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ABSTRACT

This qualitative textual analysis study focuses on two Chinese women who were previously sexually involved with the corrupted officers and later reported these officers to authorities. As a Chinese version of Twitter, Sina Weibo is a powerful social networking and communication tool for their reports. The study analyzes the posts and comments available on Sina Weibo about the identity of these women and how hegemonic Chinese femininity is performed, maintained, and challenged. These discussions may reflect the potential cultural, ideological, and socioeconomic factors that can influence the construction of contemporary Chinese femininity, providing the picture of how social media and mainstream journalists may influence the construction of the femininity and female empowerment. The results of the study suggest that the journalists and the mainstream public tend to marginalize and blame the woman in the sex-video case more than the woman in self-report case. In these discourses, the woman is given more agency in the self-report case partially because of her high socioeconomic status. The influence of traditional Chinese culture as well as the Western sex objectification of women is still obvious. The hegemonic femininity has been maintained by the mainstream groups on Weibo; however, social media do provide opportunities for the women to inspire social engagement and speak up for individual construction of diverse femininity, challenging social hegemony and empowering the women being studied.

Keywords: Hegemonic Femininity, Sina Weibo, Female Empowerment

MISTRESS OR HERO? CORRUPTION REPORTS ON SINA WEIBO AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHINESE FEMININITY

by

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B.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012

Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in *media studies*.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Starting in 2012, the new leadership team in the Chinese government launched an anti-corruption movement, encouraging citizens to report official corruption and misconduct. It is unique in China that the sources for some corruption evidences are women who had sexual relationships with the officers in the government (news.qq.com, 2013). Several videos of Lei Zhengfu (an officer in Chongqing) having sex with Zhao Hongxia were published on Weibo by two citizen journalists in November 2012. Only few days later, a woman called Wang Dechun reported another officer who raped and forced her to maintain a long-term sexual relationship with him. About a month later, another woman called Xu reported the corruption of Liu Tienan, the vice chair of the National Development and Reform Commission (a central-level government department), reaching the vertex of the anti-corruption movement. Through exposing these women's stories with some sexual content, such stories tend to have a higher exposure rate online and have a better chance to be found in major newspapers, comparing to other corruption cases (news.qq.com, 2013). Some netizens call this movement "the anti-corruption movement with Chinese characteristics," an irony of such phenomenon (news.qq.com, 2013). Such statements, potentially reflecting hegemonic ideologies, have become significant in Chinese femininity studies, as there is not much public discussion about Chinese femininity (Zhou, 2012).

This special group of women, often called second wife (*er nai*), girlfriend, or mistress (*qing fu*), are usually seen as a necessity in the subculture of Chinese new-

rich class (Osburg, 2013). The public often call them the "third person" (*xiao san*), a negative term referring to the home wreckers of married rich men (Hong, 2014). Unlike the Western concept, the concept of mistress in China falls between a lover and a prostitute, enabling the rich and governmental officials to enjoy a temporary romantic relationship without much commitment. A man "owning" the mistresses is called a patron to the women. Another term is *bao er nai*, meaning keeping and feeding the mistresses. The patrons are responsible to buy their mistresses apartments and luxuries, pay their living expenses, take them to the upper-class parties, and solve their personal issues. The most qualified mistresses are usually below 25 or 30, innocent, and pure (meaning virginity or not having much sex before) with good education and family background (Osburg, 2013). Owning them can represent the highest level of power, wealth, and masculine attraction of the patrons (Osburg, 2013). For the mistresses, it is a shortcut to access to the luxurious life of the upper class; however, such relationship can never last long because very few of the patrons are willing to divorce and marry them (Osburg, 2013; Hong, 2014). Studying Chinese mistresses helps understand the interaction between the unique Chinese culture and the construction of Chinese femininity.

Since the Eighteenth People's Congress National Conference (the highest-level national meeting of the Communist Party of China) in 2012, the new president Xi Jinping and his leadership team have created high anti-corruption pressure by further authorizing the supervision institutions, legalizing the officers and their families' financial behaviors, and encouraging more grassroots supervision. The year of 2013 witnessed the punishment of ten central-level (equal to or above province level) officers, serving as a grace period to reform the political system (news.ifeng.com, 2014). Compared to other nations, this anti-corruption movement

shows the decisive and powerful style of the new president (news.ifeng.com, 2014). This has highly increased the public trust in the new government and developed a democratic atmosphere that encouraged the highest level of civic engagement in the anti-corruption movement ever (sina.com, 2014). The first anti-corruption report on Sina Weibo, the Lei Zhengfu sex scandal, was right after the end of the congress meeting (November 14, 2012) on November 20, 2012.

The global social media websites such as Twitter and Facebook are blocked in China. As the alternative website of Twitter, Sina Weibo has become an important public sphere for ordinary people to express individualized opinions (Liu, 2012). According to the Chinese official statistical report, there were over 300 million Weibo accounts in China as of January 2013 (CIINC, 2013). Some other studies doubted that all of these accounts were active; recently scholars from Hong Kong University studied 30,000 users and found that over half of these accounts were inactive (Mozur, 2013). However, the study failed to clarify how they could generate their sample from the actual population of Weibo users, which was 1,000 times larger than the sample size. Even if the sample was representative, given the population base, there were still large amounts of active users. Many reporters of corruption cases and citizen journalists regarded Sina Weibo as their powerful weapon: once the information has been published, it could be reposted and spread out geometrically (Rong, 2011). As a typical social networking site, Sina Weibo could instantly connect citizens, mass media, and other organizations to share various opinions and potentially enable more efficient collaborations, including those that reconstruct Chinese femininity.

The publicized sexual behaviors of governmental officers are suitable for the modern definition of the sexual-political scandals, as such illicit behaviors have transgressed the social norms and the moral code of sexual relationships (Thompson, 2000; Apostolidis & Williams, 2004). As Thompson (2000) has stated, a partial cause of sexual-political scandals is that the behaviors of an official are not adhering to the ongoing political and cultural context. The change of political culture, such that the US public began to openly discuss Bill Clinton's sex scandals as entertainment, is also part of the reason. Therefore, especially in the media with more entertainment elements, more sexual-political scandals have transformed American political culture to allow the public peeping into the public figures' private lives, serving their “guilty pleasure” (Apostolidis & Williams, 2004). It is also argued that public figures' transgression of social norms and moral codes may cause serious public discussion, as the public figures have betrayed the general expectations and violated the social hegemonies (Mandell, 2011). To maintain the hegemonic power, the in-group members tend to blame the scandal figures and explore the case details regardless of the privacy issues, thereby the scandals have become public affairs (Mandell, 2011). There are similar findings in China (Liao, 2010); Liao (2010) further indicated the “guilty pleasure” deeply rooted in Chinese culture, such that citizens enjoyed spreading the “rumors” and “ugly news” of celebrities’ and it was common to discuss the private lives of others in public (Liao, 2010). Therefore, analyzing the corruption cases as sexual political scandals may help understand the hegemonic power of the existing social norms (the hegemonic femininity), especially what are made “natural” in moral codes, how powerful are the scrutiny and punishment to the figures, and the roles of culture and political context. Specifically, Liao (2010) suggested that the construction and performance of femininity in media text could reflect these factors.

There were limited up-to-date studies in global sex and corruption scandals (Hughes, 2002). The public often ignores how the females involved in sex scandals construct femininity, such as how Monica Lewinsky constructed femininity from Clinton's sex scandal debates (Hughes, 2002; Mandell, 2011). However, it remains uncertain to what extent can these women influence the femininity construction in the internet-mediated communication settings. In China, many netizens appreciate these women for their courage to report, but others begin to rethink why sometimes only a few women could release the corruption evidences of the officers (news.qq.com, 2013). These comments, whether complimenting, insulting, or criticizing, may all reconstruct the identity of these women and the contemporary Chinese femininity. According to Castells (2007), the Internet-mediated communication technologies, especially social media, are leading the society to a networked society where content created by individuals may eventually overtake the mainstream media content. As a result, individuals can be empowered to construct their own individualized identities (Wellman, 2000; Carstensen, 2014). Social media, as a platform for interactive communication and social engagement (Shirky, 2011), can eventually change the social norms and ideologies (Castells, 2007). Social media may be playing an important role to reconstruct Chinese femininity and lead to a new era of femininity via different users' discussion on the women in the corruption cases.

The communication process can reflect different cultures, histories, social rules, and ideologies (Foss, Domenico & Foss, 2013). Moreover, many multicultural feminism scholars have stated that although women are in the weaker position in the power relation with men across cultures (Costa, Terracciano & McCrae, 2001; Echabe, 2010), the weakness level of women varies (Yoder, Snell, & Tobias, 2012; Enns & Fischer, 2012). This can also change within a given society over time (Enns &

Fischer, 2012). Additionally, the femininity of a society can be reconstructed based on the historical social and cultural changes that have challenged or alternated the previously dominant power (Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006; Enns & Fischer, 2012). Thus, this study can contribute literature about how cultural context can influence gender reconstructions.

Since the 1980s, more Western culture and ideologies began to influence Chinese femininity (Luo & Hao, 2007). On the one hand, according to traditional Confucius culture, an ideal Chinese woman should be a good wife and mother; on the other hand, Chinese femininity should be sexy, beautiful, and young, influenced by the contemporary Western culture that commercializes the sexual aspects of the women's body (Yang, 2011). A twenty-year-old girl is ideal for this femininity because she is young and sexy, and she can be a good wife. In Lei Zhengfu's case, Zhao Hongxia perfectly fits into such hegemonic feminine model: she is a married, sexy, and nice-looking young girl. This might potentially make her a well-known public figure and gain her case the highest exposure rate among all the similar cases.

This study explores and identifies how Chinese cultural context and hegemonic femininity are influencing each other. Furthermore, it also examines the role of Sina Weibo as a representation of Chinese social media in femininity transformation and construction. The findings contribute to multicultural feminism studies, social networking studies on gender identity construction, the influence of traditional Chinese culture on social norms, and the current status of Chinese women in both economic and ideological perspectives.

Through textual analysis method, this study answers the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Sina Weibo users construct the femininity of the women who reported the corrupted officers?

RQ1a: How does this construction reflect the empowerment of Chinese females?

RQ1b: How do Sina Weibo users challenge the hegemonic femininity in China?

RQ2: What is the role of the journalists' Weibo posts in the construction of Chinese femininity?

