A Good Wife or A Greedy Wife? Women's Roles as Wives in Chinese Corruption News Coverage

Yiyan Li

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By Yiyan Li[1]

Abstract

Xi Jinping, China's president, has embarked on the largest anti-corruption campaign in modern Chinese history. This study provides insight into the media representing the wife figure in contemporary corruption news in China. To this end, this study employs critical discourse analysis to analyse news articles from the Central Committee for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). The data reveals news articles depict wives of corrupt cadres as greedy if they have participated in their husbands' corrupt behaviors. In this sense, wives are represented as being responsible for their husbands' corruption, while the ruling party's role is marginalized. Thus, this representational strategy allows the government to deflect pressure onto the corrupt cadres' wives and cover up the systematic flaws that allow corruption to flourish. By decoding the nature and role of the wife in news reports related to corruption, this study contributes to understanding how political power influences the construction of the wife figure in corruption news.

Keywords: Good wife, Greedy wife, Critical discourse analysis, China, Corruption news

Introduction

China's rapid economic development and one-party political system has made corruption unavoidable (Pei, 2020). Indeed, the rise of State-Owned Enterprises has allowed the CCP to consolidate control over a significant share of China's resources, which has in turn allowed official corruption to become widespread in recent decades (Pei, 2020). Upon taking power in 2012, President Xi Jinping and the CCP launched an anti-corruption campaign that is widely considered to be the most expansive and influential in modern Chinese history—"higher profile, less compromising, and more sustained than those of the past" (Keliher & Wu, 2016, p. 6). While the goal of ending corruption is desirable, the CCP's anti-corruption campaign serves another function, namely, to resolve internal power struggles within the Party (Broadhurst & Wang, 2014). President Xi has utilized the Party's anti-corruption campaign to eliminate political rivals who threaten his interests, such as Bo Xilai (Broadhurst & Wang, 2014).

Nonetheless, the prevalence of corruption can undermine a ruling Party's authority, which is especially true in a one-party political system. As such, the CCP's carefully crafted anti-corruption campaign has been a useful tool in establishing and preserving the Party's authority and legitimacy (Broadhurst & Wang, 2014; Pei, 2020; Wang, 2018). In this sense, the highly public displays of discipline for corrupt cadres demonstrates to the public the Party's uncompromising position with respect to the so-called integrity and moral righteousness (Broadhurst & Wang, 2014).

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In recent years, President Xi Jinping has increasingly used such confessions—which are a popular focus of corruption news articles—to tackle social and political challenges (Liu, 2018). According to Wang (2018), confessions have been an effective medium used by the CCP to transmit its position on corruption, with such confessions almost always consisting of the corrupt cadres expressing their feelings of guilt at not being able to take care of their elders, wives, and children. Notably, in making their confessions, some cadres also implicate their wives as helping to facilitate illegal exchanges (Liu, 2018; Wang, 2018). These confessions run counter to the notion that women should be "good wives" (*xianneizhu*), which means that a woman is "virtuous, stay[s] at home, and does not interfere" (Wang, 2018, p. 456). However, this conception of the "good wife" not only caters to the patriarchal regime, but it also reinforces gender hierarchies. Although women's roles as wives are an important component of corrupt cadres' confessions, very few studies have focused on how women are treated in discourses on corruption, especially corruption news coverage. Chen (2017) has argued that corruption news discourses portray cadres' mistresses as the source of their downfall; however, less attention has been given to how such discourses treat women in their roles as wives.

President Xi has promoted the archetypes of the good wife and the good family as key long-term anti-corruption measures. Since taking power in 2012, President Xi has repeatedly emphasized the critical role of family in reducing corruption. For instance, at the 5th Full Assembly of the 18th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) in 2016, President Xi said that:

> "every cadre should take the task of building family values as priority, keep upright and cultivate himself (*lianjie xiushen*), and keep upright and manage the family (*lianjie qijia*); while cadres control themselves to keep honest and upright, do not forget to manage the spouse, children and staff around" (Zhao, 2017).

In this sense, family (*jia*) is connected with the state (*guo*), as cultivating a "good family" is seen as an important step in reducing the nation's corruption. This principle reflects the traditional view that the family and the state are inseparable (Li, 2019). Xi further points out that bad family values (*jiafeng baihuai*) are a fundamental driver of cadre misconduct (Zhao, 2017). However, this emphasis on family values positions women as being especially responsible for preventing corruption, as Xi has decreed that women have "special functions" in building and keeping good family values (Zhang, 2018). Specifically, these "special functions" largely refer to women's personalities, their ability to give birth, and their ability to breast feed (*funv teyou de shenxin tedian, shengyu he buru gongneng*) (Zhang, 2018). Thus, Xi's focus on building family values re-embeds women into the family and emphasizes their roles as wives (Constantin, 2018).

