses' fighting against corruption is a sharp weapon of the state. Second wives are all special commissioners of the Discipline Committee. [95]

> Without a doubt, Guo Meimei is an excellent representative among second wives. She not only has broken the record of second wives' for the highest consuming taste, but is also a heroine of anti-corruption who cares about public benefits. She remained unperturbed and skillfully exposed the corruption issues of the Red Cross of China to all the people in China during her efforts as a "second wife". She has made an extraordinary contribution of second wife's fighting against corruption to our Party right before our party's birthday. Her achievement has been affirmed by millions of netizens. She is an anti-corruption model who has broken Asian records and set sights on the world level, and all the people in this world will affirm this**.** [96]

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[95] "*Ernai zaili xingong, Wuxi shiwei shuji Mao xioping bei shuanggui*" (A "second wife" once again renders meritorious service. The party chief of Wuxi City has been "doubly disciplined"). *Daxue zaixian*, April 18, 2012. Accessed March 5, 2013: http://www.dx513.com/news/gwew/505727.html.

[96] "*Guo Meimei shi ernai de youxiu daibiao*" (Guo Meimei is an excellent representative among second wives), July 12, 2011. Accessed March 5, 2013: http://blog.ifeng.com/2660560.html.

> From Yangfeng, the former vice party chief of Xuancheng city of Anhui Province, to Wang Shouye, the former vice commander of the Navy, to today's Pang Jiejue, [we have noticed that] our anti-corruption work began to benefit from the "turning against her own side" by corrupt officials' mistresses. The mistresses' "heroic undertaking" has become earth-shaking news. The main force of anti-corruption's long term efforts are not as effective as a mistress' sudden "arousal"… there is an active group of mistresses in the Chinese officialdom, and they have formed a team of Army of Volunteers fighting against corruption. [97]

In these excerpts, netizens believe that the political system does not truly aim to eliminate corruption; instead, corruption is exposed because of some official's failure at the political level. Hence, netizens mimic the party's language from different historical periods, including the language of the party's military period in pre-1949, Maoist and post-socialist periods. The last excerpt employs terms derived from the national anthem, aiming to show that the state is in a serious crisis comparable to the anthem's invocation of the Sino-Japanese War. Micro-bloggers show a desperate longing for political reform by sarcastically drawing attention to the hopeless situation that has placed the nation in crisis—a crisis that netizens blame on the political system itself, rather than on sexual improprieties which figure so prominently in the official media's construction of reality. The social media's approach to talking about corruption offers staunch resistance to the official media's "witchcraft talk" regarding corruption.

[97] Honghuang. 2011. *Sina weibo*. August 15.Accessed August 15, 2011: sina.com/weibo/honghuang.

Figure 3: The backbone of China: a woman warrior in the Red Army [98]

The genre of blogging offers very important insights into China's social media culture. Through their generic interventions, netizens give little credit to the regime's efforts to curtail corruption. The genre illustrates a strong political consciousness, in which it is widely realised that corruption cannot be solved within the existing system (Zhou 2010). The scale and depth of corruption are often compared to levels attained during the notorious Manchurian dynasty—the darkest time described in the history textbooks. Indeed, the sense that current CCP officialdom is

[98] From *Tieba*: March 28, 2012, accessed March 28, 2012: http://tieba.baidu.com/p/2126948672.

similar to the late Manchurian officialdom pervades current Chinese social media. Netizens believe and circulate any kind of message that helps to reveal the darkness of the regime. For example, a message on one *Sina* micro-blogger's home page describing how the officialdom functions was forwarded by 34,582 micro-bloggers within two days in April 2012. Bloggers commented that this ought to be the real image of the rotten state:

> *The former party chief of Wuxi city who was arrested last year said: "[whenever I] gave a hint, someone always came to provide millions of yuan to me. [Whenever I] give a promotion to a cadre, millions of yuan were handed in. I myself also needed to be promoted; therefore, of course, I needed to hand money in to the higher ups. This is a well-equipped cycle. If I had not taken the money, how could I have had money to provide good services to the higher ups? Our police chief purchased shares in entertaining places, and he took money whenever the police arrested or released someone. He also took money when the police helped the developers to tear down people' homes. [The police chief] was offered a long term hotel room for sex whenever he was provided sexual bribes. Didn't I know this? Of course I knew. All of us were sitting in the same boat."* [99]