The next chapter (CHAPTER II) discusses the literature review, which covers the concepts of femininity and hegemonic femininity; the applicability of multicultural feminism theory; the previous studies of Chinese femininity; the theoretical connection between femininity; hegemony and social networking theory; and the applicable literature about the femininity construction on mainstream media. The third chapter (CHAPTER III) has discussed the method of this study: the general introduction to the method, the sampling strategies, the cases' descriptions in detail, the analysis procedures, the researcher's roles, the potential limitations of the method, and the timeline for this entire study. The fourth chapter (CHAPTER IV) discusses the analytical results in the first case of the study: two journalists published a sex video of a young woman and a corrupted officer on Sina Weibo. The fifth chapter (CHAPTER V) discusses the results in the second case: a female news anchor at a local television station reported the corruption and sexual assaults of an officer on Sina Weibo. The last chapter (CHAPTER VI) provides the conclusions of this study, including the comparison between the cases as well as the discussion about the study's

limitations and the implications for future study. More detailed information about the cases is covered in CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

In this chapter, the concepts of femininity and hegemonic femininity are discussed. In addition, the applicability of multicultural feminism theory and the previous studies of Chinese femininity are also introduced. Furthermore, this chapter explores how previous studies connect social networking theory, hegemony, mainstream media, and femininity construction.

Femininity

The definition of femininity in second wave feminism is conceptualized by men, regardless of women's interests (Schippers & Sapp, 2012). MacKinnon (1989) wrote: "Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness to men, which means sexual attractiveness, which means sexual availability on male terms (p.110)." One limitation of this definition is that this it overlooked the differences in femininity across social groups (Hughes, 2002). For example, femininity may vary across race, class, and culture.

A better definition from post-feminism emphasized the process of performances and constructions of femininity in various contexts (Butler, 1990). Any social group, through performance and construction, can reconstruct the social norms about what makes an ideal woman (Schippers & Sapp, 2012). Potentially, post-feminism also fights against the male-dominant power as the authority to define femininity (Kearny, 2009; Schippers, 2002; Munford, 2007). This definition of femininity is a good fit to qualitative studies because the performances, often

embedded in narration, are closely related to part of the femininity construction and can be textually analyzed (Foss, Domenico, & Foss, 2013). Furthermore, it fully considers the complexity across different social contexts in contemporary society, providing opportunities to look into the differences across races, cultures, and societies (Schippers & Sapp, 2012).

As an important component of post-feminism, multicultural feminism (Zinn & Dill, 1996) studies femininity in intersectional ways by looking into women's race and socioeconomic status. It is suggested that the femininity should be considered within the social and cultural changes that may challenge and alternate the existing dominant power (Zinn and Dill, 1996; Enns & Fischer, 2012; Budgeon, 2013). The change in power relation is the key to construct femininity (Munford, 2007) and is complicated and multidimensional with different social factors involved, such as sex, class, race, and culture (Zinn and Dill, 1996; Enns & Fischer, 2012; Budgeon, 2013). It also looks into the changes in women's individual living experiences (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Overall, it is believed that scholars should recognize women's power to challenge the hegemony and male-dominant position in femininity construction across time and contexts (Enns & Fischer, 2012). Therefore, textual analysis method can be applied to study both individual and environmental factors integrated with the femininity transformation, as guided by multicultural feminism theory (Zinn and Dill, 1996). The concept of femininity for this study applies the post-feminism concept, especially the one given by multicultural feminism. The reasons are discussed under the **Multicultural Feminism Theory** section.

Hegemonic Femininity

Hegemonic femininity, according to Hughes (2002), perpetrates a hierarchical relationship where women are in a relatively weaker position than men in terms of power. It is the socially constructed and normalized rule that oppresses females to maintain males' social dominance and priorities (Kearny, 2009; Schippers, 2002; Munford, 2007; Schippers, 2007; Budgeon, 2013). Hegemonic femininity contains so-called womanly characteristics such as physical weakness, incapability to be aggressive and low authorities (Connell, 1987; Butler, 1990; Schippers, 2007). These characteristics are constructed opposite to hegemonic masculinity in order to make a difference (Schippers, 2007). Connell and Messerschimidt (2005) further argue that gender hegemony (including both masculinity and femininity) is the idealized content (or symbol) in the gender categories of males and females, constructed by society or sometimes specific social groups. This content not only institutionalizes what and how to become an ideal male or female, but also serves males' social dominance by legitimating the subordination of hegemonic femininity to hegemonic masculinity (Schippers, 2007). Usually hegemonic femininity can be produced, reinforced, and performed by individuals or social groups through "various strategies" (Foucault, 1978) such as jokes, stories, sanctions, and eventually media, legislation, social movements, etc. (Garlick, 2003; Schippers, 2007) An example of sanction is the school bullying to a school girl who is physically aggressive to her friend, because she violates the hegemonic femininity to own a feature of hegemonic masculinity (Messerschimidt, 2003).

However, studies of hegemonic femininity can fall into the gender binary that all women are similar (Hughes, 2002; Schippers, 2007). Hegemonic femininity is not just culturally a social norm; it also practices and performs in the discourses of race, class, sexuality and other social categories because the hierarchy in femininity can

still exist within and across these categories (Schippers, 2007). Dellinger (2004) also emphasizes the social and group context, which could influence gender hegemony in a specific social group or society. Study of Schippers (2002) has found a rock subculture that rejects hegemonic femininity by making female musicians leading roles in the bands. This case indicates that hegemonic femininity can be challenged within a specific social group by a subculture.

As suggested by Schippers (2007) and Budgeon (2013), although it is important to learn the similar characteristics across culture, race, nation and other social categories, studies about hegemonic femininity should learn more about the variations of gender hegemony across different social categories, and consider the influence of various social, group and cultural contexts. Through a specific case study in Chinese society, a society with quite different cultural and social background from the Western society, this study may empirically support this indication by exploring how hegemonic femininity varies in China and the extent to which the context of Chinese society, traditional Chinese culture, and social networking community makes a difference.

Multicultural Feminism Theory

The major theoretical framework of this study is multicultural feminism theory, which represents the third-wave feminism theories. Collins (1990), Shohat (1998), and Thompson (2002) defined the theory as a critique and expansion to the second-wave feminism, which merely focused on white, middle-class housewives. They argued that the process of female empowerment was not just an empowerment all at once, but an empowerment of one sociological category (for example, sexuality or class) or the others. Gradually, the ideal state of empowerment is that women are

empowered in all categories. Multicultural feminism theory requires researchers to pay attention to the hierarchies in different categories. For example, a female journalist of Wall Street Journal can be more empowered than an unemployed male, as the female is on an upper level of class hierarchy (Shohat, 1998). A similar framework was applied to African American feminism studies in the 1960s and 1970s, when part of white feminists criticized the resistance from women of color to join their activisms (Roth, 1999). During that period, many poor African American women could not afford living while white, middle-class feminists were requesting their participation of empowerment in public lives (Roth, 1999). Shohat (1998), Shields (2008), Enns, and Fischer (2012) further emphasized that multicultural feminism framework should intervene the second-wave feminism thinking pattern of white cultural imperialism. Women of color, even women of the Third World, should not be exclusive from the discourse of feminism studies, and women of color should not be generated as a single social entity (Mohanty, 1991; Zinn & Dill, 1996; Shields, 2008; Yoder, Snell, & Tobias, 2012; Enns & Fischer, 2012). Feminists should not promote Western cultural imperialism while analyzing the other countries' feminism issues regardless of cultural diversity (Shohat, 1998). Specifically in China, a country with very different social and cultural contexts from the Western countries, the femininity analysis should base on specific Chinese socio-economic contexts and traditional culture. Through comparing the differences among the femininities reflected by the Weibo posts, this study found socio-economic and cultural factors that are relevant to Chinese femininity.

Studies by West and Zimmerman (1987), Bulter (1995), Lorber (2000), Enns and Fischer, 2012, and Budgeon (2013) all reflect that the change of cultural and social contexts has transformed and reconstructed femininity. Traditionally, women's

social positions have decided the ideal roles of femininity, such as caregiver and mother (Bordo, 1993). In Hochschild (1997)'s work *The Second Shift*, once American housewives entered a relatively higher social class (such as higher socioeconomic status) in professional and athletics areas, they tended to embrace some muscular social norms. Therefore, new social expectations came out for these women such as the capability to balance their work and child. This example is particularly powerful to prove that the change in social contexts such as socioeconomic status of American women can reconstruct the social norms of hegemonic femininity. Similarly, this study applies the framework to examine how the hegemonic femininity is changed by the transformation of socioeconomic status of modern Chinese women as reflected by the Weibo posts.

Previous Chinese feminism studies apply the literatures about the influence of Chinese traditional culture, ideology, and social norms on the media representations of Chinese femininity and Chinese female empowerment (Goff & Carolan, 2013), which fits into the ideas in the multicultural feminism theory that considers different contexts across cultures. For example, a recent gender study of Chinese International student couples, with a multicultural feminism lens, found that within these couples there is a relational harmony (couples work collectively on gender equity conflicts and other issues), which is a different cultural norm from Western culture (Goff & Carolan, 2013). An earlier study conducted by Yu (2009) compares the perception of feminism of young Asian women and young women of color in America. The study finds that although both young American women of color and Asian women from developed areas or countries are living in similar socio-economic contexts, there are large differences in how they perceive the timeline of their feminist development (Yu, 2009). These two studies have shown the differences in reality and social perceptions

between Asian (Chinese) feminism and Western feminism in cultural category, which can also be reflected by the analysis of Weibo posts in this study.

The emergence of multicultural feminism studies breaks the Western binary of femininity and broadens the literature of feminism studies (Zinn & Dill, 1996). It allows the examination on the influence of a specific culture on the construction of femininity in the global setting. Thus, the multicultural feminism theory for this study can reflect whether there are social, economic, or cultural contexts that potentially caused the change of hegemonic femininity, specifically in China. It rejects the Western imperialism model that imposes the Western feminism theories directly onto a different third-world society, and provides large potential spaces to explore how cultural context, media consumption, socio-economic factors, and other social categories are interactively influencing Chinese femininity. The contexts and factors above could be analyzed as the motivation of agency and the ideological background of identity construction in the text and discourse of media and public (Mckee, 2003; Foss, Domenico, and Foss, 2013). Social media provide an ideal platform for such analysis because they allow direct reflections and presentations of each individual user (Carstensen, 2014). Thus, this study analyzes the Chinese femininity portraits on Sina Weibo, a popular social networking site with user-generated content and interactive conversations, which should clearly reflect the influence of cultural and social contexts on the femininity transformation as well as the challenges against the hegemonic femininity. The theoretical supports for this argument are available in the **Femininity, Hegemony, & Social Networking Theory** section.