In this study, state corruption news discourses are examined in order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of how such discourses are used to construct women's roles as wives. Specifically, this study explores wives' roles in preventing corruption in China, and it considers whether being a good wife is sufficient for keeping one's cadre husband upright and honest. Furthermore, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of gender relations in China by highlighting the political mechanism whereby "the wife" is constructed in corruption news, and how the ruling party uses this figure to address social issues.

In totalitarian countries like China, gender and culture are employed to serve political purposes; that is, women's images are politicized and instrumentalized (Li, 2015). Indeed, Chinese women's images are connected with various expectations and criteria that are guided by party policy (Evans, 2002). Thus, since gendered behaviour is based on the state's needs (Evans,

2002), the blurred boundaries between the public and the private spheres have made women's lives subject to state control (Sun & Chen, 2015).

During the Maoist era (1949-1976), women's images were highly politicized. At that time, the CCP was struggling to maintain its power and legitimacy, with individuals being expected to subordinate their interests to the Party (Leung, 2003). During this period, power and dominance were asserted through controlling the means of production and distributing resources to develop the economy (Leung, 2003). In this sense, women were recognized as an integral component to the construction of China's socialist society. To encourage women to join the labour force and make contributions to the economy (Chen, 2018; Pimentel, 2006; Sun & Chen, 2015), Chairman Mao Zedong famously declared that "women can hold up half of the sky." Women were portrayed as "iron girls," who could do anything men could do, including traditionally male-dominated jobs, such as rebar workers (Jin, Manning, & Chu, 2006; Liu, 2019; Sun & Chen, 2015). Although women's status improved due to increased participation in the labour force, their duty was nevertheless to oblige to the state (Evans, 2002).

In the 1980s, the Chinese Government adopted an Opening and Reform policy aimed at accelerating economic development. This shift in policy led to changes in women's place in the public sphere (Ji et al., 2017; Ji & Wu, 2018; Li & Jiang, 2019; Qian & Jin, 2018; Sun & Chen, 2015); while the new policies placed an intense focus on economic principles, they also re-cast women's lives as "personal"—that is, not the state's business (Liu, 2004). However, the reform era and its embrace of the market economy resulted in the privatization of various services and enterprises, which in turn created a new set of challenges for women; for example, these reforms saw the state gradually roll back welfare programs such as publicly funded childcare, which placed most of the burden of childcare on individual families, particularly women (Cook & Dong, 2011; Du & Dong, 2010; Ji et al., 2017; Ji & Wu, 2018; Kan & He, 2018; Li & Jiang, 2019; Qian & Jin, 2018; Sun & Chen, 2015; Yang, 2013). Furthermore, the intense economic reforms led to an increase in gender discrimination in the job market, which resulted in most women being laid off by the end of the 1990s (Cook & Dong, 2011; Ji et al., 2017; Sun & Chen, 2015). To address such structural issues, the mainstream media started to promote the image of the woman-as-housewife, and the accompanying narrative that women must choose between "marrying well" or "being successful" (Sun & Chen, 2015). However, as Sun and Chen (2015) point out, the dichotomy of "marrying well" or "being successful" may have been a deliberate false dichotomy promulgated by the mainstream media, as such a forced choice could mask social inequalities and gender discrimination in the workplace.

In 1979, China implemented its One-Child Policy (OCP), which led to further disparities in the balance between genders as Chinese culture has traditionally heavily favored males (Feldshuh, 2018; Fincher, 2016; Luo & Sun, 2015). Given this strong male-centric orientation, the OCP led to many people seeking an abortion if their baby was not male (Fincher, 2016; Luo & Sun, 2015). In an attempt to address the surplus of men that had resulted from the One-Child Policy and to push women to get married, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), which is a quasi-governmental organization that was coined the term "leftover women" (*shengnv*) in 2007 to stigmatize single, educated women who are older than 27 (Feldshuh, 2018; Fincher, 2016; Luo & Sun, 2015). The media campaign focus on these "leftover women" amplified the social pressure for them and their younger counterparts to get married (Fincher, 2016).

The above demonstrates how women's images in China are shaped based on the state's needs, and that these images are enforced through both official policy and intense media campaigns. From "iron girls" to "housewives" to "leftover women," the image of Chinese women

has evolved in response to whatever social issues the Chinese government desires to address. Interestingly, even during the Maoist era, the CCP also advocated women's roles as wives and mothers, as they believed in the dictum, "more people, more power." In sum, the images of women advocated by the CCP have been based on biologically anchored (i.e., essentialist) gender roles and behaviours (Evans, 2002). Based on this logical framework, women should strive to be wives and mothers, a role which has been positioned as being central to President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption strategies.