In 2011 excitement about the Arab Spring echoed through Chinese cyberspace and many netizens asked whether a "Jasmine Revolution" would occur in China. Although scholars argue that the narrow representative basis and fragmented and polarized nature of social media cannot successfully galvanize a movement to bring democracy to an authoritarian state such as China (Benkler 2006, Dyson et al. 1996, Hindman 2008, Shirky 2008, Sunstein 2007), my data collection through social media shows that much social unrest has occurred in the cyberspace. Social unrest within cyberspace undermines the figure of the state in the Chinese tradition. The figure of the Chinese state in the longstanding political tradition is similar to a "father figure" in the traditional family institution. Cyber unrest is a challenge to the political tradition and moreover it brings cutting edge ideas of what the state ought to be like into circulation. The party

[99] *Yuanyang. 2012. Sina weibo. April 3. Accessed Aprils 3, 2012: www.sina blog.com.cn/yuanyang.*

state obviously has seen the dangers of cyber unrest. It is believed in the blogosphere that the state's budget of "*weiwen*" project (defending domestic stability) is more than the national defence. This has prompted netizens to disseminate a message that the state's enemies are not foreign intruders, but its own "antizens" (*yimin*, ants), a sarcastic word that reflects how commoners are perceived by the state. This term is circulated in cyberspace to refer to the powerless masses that can easily be crushed by the massive state mechanism. The term itself emphasizes the enduring antagonism between the "officialdom" and the "commoners" (*lao baixing*). There evidently exists an intense social animosity toward the state, particularly vis-a-vis the officialdom, which is described as a dirty place full of "thieves", followed with an injunction to begin "killing, killing, and killing officials" (Yu 2008). How to transform the cyber unrest into a revolution in reality is a question for many bloggers. As Hanhan, a young writer known for his critique of the government who has millions of young fans online, says in his blog, "everybody knows what the problem is, but the key for us is what to do". [100]

In addition to mocking the media's link of keeping a "second wife" and corruption, bloggers and micro-bloggers specifically target the cultural script. For example, when the downfall of Bo Xilai in the spring of 2012 caused the cultural script to reappear (with Bo's wife cast as "the source of troubles"), many micro-bloggers specifically spoke out against the witchcraft talk of corruption by clearly pointing out the absurdity of the media's discourse, and the cultural script crumbles under the impact of the audience' sarcasm and mimicry:

> In this country all the bad things that men have done are women's fault.
>
> The thing normally is like this: in general women either become scapegoats or have dragged the men into the mire. If a man has a good wife, everything with the man will go

[100] Ibid.

well. Behind every successful man always stands a good woman whereas the reason why a man becomes a loser is simply because he has got a bad woman.

It's been a convention for thousands years. Whatever happens, "women are the source of troubles" (*hongyan huoshui*). All the responsibilities of a state's subjugation must be attributed to women. [101]

Concluding remarks

Corruption is a serious problem in contemporary Chinese politics. However, in the media discourse of "keeping a second wife", a cultural script is incorporated in the narrative of corruption that blames political failings on extramarital affairs and particularly on women's role in instigating extramarital affairs. The media narrative of "keeping a second wife" has transformed the issue of corruption into an issue of "sex nature", in which the combination of male promiscuity and the material girls is narrated as the driving force behind corruption. Essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality are firmly accepted as common sense in society; however, when the understanding of gender is linked to political issues such as corruption, the witchcraft talk confronts rigorous opposition.

This chapter focused on audience members' own narratives in opposition to the media's discourse and genre of talking-back in the Chinese social media. While some audience members describe "second wives" as vulnerable victims of the march toward marketization and privatization, other members used a "morally neutral" tone and viewed the practice of "keeping a second wife" through a consumerist lens. Both of these approaches have introduced a perception that has not been represented in the media narrative and have disconnected the media linkage between "second wives" and the sources of corruption. Furthermore, sarcasm in direct responses

[101] Hong, Huang. 2012. *Sina weibo*, April 26, 2012. Accessed April 26, 2012: weibo/sina.com.cn/honghuang.