Previous Studies of Chinese Femininity

The existing studies of Chinese femininity, as part of multicultural femininity literature, provide background information about how culture and society could influence the performance and construction of femininity in the past. Specifically, as indicated by previous studies (Zhou, 2012; Liu, 2010; Li, 2012; Larson & Krumov, 2013), the cultural factors are usually relevant to the transformation of traditional culture, while the social factors refer to the socioeconomic status change of Chinese women. Originally, femininity was symbolized by the character for female: 女 (Nv), which looks like a woman standing on her knees as a slave (Li, 1992). Traditionally, women were overlooked and often portrayed much weaker than men (Larson & Krumov, 2013). The Confucius culture (the mainstream culture in China even for now) set the femininity as good wife and mother, restricting women at home (Yang, 2011). In Chinese classic literatures, if women had more power, they would turn evil. There are many stories about how ancient Chinese emperors failed to govern the nation well because women allured them and distracted their work. Even in many contemporary rural families, parents still show stronger preference for male children than female children (Larson & Krumov, 2013).

In the Maoist era from 1950s to 1970s, Chinese femininity experienced a process of de-feminization (Luo & Hao, 2007). It means that the gender difference between males and females were minimized (Luo & Hao, 2007). Women were treated as men (Yang, 2011). This was relevant to the Marxist ideology and the propaganda from the Communist Party of China (Luo & Hao, 2007), which equalized the physical power of men and women and encouraged women to join heavy labor works in farms and factories. The beauty ideals of men and women were quite similar and they were all expected to wear military uniforms (Yang, 2011).

Chinese femininity experienced the process of re-feminization from the 1980s -- the era of "open-door" policies. In order to reduce the labor for market economy of the post-Mao era, the femininity from Western culture was gradually adopted in China (Young, 1989; Rofel, 1999; Yang, 2011). The direct results were the decline of women's participation in the public sphere and sexualized women for muscular entertainment business (Yang, 2011). According to Wang (1998), China was attempting to reduce its hegemonic ideology by adopting global consumerist culture in order to expand its global market. Therefore, the post-Mao era's Chinese femininity was influenced by Western culture and capitalism: the Western beauty ideals from the white models influenced Chinese models in mass media content, which became the new hegemonic femininity (Yang, 2011). Although this statement was generally agreed upon, the limitation was that how Chinese people understood and perceived the Western culture was overlooked (Yang, 2011). Thus, this study may add empirical support to how Western culture influences Chinese hegemonic femininity, and how people perceive this femininity and women's empowerment.

Indeed, the feminism studies in Hong Kong predicted the change of female power in mainland China. As early as the 1990s, women's health care and education quality went higher, and women's power position went higher in society (Pearson & Leung, 1995; Westwood, Mehrain, & Cheung, 1995). In recent China, because of the economic growth, increasing family subsidies, and the emergence of the nuclear family, young Chinese females gained more education, independent working opportunities, and higher socioeconomic status (World Bank, 1993; Green, 2006; Mak, 2007).

However, there is a significant criticism to the current Chinese femininity studies. The concept of "neofeminism" (Ivekovic and DrakulicIlic, 1984) is applicable in Chinese femininity studies. Neofeminism refers to the feminism only focusing on the legitimized political and economic aspects regardless of the social, sexual, and psychological dimensions. As addressed by Yang (2011), Chinese femininity still needs to be further constructed with further studies in the areas mentioned above. Through analyzing the user-generated content and interactions on Sina Weibo, this study explores the perceptions of the female victims from all the female participants in the discussions through analyzing their motivations to post as indicated from their posts.

In Notar's (1994) study about Chinese female models on television advertisements, the finding is that Chinese feminine ideal is the group of twenty-year-old women, being both "sexy young thing" and "good wife, wise mother." These two femininity ideals represent the mixture of "Western modernity" and "Confucian tradition" (p. 29-30). For this study, the females in the scandals mentioned before are all young (at least look young from outside), good-looking, and married. By blending the traditional Chinese femininity ideals of "young and innocent girl" and "married nice wife" with the Western "nice-looking" femininity construction, the women's images as young, innocent, and nice women in this study seem to be attractive to people, which may lead to large population of online followers and eventually the success of their online corruption report.

Multicultural feminism theory requires the studies of femininity and female empowerment to pay attention to various femininities across races, cultures, and socioeconomic status (Budgeon, 2013). Therefore, the study of Chinese femininity

should not only compare the cultural differences between Chinese and Western societies, but also study the femininities under different socio-economic statuses within Chinese society. The socioeconomic status, as defined by various scholars (Weber, 1946; Blau & Duncan, 1967; Featheran & Hauser, 1977), refers to three different social contexts: employment, income, and educational level. Studies have found that the growth of education and income quality of women from 1980s have increased the socioeconomic status of Chinese women in general; however, the income and occupational gap between males and females has been widened, especially in rural areas (Li, 2012). Similarly, the educational gap between males and females has grown wider in rural areas, as more school girls dropped out of school (Liu, 2010; Li, 2012). The advantaged socioeconomic status can make females more independent in family and society; however, generally, there are still limited opportunities for them to gain the similar level of resources as males (Li, 2012). Most importantly, the fact that the average women's socioeconomic status is still lower than men co-exists with the influence of traditional norm that women should still rely on men in a family (Li, 2012). Recognizing the importance of the socioeconomic status could help understand different contexts, social norms, and life experiences of various groups of Chinese women, including the understudied and marginalized rural women, especially the immigrating population from rural to urban areas (Zhou, 2012). Therefore, through analyzing the general public's responses and reflections to Chinese femininity, this study may help analyze the social context of Chinese women of various socio-economic statuses.

Femininity, Hegemony, & Social Networking Theory

Social network can be a public sphere where virtual communication can replace the real-life communication and different ideas can be gathered collectively (Castells, 2007; Wellman, Salaff, Dimitrova, Garton, Gulia & Haythornthwaite, 1996; Beck, 2000; Carter, 2014). Therefore, social networks may make it easier for collective reconstructions of femininity, since they enable interactive and instant communications. Social networks may strongly influence the transformation and construction of public opinion and ideologies (Beck, Dalton, Greene & Huckfeldt, 2002). The advantage of social networks, as acknowledged by Habermas (2006), is that they increase the information and opinion flow from bottom to the top of the network. This information flow can be viewed as the social power that can encourage social engagement to construct and transform social norms and public opinion (Castells, 2007). According to Castells' (2007) empirical studies in the Catalan society, the more an individual is involved in online activism, the more he or she would use the internet. In turn, the more he or she uses the internet, the more socially active he or she would become (p. 249). Therefore, through members' social engagements on social network, the perception of Chinese femininity may be changed and the existing hegemonic femininity could be challenged. However, since mainstream media still influence the public, it is doubtful whether independent opinions on social media can compete with the influence of mainstream media. According to a study conducted by 2012 by Hong Kong University, over 80 percent of Sina Weibo users did not create original posts (Mozur, 2013). This finding supports the argument by Hindman (2009) that only 20 percent of people created (or controlled) the majority of online content. According to Hindman (2009), these information creators are often social elites whose opinions often align with mainstream media, which accords with the homogeneous model of public sphere by

Habermas where social minorities are underrepresented (2006). Hence, it is helpful to explore how mainstream media may impact social diversity and identity construction in the social networks by analyzing the femininity represented, performed, and constructed by network members and comparing it to the traditional femininity construction by mainstream news.

The creation of feminine identities is based on the repeating performance and expressions or the process of individual communication (Foss, Domenico & Foss, 2013), which can influence other people's perceptions of the femininity (Goffman, 1959; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). Femininity on social networks, according to Harris (2004) and Dobson (2012), is the femininity created by members based on their own identities, cultural impacts, and social norms. The public disclosure of *true voice/self* reflects women's empowerment (Harris, 2004; Dobson, 2012; Budgeon, 2013). Although it is believed that hegemonic femininity still exists on social networking sites due to young females' needs to satisfy peers and social norms (McRobbie, 1991; Hey, 1997; Jackson et al., 2010; Carstensen, 2014), users can express relatively more independent and individualized femininity (Dobson, 2012; Carstensen, 2014). This is the performance of individualized opinions and characteristics about femininity (Harris, 2004; Dobson, 2012; Carstensen, 2014). As Dobson (2012) has found from a MySpace study, the textual displays on both female users' personal profile pages and their posts relevant to the gendered self and attitudes can strongly imply or perform the contemporary femininity as well as the cultural contexts at the time. Specifically in this study, the contributors' (especially for female users) emotions, motivations, their opinions about Chinese femininity, and their hegemonic ideologies reflected on Sina Weibo have been studied. This content represents the users' responses to the femininity portrayed by the females in the two

corruption cases involved, further introduced in detail in **Chapter III**. These performances and responses can reflect how females are empowered and what the users' attitudes are to the hegemonic femininity in contemporary China.

Femininity Portrayed on Mainstream Media

Several cross-cultural studies about the femininity portrayed on mainstream news narrations have similar findings: females are often symbolized with weakness, helplessness, and passivity (Gallagher, 2001; Ross, 2002; Luo & Hao, 2007). Moreover, Ross (2002) found that in the majority of news frames in Great Britain, South Africa, and Australia, women were restricted to "family," "domestic," or "private" spaces. In general, there is much less media coverage of females than males in the global setting (Ross, 2002). Therefore, women are not well-represented on mainstream media.

When covering the violence and sexual affairs of women, the mainstream media tend to simplify the femininity of the women, usually in a negative tone of narration (Cuklanz, 2014). For example, the mainstream news blames women and denied their innocence as the victims (Cuklanz, 2014). Another type of coverage is to cover the women in an entertaining manner by focusing on their sexual aspects, putting women under the male gaze and showing the tendency of female objectification (Cuklanz, 2014). As popular culture blurs the boundary of women in sex scandals and in the entertainment industry (especially pornography), mass media tend to cover the women of sexual affairs in entertaining tones (Mendes & Silva, 2009; Cuklanz, 2014). Overall, the mainstream media coverage of women in sexual and violent stories is simply under hegemonic femininity and male-dominant power (Berns, 2001; Oliver, 2011; Cuklanz, 2014).