Building good family values and being a good wife have become the core elements of Xi's anti-corruption strategies. The good wife (*xianneizhu or lianneizhu*) is an ancient phrase that was used to praise women who were virtuous and who promoted their husband's study, career, and social status. Nowadays, the CCP has used the trope of the good wife as a metric for evaluating the wives of Party cadres. According to an article published on the front page of the CCDI's website, a good wife should always remind her husband to not accept bribes, abuse power, or pursue a life of luxury via dishonorable means. This article in question is comprised of 12 selected mini stories that illustrate how one can be a good wife; for instance, one story tells of a wife who returned ethically dubious gifts back to the business people who had sent them in order to prevent her husband from committing corruption (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, 2019). In contrast to the figure of the good wife (*xianneizhu or lianneizhu*), the media has used the figure of the greedy wife (*tanneizhu*) to describe wives who have either participated in corruption themselves or who have pushed their husbands to engage in corrupt behaviors (Huang, 2017).

As media has the power to define reality, controlling media input and outcomes could help political actors maintain positive images (Meng, 2016). Similarly, it is much easier to control political scandals, such as corruption scandals, if one can control the media and the narrative being disseminated by it (Meng, 2016). Indeed, in China, corruption news and information are released by official mainstream media, such as the website of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). Media organizations are recognized as "the product of state control and regulation" (Meng, 2016, p. 814). In recent years, the CCP has tightened its controls on the media, making it more of an "ideological apparatus" and mouthpiece for the Party (Meng, 2016). Political ideologies affect women's identities, and media images can contribute to the construction of these identities as a strategic response to certain social issues, such as unemployment (Sun & Chen, 2015). Given the relationship between media and political controls, corruption news coverage could be an important way that the good wife and the greedy wife discourse are promoted in China. To illustrate how the CCP utilizes the official media to construct the good wife and greedy wife discourses in relation to corruption, I will examine corruption news articles taken from the CCDI website.

Materials and Methods

The Chinese Communist Party's Central Commission of Discipline Inspection is responsible for addressing issues related to Party discipline and monitoring abuses of power. As such, Party members who are "suspected of corruption, bad management or breaking with the Party line are liable to be hauled before discipline inspection commissions" ("How China is ruled: Discipline Commission," 2012). The CCDI's website publicizes CCP policies, releases information about the CCDI, and reports cadres who are being inspected or disciplined. In addition, the CCDI's website reports decisions related to and comments from corrupt cadres. Although the CCDI's website's intended audience is cadres, news articles published on it can reach the public

by being forwarded by other websites. In actuality, the government fully controls the coverage of official cases of corruption, as these cases are highly politically sensitive and could potentially cause social unrest. Generally, three kinds of websites would forward news articles released by CCDI: websites of the CCDI's local branches; other organizations' websites; and Internet portals and Internet forums. For instance, my search for *The Crackdown of an "expert" cadre—Warnings from Zhu Fulin, the former deputy Mayor of Jinhua, Zhejiang Province* (*yige "zhuanjiaxing" ganbu de yunluo ---- Zhejiangsheng Jinhuashi yuan fushizhang Zhu Fulin anjian jingshilu*) in the Chinese searching engine, *Baidu*, returned 28,600 results. One of these results was an article on the website of the School of Economics and Management, Harbin University, which had been viewed 573 times (School of Economics and Management, 2015). Even before the Internet era, newspapers needed to forward corruption cases from state news agencies. For example, in high-profile cases, such as the 1995 hearing for the former Beijing Party secretary Chen Xitong and mayor Wang Baosen, "newspapers [were] required to use the so-called standard draft (*Tonggao, 通稿*)" from the state news agency (Zhu, Lu, & Shi, 2012). In summary, corruption news in China is initially released by CCDI, but such news articles reach and influence the public via forwarding.

For this study, I analyzed news articles about corrupt cadres taken from the Repent and Warning (*Chanhui yu jingshi; 忏悔与警示*) section of the CCDI's website. From 2013 to 2016, 275 news articles were published on this web page, with 90 detailing the cadre's wife's involvement in his corruption. Since this study is specifically interested in the concepts of the "greedy wife" and the "good wife," only articles that clearly contained one of these terms were selected. Next, four articles were randomly selected from the results, the details of which are provided in Table 1.

No.	Title	Location and the Occupation of Cadres	Date and Word Count	The Greedy Wife/The Good Wife
1	"God of Wealth" who was Smashed by Money—Analysis of the case of Ren Jumeng, former Vice Chairman of CPPCC and the head of the Finance Bureau in Qihe County, Dezhou City, Shandong Province.[2]	Shangdong Province; the Finance Bureau.	2013, August 4. 3,656 words.	The Greedy Wife
2	District Mayor Qian was Investigated because of Money (In China, Qian is pronounced as money)—Analysis of the case of Qian Zenghong, the former district mayor of Hailing District, Taizhou City, Jiangsu Province.[3]	Jiangsu Province; Mayor of Hailing District	2013, August 16. 4,005 words.	The Greedy Wife
3	Family corruption—Warnings from the case of Yu Shaodong, the former director and Party secretary of the People's Congress in Chengkou County, Chongqing.[4]	Chongqing; Party Secretary of the People's Congress in Chengkou County.	2016, May 20. 3,314 words.	The Good Wife
4	The emergence of accidents ---- Warning from the case of Wu Shutian, the former director of the Work Safety Bureau in Bengbu, Anhui. [5]	Anhui Province; the Work Safety Bureau.	2013, August 12. 4,306 words.	The Good Wife