to the cultural script in the social media indicates a growing grass roots animosity towards the regime. The sense of the absurdity of the corruption narrative derives from two stances: political consciousness that urges political reform and consumerism that dilutes political consciousness. These two stances are contradictory forces. It is widely realized that new media technology has changed the landscape of communication. The monologue of the state voice now must contend with the centrifugal effects of the Internet. Much has been said about online activism that opens up a civic space for greater social participation in political events (Yang 2009). With reference to the state-society framework, the Internet— in particular the social media— have allowed a vitalized society to begin resisting the authoritarian state and testifying to the changing patterns of the state and society interactions (Zheng and Wu 2005). However, while serving as a tool for mass collaboration in political activism, the internet and social media also work to promote brands, fashion, and markets (Tapscott and Williams 2006). This chapter, therefore also highlights a case for further studies on the roles played by the internet—in particular the social media— in the rise of consumerist culture and how these technologies have acted to fragment political consciousness.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: media, audience and social change in contemporary China

The media account of "keeping a second wife" and the audiences' responses to it provide a context for understanding the dynamics of media reception and the complexities of socio-cultural change in contemporary China. Media engagement in today's China no longer adheres to a passive pattern of senders/receivers. The repressive way of communication that once characterized conventional media forms (e.g. the party's newspapers and official TV channels) has fallen by the wayside, and an "audience activity" lens is required to understand media-audience relations in the current political and social context. As Bird (2003) points out, the relationship between the media and audiences can best be understood as a creative, dynamic and transformative process, often involving active engagement. The diversity of audiences' interpretations is also found even in the authoritarian state such as China. Moreover, audiences' interpretations illustrate that marriage and sexuality in the PRC cannot be only understood through the state ideology and the dominant discourse in the dramatic social change.

The aim of this dissertation has been to examine the dynamic relations between the media discourse and audiences' interpretations, a project that allows us to gain a better understanding of the landscape of marriage and sexuality and how social change within these contexts occurs in contemporary China. In this concluding chapter I address the two key issues from the study: audience activity presented in this dissertation and the implications of the entangled relations between gender, class, and modernity in relation to marriage and sexuality in China.

Passive audience or active audience?

Media must be understood as an articulated relationship among texts, institutions and audiences (Carter and Steiner 2004)). Studying media institutions is important from the perspective of political economy. However, a cultural approach to media—the expressed goal of this dissertation—needs to examine both texts and audience. This study may be about the audiences in China, but it raises theoretical and methodological questions that could well be considered by audience scholars in other contexts.

Over the past three decades, the state media— the news press and the TV as the major forms— in China has undergone radical reformation on the trajectory of commercialized media industries (Zhu 2012). The commercialization of media has opened up two different functions for the state media: disseminating the party's propaganda for ideological control and pursuit of profit. This double function has resulted in continuing discourses previously established by the market orientated media forms; consequently, the party's propaganda became more skillfully persuasive in the post Mao regime, eschewing the repressive tactics of the Maoist state (Brady 2008). Another outcome of the commercializing media is that China has entered an epoch of rich media proliferation with a variety of media resources now available. Digital technologies and globalized media flows have forced the Chinese media to evolve beyond a state-centric and party-propaganda view of its function to a strategy defined by commercially driven globalization, consumerism and transnational markets. In addition to choosing from a multitude of media resources through international news channels and the internet, people blog, organize and become members of different communities in chat rooms and social networking sites. All of these have brought significant changes in the relationship between the media and the people. The expansion of the information and the Internet gives people more freedom in selecting media

resources (Dong and Shi 2007), and engaging with other types of ideologies that shape their everyday lives. The multiplicity of global media flow-ins from the West and other Asian regions (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong), much of which is reproduced through the state media, has made an impact on local audiences, decentralizing the dominant ideology. This variety of media resources fuels the audience's capacity for negotiation and contestation. The co-existence of the previously established discourse and the diversity of media outlets that carry oppositional messages open up a gap between the discourse and the audiences in the rich media environment, thereby opening up the possibility of rethinking the ways in which audiences engage with the media in contemporary China.