Specifically in China, femininity constructed by news can reflect hegemonic ideologies, the mainstream attitudes to women, and cultural influence. For serious topics such as the economy and politics, there is little coverage for females; however, the entertainment and crime news often has high exposure rates of women (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). Female characters have a large exposure rate on entertainment and crime news in China and are often portrayed as passive victims (Gallagher, 2001; Ross, 2002). Such findings reflect the general attitudes towards women, as the news coverage tends to fit into the public interest (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). In Luo & Hao's (2007) study about the femininity portrayed on Chinese major women's magazines, the femininity not only included the traditional Confucius ideal as "the good mother and the wise wife," but was also influenced by different ideologies and economic changes across time. In the Maoist era, because of the ideology transferred by the Chinese Communist Party, the femininity had very blurred distinction from masculinity. Women's power was once portrayed strong enough to do the same farm and factory work as men. However, after the "open-door" policy, the Western culture began to influence Chinese femininity. The young, sexy, and skinny body type became the beauty ideal for Chinese women, which has replaced the old one that believed beauty equaled to being natural (Luo & Hao, 2007). These femininity representations show the tendency of female objectifications and the focus on the sexual aspect of women on mass media (2007). Therefore, the Chinese femininity represented on mainstream media also changed along with various ideological, cultural, and social changes across time.

The mainstream media have also constructed women differently across various socioeconomic statuses (Baldwin & Orchard, 2009; Ray, 2009). For example, Baldwin and Orchard (2009) found that the mainstream news often simplified the

image of socially disadvantaged women, such as the prostitutes on drugs in Canadian poor neighborhoods. They found that the media simply described that they were driven by desire for drugs without analyzing their social status, motivation, culture, and other contexts (2009). The authors thereby criticized such coverage for not empowering but only marginalizing the disadvantaged women (2009). Therefore, the difference in the socioeconomic status of women and the mainstream media's coverage could reveal the different levels of female empowerment.

Through analyzing the posts, comments and reposts from the Sina Weibo account of mainstream and citizen journalists, this study examines the interaction of mainstream media and public opinion on Sina Weibo about Chinese femininity, and assesses how they are potentially influencing each other. These influences are: whether there are any objectifications of the women's bodies; how patriarchic ideology and traditional culture might influence the media coverage; whether the news covers women differently across social classes; and whether women are empowered in the news coverage.

CHAPTER III

This chapter introduces the method for this study in detail, including the cases' descriptions, sampling strategy, analysis procedures, roles of the researcher, and potential limitations for this study.

Method

The method of textual analysis is applied to this study, as it can effectively reflect the social norms, ideologies, and power relations that are relevant to Chinese femininity and the empowerment of Chinese females. Textual analysis helps explain how women are empowered by the Weibo text, how hegemonic femininity is being challenged, who is privileged in the text and social media discourse, whose voices are silenced, and what social and cultural contexts are reflected. Textual analysis of the Weibo posts can also indicate the possible factors, such as Chinese culture and historical stereotypes, having been influencing the construction and performances of the femininity of the mistresses. The analysis of the cultural and social contexts in contemporary China provides explanations and indications about the current hegemonic femininity in China as well as the potential changes of the hegemonic femininity. Another advantage of applying this method is that through conceptualizing Chinese femininity using the theoretical lens of multicultural feminism theory, this method helps provide information about the contexts and motivation for users to create the Weibo posts. Furthermore, this information about the users' interactions and self-created contents on Sina Weibo potentially reflects the influence of Sina Weibo as a social networking and social media platform in the femininity construction process.

Cases Description

Two cases mentioned in the introduction chapter are analyzed. They are both described in detail as below.

Case 1: Zhao Hongxia (Initial report: 11/20/2012)

Several sex videos and photos of a Chinese government officer called Lei Zhengfu were released through Sina Weibo on November 20, 2012. Lei was punished by the discipline commission (the supervising department of Chinese Communist Party) three days later. According to news reports and the police department, a clothing company in Chongqing hired Zhao Hongxia, a 23-year-old pretty woman who was trained to lure the local officers and had sexual relationships with them. Meanwhile, she was trained to secretly record the process of having sex and produce the videos, which were held by the company to blackmail these officers later on. The videos' release happened two years later by a local policeman. The man offered all the sex videos and photos of Lei to Zhu Ruifeng and Ji Xuguang, two popular Chinese citizen journalists who reported and investigated several influential corruption cases and governmental misconducts. Ji initially posted on Sina Weibo with a hyperlink to Lei's sex videos, which led to great public attention and intense discussion on Sina Weibo. The case is still ongoing as Zhao is waiting for her adjudgement.

Case 2: Wang Dechun (Initial report: 11/24/2012)

Only a few days after this case, a TV hostess from Shuangcheng (city), Heilongjiang province posted a report on Sina Weibo that Sun Dejiang, a deputy of National People's Congress, had raped her and forced her to maintain a ten-year

sexual relationship. She also reported that Sun corrupted public properties and illegally used his power to trade with some people. Later Wang Dechun borrowed 150,000 Yuan from Sun and escaped. She reported him online and sent reporting letters to different levels of discipline commissions. Wang posted the initial report and several photos as evidence, and then deleted them and cancelled her account the following day for some reason. She reopened her account in the evening, reposting the original post and evidence in the next few days. Only two female professional journalists (Wang Yi and Wang Ruohan) got in touch with Wang and reported her story. Finally, the city-level discipline commission contacted her and the case was settled. Both Sun's job and Party titles were removed and Sun was sentenced for eleven years. The case lasted for two months and two days.

Sampling Strategies

Sina Weibo, as the major social media network in China, has the most active users in China. It became an effective tool for media, government, and business to learn public opinion and interactively communicate with users (Liu, 2012). More Chinese netizens began to regard Sina Weibo as their primary source for public information (news.qq.com, 2013). More importantly, Sina Weibo also became a powerful political tool that encourages more whistle-blowers, investigators, and political participants to speak up, discuss, and push the government to cope with corruptions and misconducts (Mei, 2010). Because of its high public influence and the fact that most of the female whistle-blowers were discussed on Sina Weibo, the posts on Sina Weibo network were the objects of the textual analysis.

For the case of Zhao Hongxia, as she did not own a Sina Weibo account, the posts and comments of the original whistle-blower, Ji Xuguang, plus all the users'

responses to his posts, was analyzed. The twelve-second original video still available online was watched to collect contextual information. Due to censorship, the entire Weibo account of the other whistle-blower, Zhu Ruifeng, was deleted. Hence, Zhu's original posts about the case were unable to be studied. However, his subsequent articles on People's Supervising Net as well as the Weibo users' comments to his original Weibo posts were still accessible online to study.

For the case of Wang Dechun, as she was the major information provider, her 38 posts plus all the users' responses (or comments) to her posts, were analyzed. The relevant posts of the reporter called Wang Yi, who first reported the case and interviewed Wang, plus all the users' responses (or comments) to these posts, were analyzed.

Analysis Procedures

The analysis was conducted on Dedoose, software that can easily reflect both qualitative and quantitative information from the posts. Some quantitative information of the Weibo discussion participants can also reflect the contexts of their posts and some important demographic information, such as age, gender, occupation, number of followers, and social class. Texts (or any other formats of communication) can fully reveal the identities and ideals based on social norms, cultures, and ideologies (Hughes, 2002; Van Dijk, 2011; Foss, Domenico & Foss, 2013). Deconstruction reads the text in a variety of ways, which means a text can simply reflect multiple meanings (Hughes, 2002). These multiple meanings come from the analysis of the languages, discourse, and other literal contents and indicate history, cultural and social context, hierarchical social construction, and power relations of the social actors involved (Hughes, 2002). Therefore, based on Cresswell's (2013)

textual analysis method, this study analyzed the words, phrases, sentences, and emotional icons (emojis) to learn the emotion and attitude to the women (or whistle-blowers), which can at least imply the power relations between males and females and the contemporary femininity ideal that is acceptable to the hegemonic ideologies (Hughes, 2002). With the lens of multicultural feminism for gender research (Zinn & Dill, 1996), it is possible to compare the Chinese femininity to the contemporary Western femininity in national and cultural categories with the cultural differences fully considered. This can further reflect the unique characteristics of Chinese femininity and how Chinese social context influences the change in Chinese femininity.

According to Foss, Domenico, and Foss (2013), the construction of femininity usually includes both subjective group identities and objective contextual factors. These factors, collected from the identity construction in the text, are usually caused by and reflect ideologies, cultural differences, and the differentiations in other social categories, such as socioeconomic status, sexual orientations, and race. Thus, the context of each post was analyzed to learn the motivation and other possible factors that could influence the creation of the post, the cultural, ideological, and other social influences on the performance of Chinese femininity, and the role of Sina Weibo in the construction of Chinese femininity. Meanwhile, the analysis on the agency of each social actor in the cases can reflect the power relation among the actors (Foss, Domenico, & Foss, 2013). Therefore, the online profile information of each user as an important agency was viewed to gain contextual and demographic information, such as gender, occupation, and class. The researcher also studied the roles of different social groups, especially journalists, in the femininity construction. Through analyzing how each agency interacted with each other and got more actors engaged in

the femininity construction, the process of the group empowerment for females and the social engagement on femininity construction can be reflected. In the meantime, the influence of social media as a communication platform in this process was also analyzed.

Role of Researcher

As a social media-orientated media studies major, the researcher is experienced with both international social media, such as Twitter, and Chinese social media, such as Sina Weibo. Therefore, the researcher can tell the different functions and features between the two platforms. It is also helpful for the researcher to recognize the cultural and ideological differences between the users of each platform and thus distinguish the unique features of Chinese female ideals from Western female ideals. Another advantage for the researcher is the language. Both fluent in Chinese and English, the researcher can successfully translate Chinese to English in a fluent manner to make the transcript and the result of the study understandable to Western scholars. However, due to cultural differences some phrases and slang might not be translated well if no English equivalence was found. The researcher explains the meaning of such phrases in English.

However, although the researcher is a Chinese female, perhaps being at the age of mid-20 and not having the similar personal experience as the individuals in the cases, the researcher may not completely understand the perceptions of the women's femininity by the users of all ages. It is easy for the researcher to make assertions without carefully considering the social contexts. The researcher might also be influenced by the hegemonic ideologies about femininity in contemporary society and thus make opinions or judgments on the women and the officers.

Limitations

Although textual analysis of Weibo posts can reflect the subjective emotions and power through analyzing the comments posted by users themselves, information such as the exact situation where the posts were composed and the motivation remains uncertain. Although the majority of the users have a complete portfolio for their accounts, it is impossible to validate the identity for each of them. Moreover, some users create multiple accounts just to express specific opinions and attempt to get more people to see them, which can influence data representation. These factors could all influence the validity of the information.