Table 1: Basic Information for the News Articles Obtained from the CCDI Website

[2] Source from: http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/jdbg/chyjs/201307/t20130715_155870.html

[3] Source from: http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/jdbg/chyjs/201307/t20130717_155881.html

[4] Source from: http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/jdbg/chyjs/201605/t20160519_156118.html

[5] Source from: http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/jdbg/chyjs/201307/t20130715_155877.html

The articles listed in Table 1 detail events in four provinces—Shandong, Jiangsu, Chongqing, and Anhui—and focus on individuals from four different occupation areas. The range of locations and occupational areas indicate that the concepts of "good wife" and "greedy wife" are not specific to any one region or occupational area. In addition, the selected articles are relatively long, with all exceeding 3,000 words.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as both a theory and a method, aims to examine discourse and social life (Rogers et al., 2016). Broadly speaking, CDA examines all of the social practices, individuals, and institutions that create the epistemological foundation for our understanding of various phenomena and "truth" itself (Holsti, 1969). Within CDA, language is supposed to be connected with the participants' social context (Lams & Liu, 2018). Based on the CDA, discourse is a way to establish and reinforce power relations (Lams & Liu, 2018), and images of wives in corruption news coverage is a research topic. Liu and Guo observe that:

> "Through the surface level of language form, CDA aims to reveal the influence of ideology on discourse, the counteractive influence of discourse on the ideology, and how the two elements derive from and serve social structure and power relations" (2016, p. 1076).

In this research, CDA will be deployed to decode media discourse on corruption to understand how the good wife/greedy wife is used to reinforce gender issues relating to corruption.

Given the CCP's control over official media sources, using CDA will expose how the discourses employed by official media sources strengthen power relations (Liu, 2018). Since corruption is a sensitive issue in China's one-party political system, it is also necessary to understand how the CCP goes about identifying individuals guilty of corruption. In his book *Media Discourse*, Fairclough (1995) suggests that the language used by the media should be considered as discourse, and that CDA should therefore include linguistic analyses of these media discourses. Furthermore, CDA focuses on the media's relationships with institutions and the wider social and cultural context in which it is embedded, "including relations of power and ideologies" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 33). As such, it is critical that analyses of corruption news coverage examine the language and texture of texts, especially the use of values and slogans that are commonly viewed as taken-for-granted or commonsense by reporters and audiences.

In this study, I explore how China's structures/systems support a particular approach to covering the news, and a particular way of portraying women in written media coverage of corruption. Both "good wife" and "greedy wife" are widely spread in the Chinese context, as the "good wife" has 33,200,000 search results and the word "greedy wife" has 441,000 search results. Like the word "leftover women," both words were first used by mainstream media, and later, they became well-known words in China. Following three steps mentioned by Liu (2018), this study utilizes "Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA", and specifically, the analysis first decodes "the textual linguistic features of the item under study. It then interprets the effects of the production and consumption of the discourse" (p. 25). According to Fairclough (1995), intertextuality can provide insight into the ways in which a discourse is connected to the broader social context, including cultural norms and ideologies. The intertextual analysis in this study will compare and evaluate how the selected texts construct their representations of their subjects, particularly with respect to the inclusion or omission of details or information, the kinds of messages being conveyed through the use of ironic or metaphorical language, and their use of the presuppositions

of the discourse itself (Fairclough, 1995). Finally, according to Liu (2018), the focus of the analysis will be extended to the broad environments to illustrate how the discourse came to be, what purpose it serves, and how it continues to reinforce power relations (Fairclough, 1993, 2001, 2003, as cited in Liu, 2018).

Results

The news articles examined in this study were acquired from the *Shencha Diaocha* channel on the CCDI website. In order to explore the relationship between corruption and the discourse used to discuss wives, the news articles are presented according to two themes: the wife, and the Party/the state.

Table 1 shows titles of selected articles, with no title involving the greedy wife or the good wife directly, although each article's title contains metaphorical phrases. Article 1 includes "God of Wealth," which commonly refers to the people who are the head of the financial bureau. "God of Wealth" comes from a traditional legend. Traditionally, people enshrine the god of the future on the fifth day of the lunar new year, which symbolizes they will receive more money in the new year. Article 2 uses the same pronunciation to satirize corrupt cadres. In Article 3, family corruption caters to the anti-corruption policy "building good family values." Article 4 uses accidents to satirize the safety bureau as unsafe, as the bureau has corrupt cadres. Those metaphorical applications indicate that authors of these articles tried to make corruption news articles close to the general public's daily life to attract people to read. On the other hand, satirizing corrupt cadres can help the CCP to demarcate the boundaries with corruption and to maintain a good image.