Audience scholarship has undergone two stages of conceptualization dealing with audience activity. Early audience studies tended to focus on the effects of the media upon an audience viewed as the victim of ideologies. For example, McRobbie's work (1982) on the British girls' magazine *Jackie* uses textual analysis to investigate dominant ideology about youthful femininity disseminated by capitalist popular culture. It reveals how media texts produced by capitalism, in which the audience is surrounded and washed over. As McRobbie (1991) later reflected, her study on *Jackie* "gives the impression that the magazine is like a huge ideological wall in which the audience is a prisoner" (1991, 114). In recent decades, audience studies have focused more on the notion of "audience activity" (Allor 1988, Erni 1989, Fiske 1988, Grossberg 1988, Morley 1992, Radway 1988), investigating audiences' negotiation of and oppositional readings/watching or creative interaction with the media. Particularly within critical mass communications research, the idea of the resistant audience emerges against the theory of media effects, such as feminist studies focusing on women's rejection of the stigmatization of women in the media (Russo and Jackson 2002). Much research has been conducted within the

active audience framework, in which audiences are seemingly able to be completely free to negotiate and resist dominant codes.

The understanding of audience in this study is within Cultural Studies that emphasize negotiation and creativity. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that audience activity is both complex and changing, and neither the passive nor the active interpretation accounts for all of its particularities. This study acknowledges that the audience can be active when applying codes of their cultural competences to give negotiable or oppositional interpretations. At the same time, it can be passive when being manipulated by many kinds of ideologies. Moreover, building upon recent scholarly development of audience activity (Bird 2003, Livingstone 2004, Hermes 2009), this study has made an effort to move beyond the debate of active/passive audience, and to think about the question of audience through the differences of context and social position.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six have shown that audiences are able to vigorously reject the media's linkage between "keeping a second wife" and official corruption, whereas their responses to heteronomative and monogamous sexuality are diverse. Some of them complied with the media discourse while others expressed emerging ideas oppositional to the discourse. With the gender "common sense" proposed by the media, the audiences have shown greater adherence to the gender ideology in the media that emphasizes gendered roles determined by biological differences. Hence, this study demonstrates that the audience, to a certain extent, is active but restrained by structural factors. Active audience cannot be completely free. As we can see for the analysis in Chapter Four, middle class women employed a lexicon derived from the modernity discourse (e.g. "love", "feelings") as they encountered it in other media resources to reject monogamous sexuality. In contrast, working class women utilize Maoist class ideology to

defend a class identity that has been erased by post-Mao politics. The diversity of audience understandings results in different social-economic positions, such as class and generation.

Moreover, the previous audience studies have focused on particular kinds of media forms in its analyses of audience reception. For example, studies on soap operas audiences investigating pleasure politics (Ang 1985, Brown 1994, Brunsdon 1986, Hobson 1989, Radway 1984), genre research on women's magazines (McRobbie 1982 and 1991, Hermes 1995), and analysis of TV audiences examining the relationship between television and gender politics (Brunsdon 1986, Gray 1987, Morley 1986). The audience in these studies "[is] cordoned off for study and therefore defined as particular kinds of subjects by virtue of their use not only of a single medium but of a single genre as well" (Radway 1988, 363). This study brings a different methodological approach toward a broader version of audience, which is attempted to respond to the challenges of changing audience in the age of the Internet acknowledged by scholars (Bird 2003, Livingstone 2004 and 2009, Silverstone 2005). As Hermes (2009, 112) points out, identifiable audience "entity" and reception of particularly texts or genre in audience studies no longer reflect changing media and social realities. Hence, this study combines both ways of media studies based on the communication reality by bringing in different methods: qualitative and digital ethnography and cross boundaries of media forms. It has included the readers of the news reports, viewers of the TV drama (i.e. *Dwelling Narrowness, Woju*) and social media participants, as they all relate to "keeping a second wife". My approach to audiences that interpret one particular subject in different media outlets may offer a case to show that the conceptualization of audience might be situated in larger social, political and cultural contexts instead of remaining mired in the process of categorization.

This study has also made an attempt to move beyond Hall's (1973) encoding/decoding model that considers autonomous relations between media texts and readings of the texts. By engaging in the critical relations between the media, audience and the state, this study illustrates that audiences can be fragmentary as well as public depending on audience subjectivities. When audience members respond to corruption, they form the public, becoming something more than the fragmentary audience proposed by the postmodernist view—and they show a correspondingly greater resistance to the media discourse. This study shows that the mass media in China is subject to interrogation and debate by the Chinese audiences, and to certain extent, can generate large audiences and foster popular participation.