Another potential restriction of this study is the censorship of Sina Weibo website. A large portion of comments and posts were deleted by the website, including the entire Weibo account of Zhu Ruifeng, one of the major information sources in the first case. The missing content might contain important information about the motivation and context for the composition of the femininity-related posts. However, the fact that a large portion of the content was deleted also indicates the highly sensitive information of the cases that are under strict governmental-control (Sullivan, 2012), while the undeleted content may reflect the femininity images that are acceptable by the mainstream society.

There are more discussions focusing on the corruption officers and their roles in the relationships and then focusing on the femininity aspects of the mistresses. Therefore, I have the concern that there might not be enough data that is directly relevant to Chinese femininity and the empowerment of Chinese women. However, as Carlson (2011) wrote, the relationships between males and females can also reflect femininity and female empowerment. Therefore, even if some comments are only

about the officers (the men), the officers' relationships with the mistresses are somewhat indicated, such that men are often in the priority position as indicated by the comments that treat the issues about the officers as more important than the mistresses. This is applicable to the contemporary femininity as more females have stepped out of private sphere and have challenged more characteristics that used to be masculinity. Hence, through examining the Weibo users' attitudes to the females who spoke up in the public sphere in both cases, the empowerment of the females as well as the changes in the hegemonic femininity in contemporary China can also be indicated.

CHAPTER IV

The "Sex-Video" Case: The Hero, the Sex, and the Actual Hurt

This study applied qualitative textual analysis on the available Weibo posts and news articles by the two citizen journalists and other comments in the first case, also called the "sex-video case." In this case, a sex video of a corrupted officer, Lei Zhengfu, having sex with a young woman called Zhao Hongxia was released by two citizen journalists, Zhu Ruifeng and Ji Xuguang, on People's Supervising Net and Sina Weibo. This study collected and analyzed all the Weibo posts of Ji Xuguang associated with the case. As Zhu Ruifeng's Weibo account was deleted, only his reports on People's Supervising Net were viewed to gain contextual information. The results were categorized into three different themes as below.

From “Help!” to “Hero”: Citizen Journalists as Narration Focus

> *"纪许光：求救！如此干部隐私：11月20日本人发出重庆北培区委书记雷政富（正厅级）与情妇淫乱的图文；并要求其回应。随后，本人接到“号码未显示”的恐吓电话称，本人侵犯了干部隐私，要追究本人法律责任。真晕了！干部隐私？求证都不行？好吧，欢迎劳教、诬陷等所有报复手段。请大家围观！ http://t.cn/zjLlzU2" (The link is no longer active)* (Ji, 2012)

According to the above post created on November 20, 2012, a sex video of Lei Zhengfu, an officer of Chongqing, was reported by the author who was later threatened by someone unknown for invading Lei's privacy. The author's initial report on Sina Weibo was also deleted. Simply calling the woman in the video "mistress," the author mainly focused on Lei and himself in his narration, and asked for help and attention from the public. This first post on Sina Weibo by citizen journalist Ji

Xuguang, an online celebrity with about 500, 000 followers on his account, was followed with a photo of Lei Zhengfu speaking during a political conference, from People's Supervising Net (jdwsy.com, 2012). It, too, was created by a citizen journalist and the leaker of the case, Zhu Ruifeng. In this post, Ji indicated that he reported Lei Zhengfu for licentiously having sex with his mistress and was then threatened via a phone call. He was blamed for invading the officer's privacy. Therefore, he asked for the public attention and support.

The link in the post above was connected to People's Supervising Net, founded by Zhu Ruifeng, where a 12-second sex video of Lei Zhengfu and Zhao Hongxia was available on the same day (it was deleted few days later). In the 12-second video Lei put his penis into Zhao's body, had sex, pulled it out, and cleaned up his penis using a napkin. Both individuals were completely naked with Lei facing the camera with his complete upper body exposed while only Zhao's back head, back, and legs were visible underneath Lei. Lei's facial expression is close to the camera while Zhao is unrecognizable. In his later posts, Ji posted different screenshots of the video, attached to his reporting posts on Weibo.

According to Ji, there were a few more posts reporting Lei that were deleted by Sina Weibo. Therefore, the post mentioned above was the first tractable post releasing the video of Lei having sex with a young woman, according to the Weibo record. In this post, Ji framed both Lei and himself as the focus in his narration, emphasizing that he was “threatened” by someone representing Lei, and asking for public attention and support. In this way, the weakness of the reporter and the strong and evil power of Lei were contrasted, making the public standing on the weak side (Ji). However, the woman who had an important role was only mentioned as Lei’s

“mistress,” completely ignoring the female character. The sexual activity in the exposed video and photos was negatively described as “licentious sex.” Such narration objectified Zhao and her sexual activity, and erased her presence as a complete individual, simplifying Zhao's femininity as she was only treated as a sex object.

In the first two days of the report (from November 20 to November 21, 2012), Ji kept exposing the details of the video, calling the woman “mistress” or “second wife,” and asking the officer to respond whether he had had the local police arrest and keep her for a month. On November 20, Ji called her "mistress" as an evidence for Lei's illicit behaviors:

> Chair of Beipei, Chongqing, Lei Zhengfu, please answer the question: Where were you on Lunar New Year’s Day and the third day after the New Year? At that time, you were the vice chair of Beipei. Have you ever had sex with your 18-year-old *Er Nai* (second wife) called Zhou Xiaoxue (the woman's pseudonym) at a hotel in Chongqing? According to my investigation, Zhou Xiaoxue, real-name Zhao X Xia, is from Zhaojia village, Kai County, Chongqing. Chair Lei please respond, have you ever had the police to arrest this woman and kept her for one month? (2012)

This was the first time that the identification of the woman was revealed; however, she was in fact a 25-year-old married woman instead of an "18-year-old single" girl. It is possible that Ji wanted to attract more public attention by enlarging the age difference between the two and increasing the news deviance. Although her real name, Zhao Hongxia, was not completely exposed, it was already well known from the mainstream news and mentioned in comments. This post clearly indicated that Lei

had sex with Zhao and illegally put her in jail for a month, indicating the vulnerability of Zhao; however, she was still identified as Lei's lover, a term indicating a sexual relationship under Zhao's consent.

Even though Ji claimed himself as a journalist, he intentionally made up stories: "Lei broke up with the mistress Zhao X Xia, who later secretly shot the video." (2012) Zhao did not break up with him at that time, nor that was the reason for her to shoot the video. This post suggested that shooting the sex video was just Zhao's revenge after breaking up. Thus, Zhao was portrayed as evil, proactive, and having her own choices to take advantage of Lei.

Ji listed more unfavorable stories of Zhao: "Lei Zhengfu's mistress, the former owner of a small beauty salon at Dianjiang County, also followed Lei Zhengfu by taking a decoration construction business. Chair Lei, is this report real? Are you in lover relationship with Zhao X Xia?" (6:13 p.m., November 21, 2012) In fact, at that time Zhao was a clerk in an architecture company of another man called Xiao Ye. By saying this Ji further indicated that Zhao made her own choice to take advantage of Lei, and thus portrayed her as an evil woman with more power than what she actually had (changing her identity from a small clerk to a business owner).

From November 21, 2012, Ji began to expose the corruption facts of Lei, including how he abused his authority to benefit his family by letting his brother occupy all the construction businesses in Dianjiang County. On the same day, he said that he was invited by Chongqing discipline commission to fly to Chongqing for investigations and broadcasted his entire trip. Before going on board, he posted a selfie with his boarding pass. At this time, he became engaged with portraying himself as lone hero to go to a city full of danger. In the meantime, he proactively

interacted with the audience by answering some of their questions. One asked: “Are you afraid of revenges from them (Lei's people)?" (Hey_It's Qian er, November 23, 2012) Ji (2012) answered: “I have been struggling through all kinds of extreme cases for eleven years. If I was afraid, I would not help Zhu when he initially found me.” By describing that he had been through all kinds of danger for eleven years, Ji wanted to show his braveness to the audience. He answered most of the questions that complimented him, and these posts helped him highlight himself as a hero. Two and a half hours later, after refusing to provide his personal ID, he posted a selfie in front of an airplane and wrote that he was returning to Beijing. The entire narrations of these posts focused on Ji himself, and as suggested by some netizens, was pure performance to construct him a hero.

In the meantime, on November 22, 2012, Ji also put Zhu Ruifeng into his story by emphasizing his safety, also creating a hero image for Zhu:

> In early November, you phoned and pleaded to @Zhu Ruifeng, saying that you will let your cousin to 'negotiate' with him. And then you called yourself to lure him by 'making friends with him,' inviting him to visit Chongqing. Then you said you will 'visit' Zhu in Beijing. Zhu is my first source, and he has been out of touch with outside for several hours. If he is in trouble, I will never end up with this! (2012)

Ji successfully increased the intensity of the story by making both journalists into the narration to attract more public attention. However, the entire series of such posts completely ignored Zhao, thereby erasing the entire presence of females. The male-priority ideology and male-dominant power were also implied from such erasure.

Indeed, among Ji's 135 posts about the case from November 20, 2012 to December 3, 2012, only two posts focused on Zhao Hongxia. On November 23, Ji wrote: "Someone compared the Chongqing sex video case to 'the girl next door committing adultery.' And (someone) said that 'violating the party's rule is not against the law' to clean the guilt of him (Lei). When a component of our society has such mean and low mind, all I can do is to cry into the air! Please excuse my wrath."(2012) He disagreed that adultery should be excused, further negatively portrayed the two. Only mentioning Zhao's presence here as "the girl next door" seemed to reduce the sin of the officer but leave Zhao under the limelight negatively, further indicating the weak power and evil image of the woman. Ji also posted:

> The woman in the video, do you know why didn't I disturb you? Indeed, *she does not deserve sympathy*. I just accepted an interview and *corrected my colleague for calling her a 'victim.'* I said that this woman *willingly acted as the gun for others*. Forget about morality and law, to some extent, Lei Zhengfu was the victim. However, the original source of the video few years ago is really interesting. I will cover it shortly! (2012)

Without releasing the detailed information about the original source of the video and how it was shot on Weibo, Ji stated that instead of Zhao, Lei was the real "victim" because his sex video was secretly shot by Zhao and blackmailed by a third person (Xiao Ye) as later disclosed. Even if he chose not to "disturb" Zhao and recognized that she was controlled by another man to shoot the video, he still implied her as having had a choice to do so and not deserving sympathy. Such superficial female agency was completely based on male-dominated ideologies, disregarding the woman being weak and under control of another man.