The Discourse of Women: The Good Wife or The Greedy Wife?

In the articles, the good wife is differentiated from the greedy wife by that fact that she did not participate in corrupt acts. Of the four articles, two portrayed the wife as greedy. However, it should be noted that, while Article 3 used the term, "the good wife," the use of quotation marks in the article indicates that this term was being used ironically.

The research results showed that, in corruption news, a woman's most outstanding role is that of being a wife, most clearly evidenced by reporters and investigators' repeated use of this identity category when discussing these women. In these discourses, women were cast as either the greedy wife—the wife of a corrupt cadre who not only did not keep her husband upright and honest, but also participated in the corruption herself—or the good wife—the wife who kept her husband upright and honest, while also maintaining good family values. Surprisingly, these women's account of events, in their own words, is largely absent from these discourses, with only a handful of quotes from the accused wives appearing in the articles. The following is one such quote:

> Excerpt One
> "While Ren Jumeng was the head of the financial bureau, many people wanted him to help them. Sometimes those people came to our house and brought gifts and money. Ren was not at home, so I took those gifts and money, and then I told Ren what people wanted his help with" Ren Jumeng's wife, Jia Mou, said. (Article 1)

Jia Mou described the process of taking bribes. Excerpt one typifies corruption narratives involving spouses: first the wife gives in to corruption, and then she encourages her husband to also engage in corrupt behavior. Although Jia Mou does not describe herself as being greedy, her greediness is alluded to when she admits that "Ren was not at home, so I took those gifts and money," thus indicating that she participated in corruption. The decision to include Jia Mou's account of taking bribes serves to emphasize a fundamental moral point in corruption discourses: a greedy wife can cause serious trouble for their husband.

> Excerpt Two
> Jia Mou, the wife of Ren Jumeng, used to live in the village and moved to the county because of the husband's job promotions […] Generally, she should be satisfied with a normal life in the county, as she had lived in poverty for a long time when she was in the village. However, she became a greedy wife— "I accept money for him, he does things for people." She accepted money for Ren Jumeng, as Ren was not suitable to accept the money […] She also accepted money sent by Ren's colleagues […] (Article 1)

Title: "Repaying Qian Zenghong for his kindness," wife helped her husband commit corrupt act**s** (Qinqing huibao, fuzhufutan)

> ……
> As the old Chinese saying goes, "a good wife will help cadre to keep honest and upright and live in poverty (*jia you xianqi, ze shi neng anpinshouzheng*)." However, Qian Zenghong's wife not only failed to prevent Qian's corruption, but she became a greedy wife *(tanneizhu)*. This couple "cooperated together" *(peihe moqi)* and engaged in a farce in which the wife conspired with the husband (*hangxieyiqi; 沆瀣一气*) and accumulated wealth by corruption (*gongtong liancai*).
>
> When some business people would visit Qian's house, Qian would not appear; rather, his wife would accept their money and gifts, and then tell Qian about their requests. Later, many people knew that Qian's wife could "accept money and gifts for Qian" *("zuozhu")*. His wife also liked to show her face in public *(paotoulumian)* and do things for money *(bang ren lanshi)*, so she became the spokesperson of Qian. (Article 2)

In Article 1, the comparison between living conditions between the village and the county affects the subsequent interpretation of the discourse. It presupposes that readers understand the hierarchy of living conditions in China (i.e., the county is better than the village, and the city is better than the county). The third-person narration suggests that Jia Mou was greedy by commenting that she should be "satisfied" with the better living conditions in the county; that is, if her quality of life has improved by moving to the county, her lack of satisfaction must be an indication of greediness. Moreover, this discourse serves to remind readers of the perils of family corruption (*jiazu shi fubai*), and how good family values can serve as a bulwark against it (Zhao, 2017). However, exclusively attributing corruption to the erosion of family values is problematic, as it does not consider the influence of the one-party system. This shift in emphasis is revealing, as it shows how the framing of a discourse can be used to strategically preserve existing power structures: rather

than exploring the one-party system's vulnerability to corruption, thereby raising questions about its efficacy and legitimacy, the author elects to blame the family's corruption on the wife's failure to uphold strong family values.

Based on Liu's (2018) observation, the author of the news article could influence readers' understanding via a set of careful choices of words and phrases. In Article 2, for example, the title includes the metaphorical phrase, "wife helped the husband to commit corruptions", which is based on a proverb (*fuchangfusui* (夫唱妇随)) that says that a wife should always obey her husband. The statement, "The wife should always obey her husband," is a metaphor for the harmony between husband and wife; in contrast, "the wife helped her husband commit corrupt acts," means the wife helps the husband to commit corruption and they commit corruption together. The use of the phrase "the wife helped her husband commit corrupt acts" presupposes that readers are familiar with the proverb "the wife should obey her husband," as both use very similar wording. Furthermore, "wife helped her husband commit corrupt acts" invokes traditional gender ideologies, which hold that a wife must obey her husband. This is evident in the author's deliberate inclusion of the terms, "husband," "wife," "help," "corruption," which also serve to confirm the helping role played by women in corruption cases. The author's allusion to the old saying, "Repaying one for his or her kindness *(qinqing huibao),"* in the title of Article 2 also serves to evoke a moral point: the wife aids in abetting her husband's corruption in the same way that she repays his kindness.