Therefore, it can indeed form a public, such as the online debates concerning the ironic genre-responses to the link between "keeping a second wife" and corruption. However, this critique offers a limited form of cultural resistance to gender ideology, globalized forms of consumerism and the social engineering necessitated by neo-liberal expansion in China (e.g. *"suzhi*"). As scholars (Bird 2003, Hermes 2009, Livingstone 2004) suggest, the media function with the larger social and cultural contexts, and thus the analysis of audience for future studies needs to move beyond the paradigms of "passive/active" audiences. Audiences are receivers and consumers as well as participants and dissidents.

In short, the conceptualization of audience in this study is within Cultural Studies, but it places audience in a larger social, cultural, and political context instead of treating it as a decoder of a particular text or genre. I focus on audiences' social positions that bring different understandings of the context. I hope this treatment will invite audience scholars to think about challenges of changing audience.

Gender, class, and modernity in changing sexuality in contemporary China

This dissertation studies marriage and sexuality in contemporary China through the lens of media and audiences. The relations between media and audience involve a complex process of social change. This dissertation deals with the audience interpretation of "keeping a second wife" stories presented in the media. The study treats the various media as cultural forms, rather than isolated texts/messages taking place within the social sphere, and defines audience reception as activities in everyday life, rather than merely textual engagement. More importantly, this dissertation asks questions about the extent to which social actors adhere to the discourse of marriage and sexuality and how sexual culture evolves in a dramatically changing society through the lens of media reception.

Chapter Three, a discourse analysis of "keeping a second wife" in the news media, reveals that the ideology of marriage and sexuality established since the 1950s is disseminated through news reports. Three decades after China's opening up to the world, monogamous and heteronomative sexuality within marital status remains the only legitimate and moral form of sexual behavior recognized by the official discourse. The continuing ideological re-articulation of monogamous sexuality through the news narrative of "keeping a second wife" indicates that the "retreat" of the state from the practice of controlling sexual behaviours is not complete. The way of controlling sexuality in post-Mao regime has shifted from direct intervention through the laws and administrative regulations to "governing at distance" (Wang 2001), to a skillful reliance on "persuasion" through media discourse (Brady 2010).

Nevertheless, individuals have gained greater autonomy in private affairs over the past decades. The previously established ideology lost considerable power during the course of the modernity process in China. The complex terrain of multi-vocal, multimedia and multiple-flows

of media messages brought enormous challenges to the dominant ideology. At the same time, audiences have become ever more fragmented, fractured and entangled in the matrix of different kinds of media resources and discourses. The fragmentation of the audience shows that state ideology cannot penetrate the audience en masse as it used to during the Maoist regime. Thus it no longer has a monolithic power and degree of audience adherence to the ideology has become heterogeneous.

In order to examine ways of attachment to the official discourse among different social groups, this study takes class into account to examine the distinction between the rising middle class and the working class—identities that are linked to the politics of subjectivities produced by China's modernizing efforts. It is clear that class identity has an impact on the degree of adherence to the ideology of monogamous sexuality. The subjectivities of middle class people are linked to "modern selfhood". This idea places a particular emphasis upon the discourse of *suzhi*, which enables middle class women to negotiate the official discourse with other types of modernity discourse that they received from other types of media outlets. Notions of "love" and "feelings"—used to define heterosexual monogamy in opposition to traditional marriage forms when the ideology of marriage was articulated in the 1950s (e.g., "freedom of marriage") — now are employed to challenge the idea of monogamous sexuality and justify the pursuit of extramarital affairs. It is the concept of "modern selfhood" that enables them to tolerate "defiant" sexual behaviours, such as sex out of wedlock and homosexuality.

In comparison with middle class women's taste-oriented media resources that carry more non-official ideas, working class women usually choose the state media outlets, which include local official media such as the Party's dailies and official TV channels. As a consequence, working class women are more likely to engage the party's propaganda language and thus

showed less tolerance of sex out of wedlock. The working class is marginalized by the modernity discourse, and thus their adherence to the ideology is more clearly reflected in their vocabulary than it is among their middle class counterparts. In terms of age difference, younger generations are likely to have fewer ties to the idea of monogamous sexuality than their older counterparts. This confirms the scholarly finding that the younger generations exhibit a different attitude and behaviors than their older counterparts in relation to marriage and sexuality (Farrer 2002, Rofel 2007).