To summarize, on the one hand, Ji, as one authority to disclose the case, intentionally used negative frames to describe the case just to attract more public attention and put blame on the officer; however, he also negatively framed the woman as Lei's "mistress," indicating that she chose to have sex with him and shot the video for personal benefits. Even if he later disclosed that Zhao was controlled by another man, he still described her negatively as if "she was willing" to shoot the video, portraying an "evil woman" image of her. Although this superficially showed that she had a choice, he chose to ignore her weakness under the control of men's power. His narration about the video, making up her identity and story, and calling her "er nai," lover, or mistress all reflected the intention of simplification and objectification of her in the scandal to entertain the public. On the other hand, Ji put most of his efforts into making himself as part of the story to make him an anti-corruption hero. The narration of his fights with Lei merely highlighted his courage and Lei's evil characteristics, showing Zhao's complete vulnerability in public discourse. Zhao's presence as an independent woman was completely erased. Therefore, the entire posts of Ji Xuguang show a male-dominated femininity of Zhao Hongxia.

Male-Dominant Perspective Influenced by Journalists

Ji and Zhu's reports with Lei's naked images directly caused public disgust on Lei's appearance, even if his dressed-up photos were also available. On November 22, Miss ZZ-mao shi described him as: “Rat’s eyebrow, strabismus eyes, nose like a garlic, and chitterling lip." (2012) Many called him "pig," "frog," or "catfish, "because he was fat. Therefore, the public directly linked Lei to corruption, because corrupted officers are usually portrayed as fat people in Chinese classic literature and the media. For instance: "People's fortune and benefits are on your face. Lei bro, go home and

sell sweet potato." (Meaning that if an officer does not work for people, he should not stay in the position) (Chandler_0606, November 21, 2012) "Old people like me do not like to judge people by face, but you, sir, really do not look like a good man." (Fallen Leaf michael, November 21, 2012) “This officer is a typical corrupted officer as portrayed on television shows." (Je Je Weibo, November 21, 2012) These opinions blamed Lei for robbing fortunes from people due to Lei's fat body, as fat officers have been a typical cultural and political icon for corrupted officers in scandals. The online discussions all represented the male-dominant perspective that completely erased the presence of Zhao, apparently directly influenced by Ji's description in his posts.

The screenshots of the sex video attracted more attention but more disgust. On November 23, Y Mu yi mu yu said: “I felt disgusted!!! Such people are so disgusting!!! Even if he dies, he will pollute the air and waste the land!!! This is REALLY disgusting!!!" (2012)

On November 22, Tigerkun_10 said: “The photographing skill is not as good as Guan Xi." (Referred to Chen Guanxi, a pop star with similar sex video scandals) (2012)

On November 21, Dad is the model of the son said: “Chen Guanxi looks clean and good-looking, this guy (Lei) is too dirty." (2012)

The negative and abusive words as "disgusting" and "dirty" were applied to describe Lei's appearance .They expressed different levels of negative attitude towards Lei, such as disgust, anger, criticism, and even hate. These photos had also reminded them of Chen Guanxi, a pop star whose sex photos and videos with several female stars were released online. Therefore, they made up a nick name for Lei: "Lei

Guanxi." This name is very entertaining, resonating with sex-political scandals that satisfy the sexual pleasure of the public.

The male-perspective narration by Ji Xuguang could at least partially influence the topic and subject of the public discourse online. The majority of the audience supported and complimented him, calling him and Zhu the anti-corruption heroes: "You are the man! We need people like you in our country!" (Linduoduo's little belief, November 22, 2012) "Take care, fighter." (Captain Jimmy, November 22, 2012) "Ji Xuguang is the real man, the real hero." (Lxhjess, November 22, 2012) Such comments often appeared under Ji's posts directly discussing Ji's fight against Lei. Again, Zhao was completely absent in these posts, showing the male-dominant ideology.

The general attitude towards Zhao Hongxia was negative, according to the existing comments to Ji's posts. The public assumed they were in a trading relationship instead of lovers. Some simply called her "mistress," "er nai (second wife)," or "prostitute," and blamed her for being willing to trade her body with such an old and ugly-looking officer. On November 30, Vivi yami (female user) said: "*This woman (Zhao) is even more disgusting than the man (Lei)!* She even wants such an ugly-looking man just for money." (2012) In this post, the author assumed that Zhao had sex with Lei just for his money, as she believed that Zhao could not fall in love with an ugly old man. He Tinging (female user) on November 23: “How did the woman think? Just for money? It is so disgusting to see such an ugly pig! And she even had sex with him! It is really shameful for our women!" (2012) Similar to Vivi yami, He Tinging also expressed blame and disgust to Zhao. Even more, she thought it was "shameful" for all women, strongly indicating a shameful feeling towards

women in general (including the author). On November 22, Zhengyu brother commented: “If she can accept such an ugly-looking man, she is also a bitch." (2012) This comment further suggested that Zhao should be a prostitute based on the assumption that she only traded her body for money. The hate and abusive words in the upper posts, such as "disgusting," "shameful," and "bitch," all expressed the feelings of shame, anger, and disgust, which reflected Zhao's transgression from hegemonic femininity of "good woman" that women should not take advantage of men and betray them. Moreover, the term "just for money" was commonly applied. These users just assumed that Zhao simply traded her body for Lei's money without considering the real context and her personal motivations. Some simply marginalized Zhao as a prostitute. Such simplification of Zhao's behaviors and marginalization of her as a prostitute further indicated Zhao's lack of voice and vulnerability in such public discourse, as well as her powerlessness. It also reflected the mainstream's male-dominant ideology that paid little attention to the woman's story.

A lot of female users criticized Zhao, perhaps because they thought that it was her own choice to have sex with Lei, which looked bad, evil, and even disgusting. Taking advantage of men had transgressed the morality code of being a "good woman," and the responses of the female users reflected their acceptance and maintenance of hegemonic femininity. Even if this was not discussed in Ji's posts, people tended to blame the woman or discuss her negatively, regardless of her vulnerability, feelings, and real context. This implies the hegemonic femininity in traditional Chinese culture that blames women for taking advantage of men from the male-dominated ideology, also held by Chinese women. Meanwhile, Zhao's behavior was very controversial because women were all expected to keep their virginity pre-marriage, be a good wife and mother, and be sexually loyal to their husbands. Any

Chinese women violated this rule were considered as "bitch," "bad women," and "prostitute," being looked down upon and cannot marry a good man. As women tended to restrict themselves within the moral rules (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997), they were more likely to blame the women who violated the rules. Here they blamed Zhao and thought that she was a shame to women.

To conclude, the major influence of the eye-attracting and controversial sex images and video as well as the narration of both journalists is that the Weibo users' discussion tended to focus on either the journalists (whether they are heroes or not) or the officer (whether he should be blamed), which completely erased Zhao's presence. The journalists' negative tone and the tendency of sex objectification on Zhao have also formed the public disgust and shame feeling to both Lei and Zhao's behaviors, looks, and personalities. Overall, these comments were guided by male-dominated ideologies that women should be loyal to their husbands, and the traditional "good woman" femininity that restricts women's sexual behaviors.

Female Objectification: "Bad Sex"

Some comments had showed the evidence or intention of the sexual objectification of Zhao. Specifically, male audience members tended to treat this news as entertainment. It is a feature of modern sexual political scandals on media that entertains the guilty pleasure of the public. Different from the classic Western scandals where the criticism is usually in a serious manner (Apostolidis & Williams, 2004), Chinese audiences directly expressed their interests to the sexual aspect of the case. In a mocking or molesting tone, they directly abused the characters with dirty words. For instance, Qu zhuo guang ju mocked the role of a mistress in anti-corruption movement: "The anti-corruption movement by women's underwear is

usually caused by the corrupted officers having too much sex. Since this is effective, we should put it into the Party's chapters." (6:27 p.m., November 23, 2012) It seemed that women who were mistresses were powerful enough to beat the officers; however, in a mocking tone, their only function was as “underwear” to allure the corrupted officers to fail. Therefore, the mistresses mentioned here were not independent, subjective human beings but the sex objects that led the corrupted officers to failure.

Similar tones can be found in the comments that teased the sexual activity in the screenshots: “It would be a hardcore game to have a naked sex with such a creature from outer space." (Xi wind, 2012) The author mocked that Zhao having sex with ugly-looking Lei was a hardcore game. Heishan feiyao123 said: “We should give them two awards: the Oscar’s best actress and the literature Nobel’s prize for Chair Lei for his gloomy and artistic face." (2012) The author commented on a screenshot where Zhao's both hands were touching Lei's face and Lei's expression was intoxicated in the sexual pleasure. He mocked both Zhao's behavior and Lei's facial expression. Sha la po hou said: “This man is too hot, people call him ‘robbing gun brother’ ‘Lei Guan Xi’," (2012) mocking the officer in a teasing manner and making him several nicknames. In the comments above, either "hardcore game," "robbing gun brother," "Oscar's best actress," "literature Nobel's prize," or "Lei Guanxi," showed the teasing tone of the users as if the sex video was only a joke or entertaining pornography, and the two individuals were actor and actress. All the Weibo users needed to do was to watch and mock them. Therefore, without caring about the characters in the case, these comments sexually objectified Zhao as a porn actress and Lei as a porn actor.

Since the released video only lasted for twelve seconds, Lei was also called “twelve-second man” for the short duration and his low sexual ability. For example, in a teasing and ironic tone, TNTDoctor said: “On New Year’s Eve, his wife warmed a bottle of wine for him. When he just picked up the glass, his cell phone rang…… He put his heart and soul to really 'work with people', and people kept yelling 'good' and complimenting him as a good officer….. When he returned home tiredly, the wine was still warm……" (2012) This user referred "work with people" to Lei's sex with Zhao and mocked the short duration of Lei's sex by describing that when he returned home, "the wine was still warm." By describing that "people kept yelling 'good' and complimenting him as a good officer", the author created a pornography scenario assuming that Zhao completely enjoyed the sex, regardless of the real context.

Although such mocks only targeted the officer and his sexual ability, it still showed the neglect and objectification of Zhao by male-dominant ideology. It was normalized that males should be powerful and control women in sexual relationships, while females should be in passive positions. These comments further showed the weakness and vulnerability of Zhao by simplifying her as a sex object in the video to tease the sexual capability of males. In traditional Chinese culture, senior men tend to find younger sex partners to experience youth and passion (Ke, 2013). Therefore, young women are often objectified as senior males' sexual necessity, regardless of their own characteristics.