In China's moral system, it is considered virtuous to repay people's kindness. This is illustrated by the expression that a drop of water given to a person in need shall be returned with a burst of spring (dishui zhi en, dang yongquan xiang bao;滴水之恩，当涌泉相报); that is, even if others provide just a little help, one should return the favour with all one can when others are in need (360doc.com, n.d.). Both "wife helped her husband commit corrupt acts" and "repaying one for his or her kindness," warn that a wife should never aid her husband in committing acts of corruption. Furthermore, the use of these two sayings presupposes that readers are familiar with both them and China's moral system, as well as the fact that the sayings are being used in an ironic manner to express the opposite meaning.

In the first paragraph, the narration strengthens the perception that Qian Zenghong's wife was greedy and responsible for his corruption by using the old Chinese saying, "a good wife will help cadre to keep honest and upright and live in poverty." This old saying establishes a cause-effect relation: if the wife is a good wife, the husband will be content in poverty, and will be upright and honest. The phrase, "contented in poverty" (*an pin*), comes from a proverb, which states that one should content oneself with poverty and devote oneself to things spiritual (anpin ledao;安贫乐道). Thus, according to this proverb, people should insist on upholding the integrity of their moral principles, even if they find themselves living in poverty. This proverb expresses cultural and societal expectations for ancient cadres, as they received only a small salary, but were expected to be morally advanced. In Article 2, the use of this proverb directly indicates that a good wife will take the main responsibility for her husband's actions [a good wife will help cadre to keep honest and upright and live in poverty (*jia you xianqi, ze shi neng anpinshouzheng*)], while a bad or greedy wife will not. In addition to this proverb, the use of the expressions, "greedy wife," "cooperation together," "conspire with the husband," and "accumulated wealth by corruption" illustrate the dangers posed by a greedy wife. In this sense, a good wife should act as a supervisor who ensures that her husband is behaving properly.

Next, Article 2 introduces the wife's behaviour as facilitating corruption. The phrase, "accepted money and gifts for Qian *(zuozu),"* and the word, "liked*,"* depict the wife as an active participant in the corrupt behaviours. The wife's corruption is further established through the use

of the proverb, "liked to show her face in public *(paotoulumian),"* and the phrase, "do things for money *(bang ren lanshi)*," which indicate that she is willing to accept money and gifts for her husband. Although the label, "greedy wife," is only used once in Article 2, the use of metaphor, irony, ancient precepts, proverbs, and description firmly establishes that the wife in question is greedy. In casting the wife as greedy, the discourse shifts readers' attention to the wife's qualities and behaviours, while ignoring other potential causes of corruption, such as the political system's flaws. Put simply, Article 2 normalizes the relationship between the wife and corruption.

In China, mainstream media is primarily responsible for the construction of the discourse wherein the greedy wife fails to keep her husband upright and honest. This is notable, as such discourses resonate with the anti-corruption policies—building good family values—proposed by President Xi Jinping. At the end of 2012, the Xinhua News Agency released a special article wherein Xi warned his family members, relatives, and friends not to do any business with companies he had previously been involved with, and not to use his name for personal gain (CCTV.com, 2018). In this article, Xi connects family values with anti-corruption by pledging to "be honest and keep his family in order" (*lianjie qijia*;廉洁齐家), which in turn obligates party members to also be honest and ensure good family values as part of their obligation to the paternalistic nation. Strategies such as this have subsequently been implemented by many local governments and government organs. For instance, since 2014, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) (*quanguo fulian*;全国妇联), which is a quasi-government organization that is mandated to solve women's issues and promote gender equality, has promoted its initiative to "Build an honest atmosphere; family helps to ensure that people are honest and upright (*shu qinglian jiafeng, jiating zhulian*;树清廉家风，家庭助廉)" (Xinhua Net, 2016). This initiative requires women to be good wives in order to educate their families on how to be honest, and to maintain an honest family atmosphere, which is in line with the Party's view of the family as the foundation of anti-corruption (Xinhua Net, 2016). The discourse of the greedy wife reinforces the meaning of the good wife and the Party's anti-corruption strategy.