Chapters Four and Five illustrate that China's modernity process has accelerated in recent decades and has played an important role as a "pushing force" to change individuals' perceptions of self and the society in relation to marriage and sexuality. Particular subject positions produced by the modernity process have shaped particular ways of living. Middle class and younger generations figure prominently in the story as modern subjects that link to the discourse of modernity (e.g. *suzhi*) and thus show more tolerance towards a plurality of sexual behaviours. Thus, the dominant ideology of monogamous sexuality is contested by the increasing levels of tolerance and morally neutral attitudes adopted towards "keeping a second wife" and other types of sexual behaviors out of wedlock. This tolerance towards "difference" is understood as a quality of "modern selfhood". The discourse of modernity is often employed by middle class women and younger generations to contest the ideology that encourages monogamous and heteronormative sexuality.

Nevertheless, social and cultural change does not simply take the form of one ideology replacing an old one in a direct and linear fashion. With reference to Raymond Williams' (1977) conceptualization of culture as a competing process of three elements, the modernity process may have produced new subjects but the older cultural traditions do not fade away instantly.

Frequently, the traditional forms and values are transformed into the dominant and the emergent forms. As women make sense of "managing marriage" and adapt to a changing perception of sexuality, the "common sense" of gender roles inscribed in the established ideology as well as in the recent modernity discourse occupies a dominant position. Gender ideology is firmly and widely believed, although ways of performing gender within marriage may differ between middle class women and working class women as well as between older people and their younger counterparts. While expressing an interest in independence and the "freedom" of pursuing sexual pleasure, middle class women and younger women also indicated that entrenched values of marriage and strong family ties deeply rooted in the Chinese culture and reinforced by the dominant ideology proved more resilient than what Yan (2009) has observed "individualization" in the intimate lives of women in contemporary China.

The selfhood of the middle class and younger women often emerges via the exercise of consumer choice in the global market and is shaped by the larger structural factors that constrain as well as enable their agency. While middle class women are attracted to financial independence through their own careers and put conceptions of "love" and "feelings" into the notion of extramarital affairs, they are unable to abandon the importance of marriage and family. We see that incapacity in their awareness of their social position and life condition connected to their male partners. At the level of intimate relations, where traditional values and gendered sexual morés (e.g. female virginity) prevail, the male sex continues to enjoy far greater "sexual freedom". Hence, how women actually manage marriage is both rooted in cultural heritage as well as emerging ideas and aspirations. These findings add a culturally specific context to revise the theory of modernity (Giddens 1991, Bauman 1992), which claims that traditional values and customs are undercut by individualization during the course of the modernity process. In the case

of middle class women's managing marriage in China, we see a convergence of "modern selfhood" and the dynamics of cultural values retrieved from the Chinese tradition as well as from the dominant ideology.

Chapter Six shows a vigorous rejection of the link between official corruption and a cultural script that stigmatizes women in politics, and reveals multiple layers of audiences' reception of gender "common sense". On the one hand, gender ideology benefits from the status of common sense. It is seen as "modern scientific knowledge" that reinforces normative masculinity and femininity; essential gender differences and separate roles and expectations for men and women. On the other, the gender common sense appears to be rigorously rejected at the political level. The media link between corruption and "keeping a second wife" has generated a very interesting (and vigorous) audience counter-narrative that reflects the intensity of social animosity towards officialdom, and provides palpable evidence of a political consciousness that the state has striven to erase. The political consciousness is largely diluted by the prevailing consumerist culture acting as a counter force. These instances of audience rejection mostly rely on data culled from the social media, which inclines to deconstruct authoritative script and to ridicule official moral legitimacy.

The intertwined relations between gender, class, and modernity in this study raise questions that may cross disciplinary boundaries and extend to other scholarly fields. First, class is a major cleavage in contemporary Chinese society (and thus it is employed to be examined to gain any insight into the practice of sexuality in contemporary). The concept of class in this study is a negotiated one, which has restrained a further discussion on the links between class identity and heterosexual intimate relationship. The observation of class in contemporary China in the scholarship, to date, has been limited to understanding patterns of economic inequalities.

How does class identity in China link to cultural conditions such as "taste" as Bourdieu (1984) states? How should class in China be studied within an intersectionality paradigm that links to other social inequalities such as gender? How does class identity play out in intimate relationships? This study has followed the "borrowing model" (Baxter 1994) conceptualized in the US and North European contexts to categorize wives' class identity in post-Mao China. Does this model offer a perfect fit with contemporary Chinese society? Can we categorize women's class identity alone? These questions raise further questions for scholars interested in the study of class issues.