As an extension of the first type, some comments related the video to Japanese pornography. Also called "AV," it is popular among Chinese males, featuring old and ugly-looking males having sex with young, sweet, and pretty girls. This is sexual

objectification of women to meet the need of male sexual desire. In such pornography, women are simplified as pure sex organs which would not care about men's appearance, wealth, and power, and can have sex with any males ("Japanese Women Harm Chinese Men, Korean Men Harm Chinese Women," 2014). Lei's video is similar to AVs that can meet the sexual need of males with low socio-economic status and comfort their self-esteems. For instance, Wusheng baby said: “These photos are all indecent and can be labeled as 'fornication series.' Featured with 'face exposed and inner-ejaculation'..... The whole process in the product only cost four Yuan in AV market!!!” (2012) "Face exposed and inner-ejaculation" referred to an AV genre where the actor's face is exposed in video and ejaculates the semen inside the actress's body. The author here teased both Lei and Zhao as AV actor and actress, but said that their production was bad and cheap, only deserving four Yuan. Many male users even asked Ji for the original video with the whole process of the sex for entertaining purpose. For example: “I really want to see how he did for twelve seconds. Please send me the link (of the video)." (A shot after drunk, November 23, 2012) Although the author was only curious about Lei's performance, the entertaining purpose revealed from the teasing tone still showed the sex objectification of both individuals. These comments were similar to the first type of objectification mentioned above, but more specifically referring to both individuals as AV actor and actress, which is the pure sex objectification for entertainment purpose. The women in pornographic sex videos are usually sex object for the sexual desire of men (Davidson, 1998). Because of the sexual objectification, their presence tends to be erased by their community, as people often assume that such women have accepted being the objects (Davidson, 1998). Especially in this case, Zhao in the video actually tenderly touched Lei's face and surrounded him tightly with her legs, indicating that she was willing to have sex

with Lei and thereby "accepted" being the sex object. Hence, Zhao's images released by Ji and Zhu further marginalized her in public as a sex object.

Female Objectification: "It Is Good to Be An Officer!"

Another type of objectification directly treated young and beautiful mistresses as the personal property or status symbol of authorities, a subculture among Chinese officers and businessmen (Hong, 2014). Therefore, some male users expressed agreement with Lei having sex with Zhao, normalizing their own sexual behaviors. Some even showed admiration on Lei's power. For example, the most hardworking Lao Zhang said: “Power is aphrodisiac, great, making the officers younger!" (2012) Some even stated that it was the authority's rights to own young mistresses and agreed on the trade between power and sex. Bing bro OnTheWay said: “As an excellent officer of our Party, it is not a problem to get several 18-year-old little girls laid!" (2012) Hot concept lulang said: “It’s so good to become a Party member, 18-year-old sisters all like him." (2012) Some users mistakenly thought that Zhao was Lei's wife, still treating her beauty as the symbol of Lei's power. Sanbanfu’s curse said: “This scary man, is it because he is a member of the Party, his wife (Zhao) is so beautiful?" (2012) No matter she was a "wife" or "mistress," Zhao's own characteristics were neglected. Zhao was completely treated as a symbol, not an individual. Such objectification, including the discussion of Zhao's appearances, treated her as a private property of Lei, completely under male-dominant ideology.

Similar to the objectification above, some users agreed to treat mistresses as social status symbols, but they further suggested how to avoid the regulations for keeping mistresses: being a businessman instead of officer. White as hot Tongtong’s dad said: “That is why being the boss of private enterprises is good. If officers or the

boss of state-owned enterprises has such case, he will be in great trouble. Nothing will happen if it was the boss of private enterprises." (2012) Women could also be treated as private property, such as watch and car, which represented fortune. Han Xinjun said: “That is why I don’t want to be an officer. It is good to become a businessman, you have money and you can wear nice watch, drive nice car, and have sex with women… I can abandon power for freedom." (2012) These comments normalized the phenomenon that rich and powerful men can own a mistress or have sex with prostitutes, again showing sexual objectification of females as males' personal property and social status symbols.

In a more neutral tone to Zhao, though, other users regarded their relationship as a sex-money trade, normalizing that rich and powerful males can trade for young and beautiful girls' bodies. In such posts, Zhao was not blamed too much; however, her sexual relationship with Lei was still perceived as sex-money trade, which was accepted and normalized by these users. For example, the post below assumed that the sex was a trade and stated that it was a loss for Zhao to have sex with a disgusting man (Lei). Xue xi _ sheng huo said: “He looks too disgusting. Even just for money, it is still a loss for the mistress." (2012)

This trading relationship was even directly called "prostitution" by many users. Gua li xiao xiao said: “This chicken (referring to prostitute) is so unprofessional, she even did not clean the “gun” (penis) for the officer???" (2012) Shenzhen favor datang said: “*It is just prostitution*, is there any newsworthiness. Three hundred yuan for the fast version, and 500 for the whole process (referring to sex services), international ISO standard (referring to the prices for prostitution)." (2012)

Weibo’s name shouldn’t be too long said: “What a mistress. The leader had to do it himself (to clean up)." (2012) Literally, the author meant to criticize Zhao for failing to clean the penis for Lei as a "prostitute". However, the term "leader" sounded ironic towards Lei. Although the post was perhaps ironic toward the officer, it still came from patriarchic ideology that normalized males in a more powerful position where women should serve men or be their slaves, especially a mistress, second wife, lover, or prostitute.

Such comments completely regarded Lei and Zhao’s relationship as trade or prostitution, where Zhao’s body was objectified to trade for money. As a property and symbol of a male's wealth and power, Zhao was also objectified for the rich to consume and enjoy. Women were completely disrespected in such comments. Some users even normalized prostitution to speak for the officer. Another type of comments focused on male users' attention and sexual interests in Zhao's body, shown from the video and Ji's screenshots on Weibo. For instance, Ling han san qian sui said: “Girl your skin is so good, your body is so good, and your mental qualities are extremely good." (2012) Square8 said: “That girl is so fresh!" (2012) Bo min yi yu said: “It seems that that woman is so white and tender!" (2012) Without any respect to women, these comments show a direct "male gaze" and rough sexual desire for Zhao's body, further objectifying her as a sex organ for male pleasures.

Those with low socioeconomic status as indicated from their profile, expressed pity, anger and hate to the officer. Some even wanted to kill him. Believing that Zhao was only 18 years old, many males said that Zhao as a "flower inserted in dung (Lei)," meaning that it was a pity for a young, beautiful women to stay with ugly-looking or bad men. There were a few more similar posts such as those below.

Da_tang said: “Fresh Chinese cabbage eaten by a pig." (2012) "Fresh Chinese cabbage" often referred to young and beautiful women, and here it referred to Zhao. "Pig" referred to ugly-looking or fat people, which represented Lei in the post.

Bad ass without self-control said: “As long as you have money and power, do not worry about having girlfriends no matter how ugly you look." (2012)

Xu ya Xu Xiao Yan said: “He is so ugly! His child should have been 18 years old. Sigh." (2012) These users expressed both their admiration to Lei and jealousy for having a young mistress with ugly look.

Su qin nan said: “There is no need to investigate anymore. This guy deserves a 10-year sentence just for his appearance!! This is the ugliest sex-photo gate in history for the male main character." (2012) In order to express the enormous hate, this author said that Lei deserved a 10-year sentence because of his ugly appearance and having sex with Zhao.

Railway to spring said: “How can you have sex with a 20-year old fresh young woman and only for twelve seconds? You are so useless! I am young, tall, and good-looking, and I can continue doing it for an hour but no beauty comes to me! Is this a harmonized society?" (2012) These posts seem to indicate that because they were in low socioeconomic status, young, and having no girlfriends, these men were jealous watching an old and ugly man owning a young and beautiful girl as mistress, and they believed that it was Lei's social power and wealth that drove the girl towards him. Therefore, they became angry at the officer for owning things (mistress) they did not have. This is, still, sex objectification of women being a property of wealthy men. They were angry because they could not own such "property."

In conclusion, most male users in the exemplars tended to sexually objectify Lei as a badly performed porn actor with Zhao as porn actress and pure sex organ for males' sexual pleasure. Attitudes expressed to Lei, Zhao, and their sexual activities included irony, tease, and anger. Many objectified Zhao for entertainment purposes. They tended to discuss and tease the sex aspect in the scandal, and openly expressed their pleasure. Some even directly related the video to pornography. Not being the focus of such discourse, Zhao was simply treated as a sex organ or AV actress for trading, pleasure, status symbol, prostitution, and slave of the man. By only mocking the sexual ability of Lei and expressing hate toward him, such users erased Zhao's presence and showed her disrespect.

Marginalized Opinions

While the mainstream opinion was against Lei Zhengfu, the corruption officer, and blamed Zhao for being his "mistress", diverse opinions still existed either speaking for Lei or speaking for Zhao, showing completely different types of femininity in relation to Zhao. Generally, these users either entirely blamed Zhao as an evil for later betraying her "lover" or defended Zhao by expressing the awareness of her vulnerability and powerless personal condition in the case.

Someone speaking for Lei said that Zhao shot the video herself in order to blackmail him for more benefits. For instance, on November 23, 2012, Big horse 7978 stated: “Women are the roots of troubles ah. Chair Lei, you worked in a camera and you were framed." Similar to the earlier theme that blamed Zhao for taking advantage of Lei, the author further blamed women in general, believing that all of them were just the roots of troubles for men. This comment reflected the male priority in an extreme way that only women should be blamed when both men and women

make mistakes. Such comment further enhanced the normalization of the hegemonic femininity that women should be "good" and should never cause trouble for men.