Besides the anti-corruption campaign, the idea of a good woman and a good wife is widely advocated by the Chinese government. In the 1940s, the former premier, Zhou Enlai, proposed a role model—"good woman"—which indicated women's roles as mothers and workers (Xue, 2016). This role model later became a discourse of the ACWF during Maoist (Chen, 2017). The ACWF is supposed to be the propaganda tool of the CCP and keep promoting the CCP's ideologies during the Post-Mao regime (Johns, n.d.; Stacey, 1984). Since China has implemented the Opening and Reforming policy in 1978, the planned economy has shifted to the market economy. However, the retreat of the welfare state re-emphasized women's family roles, and the ACWF kept promoting them. Since 1985, the ACWF selected "Five Virtues Families (*Wu Hao Jiating)*" (outstanding in such five aspects as law-abiding, diligent study, family planning, domestic harmony, and industrious and thrifty management of the household) to highlight women's contribution to the family (Chinadaily, n.d.). Also, women's roles as mothers were promoted by the "Ten Outstanding Mothers (shi da jiechu muqin)" (Guo, 2010). Later, in the 1990s, women were encouraged to choose the family role to solve social inequalities and gender discrimination (Sun & Chen, 2015). In recent years, the word "leftover women" were widely spread in mainland China, and many articles blamed educated women for not marrying and having children (Feldshuh, 2018; Fincher, 2016; Luo & Sun, 2015; Richardson, 2018). In the meeting with leaders of the ACWF in 2013, President Xi Jinping mentioned women's "unique roles" in "promoting Chinese traditional family values and establish[ing] good family ethics," and "voluntarily shoulder[ing] the responsibility of respecting the elderly and caring for the young" (Richardson, 2018). The above role models

indicated that women's main roles are still in the family, and women were supposed to be responsible for building a good family in order be a "good woman" or "good wife." According to Chen (2017), women role models are actually being duplicated in the anti-corruption campaign, and moral women were formulated as tools to stop corruption. The corruption news discourse blamed the greedy wife and praised the good wife (Chen, 2017). Indeed, women were blamed for being irresponsible in building a good family. For instance, in Article 2, the wife was blamed for failing to keep a good family by committing corruption with the husband (i.e. a good wife will help cadre to keep honest and upright and live in poverty (*jia you xianqi, ze shi neng anpinshouzheng*); However, Qian Zenghong's wife not only failed to prevent Qian's corruption, but she became a greedy wife *(tanneizhu)*. The dichotomy of the "good wife" versus the "greedy wife" promotes women's responsibility in managing family members and ending corruption within the family (Chen, 2017). However, women were scapegoats of corruption, as corruption news does not go deep to discuss the political system's flaws that are at the root of corruption.

Excerpts one and two do not establish the wives in question as greedy wives through their own words; rather, they reinforce their central role in the corrupt behaviours using ancient precepts and anti-corruption policies. At this point, it is important to clarify that this analysis is not aimed at demonstrating that these wives were faultless in these acts of corruption. On the contrary, this analysis aims to demonstrate that these discourses treat women unequally by judging them based on their role as wife. Indeed, the emphasis on these women's roles as a "wife" reflects the resurgence of Confucianism and gender relations in contemporary society. Since the market economic reforms of 1978, Chinese women have encountered more challenges, as the market reforms intensified the conflict between women's private and public roles and eroded gender equality (Chen, 2018; Constantin, 2018; Li & Jiang, 2019). The ideal family, which is promoted by the state as a harmonious family, consists of young couples living with their parents: the husband focuses on work outside of the home, the mother-in-law helps to care for the grandchildren and with the housework, and the wife gives birth to children and maintains the household. In this model, the dutiful wife is taken-for-granted (Zavoretti, 2017; Zurndorfer, 2018). In this sense, traditional cultural attitudes about gender remain persistent in Chinese society, which means that gender discrimination is all too common and largely ignored (He & Wu, 2017). As a result of the resurgence of traditional culture, the family and the wife have become important components of anti-corruption strategies.

In sum, the news articles above cast wives as a greedy and as failing to keep their husbands morally upright, thereby failing at preventing corruption. Although the author sometimes inserts wives' words into the article, readers' perception of wives is largely dependent on the author's narrative choices (Liu, 2018). While news articles use descriptions of the corruption process to portray wives as greedy, it is important to also understand the CCP's role in these articles.

The Discourse of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP)

Although the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) does not speak for itself in corruption news articles, it is invariably represented as not being complicit with corruption. As the ruling Party, the CCP is portrayed as unwaveringly upright and committed to detecting corruption and meting out just penalties. The following excerpts illustrate this narrative strategy.