Finally, the politics of sexual freedom emerged in post-socialist China, which link to the construction of the modern self, have made sexuality a malleable discourse in the framing of "modernity" against "tradition". The emergent liberation of sexuality employs new discourses and practices of self, seemingly reinforcing individual freedom, desire, autonomy, and pleasure as alternatives to the repressive past. It is a wave in the Far East echoing what McRobbie (2009) calls "the aftermath of feminism" observed in western societies, in which women assumably have gained all kinds of freedoms through consumption and choices. How do we think about sexual freedom within feminist theorization? Does it fit into the model of "women's liberation"? Borrowing Stuart Hall's (1996, 222) question to the ascendancy of the new right in Britain and the US, "Are they the dawn of a New Age or only the whisper of an old one"? In future research, I look forward to further exploration of these questions within Chinese context as well as in other cultural settings.

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Appendix: participant information

Name *	Age	Occupation	Marital status	Husband's occupation	Date of interview
Zhengzheng	31	editor	married	private company owner	June 12, 2011
Huangjie	47	factory worker in the state-sector	married	factory worker in the state sector	June 13, 2011
Zizi,	33	journalist	married	bank cadre	June 13, 2011
Peng	35	teacher	married	state-owned enterprise cadre	June 15, 2011
Nansan	34	editor	married	businessman	June 15, 2011
Zhuzhu	31	journalist	married	businessman	June 20, 2011
Jojo	55	teacher	married	teacher/writer	June 10, 2011
Jin	30	housewife	married	private company owner	July 15, 2011
Tangtang	29	factory worker in the state-sector	single		July 17, 2011
Yuanyuan	33	restaurant owner	divorced		July 20, 2011
Mingming	46	redundant worker	married	redundant worker	July 20, 2011
Zhenzhi	33	teacher	married	state-owned enterprise cadre	July 22, 2011
Guoguo	33	housewife	married	lawyer	July 24, 2011
Kunkun	35	editor	married	cadre in a state-owned investment company	July 25, 2011
Wong	47	redundant worker	married	redundant worker	July 26, 2011
Chaoming	47	redundant worker	married	factory worker	July 26,2011
Fong	33	teacher	married	businessman	July 27, 2011
Juanzi	34	bank accountant	married	bank cadre	July 27, 2011
Ruru	47	company manager	married	city-rank official	July 30,2011
Dashen	47	factory worker	married	factory worker	August 5, 2011
Mei	37	editor	married	private company owner	August 5, 2011
Luyan	46	factory worker	married	factory worker	August 6, 2011

Liuliu	55	private factory accountant	divorced		August 6, 2011
Dong	48	nurse	married	Party-secretary of a state-owned enterprise	Focus group, August 7, 2011
Gong	46	dentist	married	businessman	Focus group, August 7, 2011
Zhao	47	medical doctor	married	businessman	Focus group, August 7, 2011
Duo	45	medical doctor	married	state-owned enterprise cadre	Focus group, August 7, 2011
Zhou	24	student	single		Focus group, June 24, 2011
Haijuan	23	student	single		Focus group, June 24, 2011
Qianqian	23	student	single		Focus group, June 24, 2011
Meixia	23	student	single		Focus group, June 24, 2011
Li	19	student	single		focus group, June 26, 2011
Ma	20	student	single		focus group, June 26, 2011
Cheng	20	student	single		focus group, June 26, 2011
Sun	20	student	single		focus group, June 26, 2011
Yang	25	migrant worker	married	migrant worker	focus group, July 4, 2011, morning
Wu	19	migrant worker	single		focus group, July 4, 2011, morning
Xu	28	migrant worker	married	migrant worker	focus group, July 4, 2011, morning
Jiang	30	migrant worker	married	migrant worker	focus group, July 4, 2011, morning
Xi	42	migrant worker	married	farmer	focus group, July 4, 2011, morning
He	18	migrant worker	single		focus group, July 4, 2011, afternoon
Xue	32	migrant worker	married	farmer	focus group, July 4, 2011, afternoon
Duan	23	migrant worker	single		focus group, July 4, 2011, afternoon

Zhou	28	migrant worker	married	migrant worker	focus group, July 4, 2011, afternoon
Zhang	21	Migrant worker	single		focus group, July 4, 2011, afternoon

* All names are pseudonyms.