Excerpt Three

On June 29, 2018, the Intermediate People's Court of Dezhou, Shandong province made the original judge for Ren Jumeng's case: Ren was convicted of taking bribes and sentenced to 13 years in prison, […].
Jia Mou, who was Ren's wife, was convicted of taking bribes and sentenced to 1 year in prison, two years in probation.
[…] (Article 1)

Comments: from those corruption cases, family members' indulgence in corruption *(jiafeng baihuai: 家风败坏)* were mainly accounted for corruption cadres' illegal behaviour. […]
Everybody has family members, but they cannot violate laws and rules. […]
As a Party member, cadres should differentiate individual emotion with laws and rules and differentiate the use of public power and the interest of individuals and family. Cadres should not work for the family by abusing public power. […]
[…] (Article 3)

Solutions: build the "anti-corruption wall" for cadres
Improve cadres' qualities by intensifying anti-corruption education. […]
Improve supervision, making sure that power is not abused by any cadre. […]
Facilitate the political system and prevent corruption from the source. Building a healthy and transparent political system is an effective strategy to prevent corruption. [..]
Improve the family capacity to prevent corruption. […]. In this sense, … we should intensify the anti-corruption programs, such as "the good wife, the good children and the good relatives" … (Article 4)

In Excerpt three, when introducing the trial results of Ren Junmeng and his wife, Jia Mou, the article states, "was convicted of taking bribes" and "sentenced to prison," indicating that their corruption was an individual problem, and not a problem with the CCP more broadly. Similarly, the investigator's comments indicate that the corruption was directly caused by the cadre's family members, and that the ruling Party had nothing to do with it. In Article 3, the CCP is portrayed as standing against corruption in the name of the public's interest. However, Article 3 fails to mention the CCP's failure to supervise corrupt cadres and the political system's propensity for corruption, and how the corrupt cadres were detected without the supervision of the public. Although Article 4 mentions the need to improve the political system, it does not provide any details about how to do so. Instead, the article simply indicates a vague goal with respect to the construction of a political system: "we need to build a reasonable structure for the operation of power…" While the ruling party's responsibility in stopping corruption is never stated in any sort of clear detail, the figure of the good wife is explicitly mentioned as a solution. In sum, corruption news articles use the greedy wife discourse along with many specific examples to illustrate how women become involved in corruption due to greediness, but only discuss any culpability on the part of the Party or political system in the vaguest of terms.

Overall, the discourse of the CCP as an upright Party also aims to reinforce the Party's image in China, as the CCP has a long history of keeping a good public image. As the only ruling party, the CCP strives to build a positive image of Chinese history in order to make the current system look like the only possible mode of rule for Chinese society. The CCP emphasizes what it

considers to be great achievements, through a variety of different media forms, including middle school textbooks, TV programs, and movies. For instance, the film *My People, My Country* (*wo he wode zuguo*), which is a movie that celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Foundation of PRC, consists of seven achievements, including the foundation of PRC, the successful explosion of the first atom bomb in the 1960s, the Chinese women volleyball team's Olympic gold medal in 1984, the return of Hong Kong, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 70th anniversary of the victory of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the manned spacecraft Shenzhen-11's successful return to Earth (Zhang, 2019). On the other hand, media and official state materials tend to simplify or altogether avoid any social issues, disasters, or sensitive issues that the CCP may be responsible for, such as the brutal suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests and the Cultural Revolution. Finally, it is noteworthy that textbooks in a course about politics make no mention of the state's corruption issues (Wang, 2011).

Discussion

In corruption news articles, women are described as greedy wives who should be held responsible for corruption, though they did not have much voice in these articles. To be a good wife, women should monitor their husbands' behaviour and fulfill traditional feminine roles. The greedy wife was constructed by the mainstream media to stigmatize the wife involved in corruption. By continuing to reinforce the behaviour of a greedy wife, the state media try to establish the rules women are expected to conform to—manage the household and the husband's behaviour, and cater to the Party's anti-corruption strategies. By detecting and dealing with corrupt cadres and their greedy wives, the CCP legitimized itself as an upright and responsible ruling party.

However, the strategy of a good wife and building good family values can hardly prevent corruption effectively, as in a contemporary Chinese family the wife does not have very much marital power. According to Hu and Scott (2016), China has a deep-rooted patriarchal culture, and men always hold power in making decisions, while older people in an extended family hold power. On the other hand, some scholars propose that by doing housework or making household decisions such as choosing what to eat for dinner women can also gain power (Shu, Zhu, & Zhang, 2013; Zuo & Bian, 2005). Although women have some power in making trivial decisions, men are still the breadwinners in the household. In this imbalanced family power structure, women do more housework than men. Such family labour division reflects traditional patriarchal norms; that is, women are supposed to manage the household, and men are supposed to support the family. Power in making important decisions and in allocating resources helps men build authority in the family, and such an authority maintains the family. In this sense, the wife is less likely to be an effective tool to stop omnipotent corruption in China.

In sum, news articles consistently highlight corruption as the fault of individual women. By doing so, the news takes away attention from more systemic problems related to the political system, seldom discussing the CCP's failure to monitor cadres or to change procedures that make corruption possible. News framing is a political strategy for the CCP. By repeatedly emphasizing individual faults, the CCP is mitigating political pressure, as corruption scandals are serious in democratic countries and may trigger the demise of the ruling Party.

Conclusions

        This study decoded women's roles as wives in corruption news articles which were released by the Central Committee for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). The discourse of the greedy wife, which stigmatized the wife as helper and facilitator in corruption, has become a tool that helps the CCP legitimize itself in corruption scandals.

Notes

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