One potential reason for overly blaming Zhao was the simplification of Zhao's femininity by both journalists. At the early stage (the first two days of Ji's reports) when Ji had not exposed Lei's corruption, someone stated that there was nothing wrong to have sex with a woman and Ji had invaded Lei's privacy. For example, on November 21, 2012, Ai Xia Mi said: “Has the Party chapter forbidden the officers to have sex? *What is wrong to have sex?* Which chapter does he violate?" He thought that Lei's only problem was having sex with Zhao, which was not an actual crime or fault according to his belief. Similar posts were as below:

Hu fortune_kk wrote: “I *don’t think this is a serious issue* if it was just a matter of men and women sleeping together. Is there any news about corruption?" (2012)

MageV5: “I speak for Lei Guanxi: 1. if he had several mistresses but worked hard, he was still a good officer. We admit that you are energetic! 2. You should admit if you have slept with the girl. If you did not use the public funding, you are still a good man. We admit that you are charming and in love with her!" (2012)

Kun Teng : "Bro, did you offend someone important? *You just slept with a girl*. Eggache (meaning extreme pain) ~!" (2012)

Wenzhou A si zheng ban: “This is a good officer from the photo, how do you report him in real name (to Ji)? *He just played a girl*." (2012)

MariadelMar: “Comrades, please be tolerant (to Lei). *Can we only allow ordinary citizens keeping mistresses and lovers?* Comrade Lei is also a man. *It is*

understandable to keep a mistress. But things will be different if this relationship was being forced." (2012)

Some phrases used in these comments, such as "I don't think this is a serious issue," "you just slept with a girl," and "he just played a girl," showed that Lei having sex with Zhao is "not a big deal". They all normalized Lei having sex with Zhao and keeping her as mistress, regardless of the real context and Zhao's condition, disrespecting Zhao's femininity, erasing her presence as an independent woman. Some also directly commented that men keeping mistress was a normal phenomenon by stating that "if he had several mistresses but worked hard, he is still a good officer" and "can we only allow ordinary citizens keeping mistresses and lovers." By directly stating that having mistress is allowed, these comments reflect the traditional Chinese concubine culture that acknowledged men's privilege to have multiple female lovers, males' dominant power in China, and the hegemonic femininity that kept women relying on men. Moreover, normalizing the process of having a mistress and even a prostitute for males resonated with sexual objectification, male-dominant ideology, and the weak power of women. Again, they completely erased Zhao's other aspects of femininity.

Quite the opposite, some users rejected the hegemonic discourse that simplified and marginalized Zhao's presence, trying to independently understand Zhao's conditions and her personal motivations to have sex with Lei and shoot the video. Yimu-Elaine wrote: “How was she called er nai (second wife) if she was arrested and kept in jail? She was forced to be er nai!!!”(2012) This indicated the care and focus on the woman, especially her vulnerability in the case and public discourse.

Moreover, it independently challenged the hegemonic thought that Zhao was Lei's mistress and considered the specific context of Zhao in this case.

On November 22, 2012, Xiaolan Teacher_Weihan said: “Do you think the woman is willing to (have sex with Lei)? If it was her own will, who set the camera? This was a trap for an inner-fight within the government!" The author did not positively describe Zhao but began to think about the story behind the scene by stating that the sex video might be a trap guided by Lei's political enemy. This post indicated an independent consideration of the case without simply blaming Zhao.

Very few people expressed complete care for Zhao. On November 22, 2012, Shanqi Zheng said: “This woman called Zhao is really miserable!" Although there was a lack of detailed description about why Zhao was miserable, it was independent of the homogeneous construction of her femininity as a "bad woman." Instead of blame, it showed sympathy to Zhao, indicating an understanding of her vulnerability in the case. Such a tone was scarce in the entire Weibo discussion.

Free silence posted on November 30, 2012: "There is a little figure ignored by almost everyone -- Zhao Hongxia. The two great journalists have exposed all of her personal information, such as family address and real name. How can she live on? Two great 'ji zhe' (the word ji "记" stands for journalist but is replaced by "妓," pronouncing the same but meaning prostitute)."Compared to the mainstream discourse, this post indicated much more concern about Zhao's life and even criticized Ji and Zhu for damaging her personal life. This comment potentially challenged the journalists' authority in Zhao's femininity construction as well as the hegemonic femininity framework repeated by the homogeneous Weibo users.

Unfortunately, the diverse discussion only focused on analyzing Zhao's vulnerable personal condition; there was no discussion in reference to Zhao's personality, attitude to the case, and her specific motivations, which would help better understand the diverse users' perceptions of Zhao's femininity. Perhaps this was because Zhao's voice was completely absent in the media and her personality was thereby unknown by public. Ji and Zhu's erasure and simplification of Zhao's femininity partially caused the public's scarce consideration of her. However, even under such conditions, there were still a few users who tried to retrieve her actual conditions and specific motivations in the case, which showed their independent rejection of the journalists' narration and the mainstream discourse, potentially trying to challenge or reconstruct the hegemonic femininity that cast Zhao simply as an evil mistress or as Lei's prostitute.

The majority of the comments showed partial evidence of being influenced by the narration of both journalists; however, there were still few comments speaking for Lei or caring about Zhao. On the one hand, even if the mainstream did not directly support or normalize women's subordinate relationship with men, the extreme comments that directly disrespected women still existed in an effort to maintain the male-dominant power, such as overly blaming women as the roots of men's trouble, or openly allowing men to keep mistresses. On the other hand, the awareness of Zhao's vulnerability in the case and the attempt to understand her personal condition and motivation emerged. Some even challenged Ji and Zhu, the two anti-corruption heroes created by the mainstream, by blaming them erasing Zhao's presence and disrespecting her personality and private life.

Nevertheless, the comments that saw the vulnerability and weakness of Zhao or expressed care about her personal conditions were rare. After all, the Chinese homogeneous discourse on Sina Weibo was at least intolerant of Zhao Hongxia, a woman being marginalized as an evil woman or prostitute. This reflected not only the powerful influence of the journalists on Sina Weibo, but also the powerful influence of traditional Chinese ideology and culture dominated by males, the normalization of hegemonic femininity and male-dominant power, and the tendency toward sexual objectification.

Conclusion

As citizen journalists and the major agency in the case narration, Ji Xuguang and Zhu Ruifeng have highlighted the evilness of the corruption officer, Lei Zhengfu, as well as their courage to fight against Lei. Especially in Ji's posts, the story of the journalists' fights against Lei was broadcasted in real time. As a result, both journalists gained an enormous amount of public attention, followers, and support, and were complimented as anti-corruption heroes. However, the only presence of Zhao Hongxia, the woman who had sex with Lei, was in the sex video, screenshots, as well as Ji's posts where she was called Lei's mistress. Ji said that Lei was the victim of Zhao's trap, implying that Zhao was a bad woman. To attract more public attention and increase the blame on the corrupted officer, Ji even made up fake stories about Zhao, saying that she was only 18 years old instead of 25 (her real age). As only Zhao's body and the unfavorable facts about her were disclosed on Weibo, the users in the discussion either treated her as an evil mistress or bad woman, or sexually objectified her as an entertaining prostitute. Furthermore, many male users tended to link the released video and screenshots with "AV" (stands for adult video), the

Japanese pornography, which sexually objectified Lei and Zhao as porn actor and actress. In the meantime, none of the citizen journalists have given agency and voice to Zhao, one of the major characters in the video. Therefore, Zhao was completely vulnerable in the discussion and was further marginalized as a prostitute in the sex objectification previously discussed. Overall, the journalists' discussion of Zhao's femininity was completely within the hegemonic femininity of male priority and the rule of being a "good woman." Moreover, the journalists' attitude to Zhao was influential among the majority of Weibo users. As a result, Zhao was still powerless in the major Weibo discussions, and in only a few posts was she respected and potentially empowered.

A large number of male users showed strong male-prioritized ideology when discussing Zhao's femininity. As already mentioned above, such users tended to sexually objectify Zhao as a prostitute or AV actress, discussing her body and sexual performance in an ironic or entertaining tone. They expressed various kinds of feeling towards Lei, such as admiration, anger, and hate, because Lei as an old and ugly-looking man could own a young and beautiful mistress. Some wished that they could have such authority and money; others believed that being a businessman would be safer and freer to have mistresses than government officers. Thus, Zhao was perceived as a sex object for males to have fun with, as well as a status symbol of social authorities, showing both sex objectification and male-dominated ideology. The major group of users believed that Zhao had sex with Lei just for his money; some even stated that she was a prostitute. Such simple statement of Zhao's femininity was regardless of her real context and personal motivation, showing the public's marginalization of Zhao, all from the perspective of the male-dominant ideology in China. Especially a large number of female users tended to blame Zhao's behaviors

and feel shame, representing their own acceptance of the "good woman" rule that women should not have relationships with men just for money. Therefore, the comments from the majority on Sina Weibo reflected the impact of patriarchic ideology and traditional Chinese culture about "good woman," constructing Zhao's femininity within the hegemonic femininity framework.

It is still questionable whether Zhao had her agency in this case. As Ji and some Weibo users argued, Zhao made her own choice to act as the "gun" for Xiao Ye and cheated Lei, who was unaware of the video when he had sex with Zhao. Therefore, it was interpreted that she actually had agency. For this study, the researcher interpreted that Zhao did not have agency because she did not have a voice in the communication process on Sina Weibo. As argued by Foss, Domenico, and Foss (2013), agency is usually built on the actor's internal awareness of having a choice to proactively change identity construction. Externally, the agency also needs the agreement and engagement from others. However, there are no indications of Zhao being aware of any choices to change her femininity or of making an effort to speak up on Sina Weibo. According to the Weibo posts, nor she did not gain any supporters or social engagement to change her femininity. Therefore, even if Zhao made a choice to cheat Lei while shooting the video, she had no agency on Sina Weibo in terms of her femininity reconstruction.

Extreme opinions existed on Weibo, such that some users named women in general as the roots of trouble for men. However, there were still diverse but marginal voices speaking for Zhao or trying to understand her personal motivation. One user denied that Zhao was intentionally taking advantage of Lei and doubted that there should be more stories (even a trap to Lei) behind the scene. A few others even

criticized Ji and Zhu for disrespecting and invading Zhao's personal life and privacy. Such diverse opinions reflected an independent thought that challenged the homogeneous opinions on social media that marginalized, objectified, and disrespected Zhao and her femininity. However, due to the repetitive performance by the homogeneous group to marginalize Zhao's femininity, the diverse group did not empower Zhao's femininity much. Perhaps this was due to the absence of Zhao's individual voice to portray and perform her own femininity, suggesting no disagreement with the hegemonic femininity.

CHAPTER V

The Non-Anonymous Report: Victim? Hero? Or Prostitute?

Thirteen days after Case 1, the second case (Case 2) took place. Wang Dechun, a former news anchor, reported on Sina Weibo that an officer named Sun Dejiang had sexually assaulted Wang and forced her to maintain a ten-year sexual relationship with him. Two female professional journalists, Wang Yi and Wang Ruohan, published separate news articles about her story. Wang Yi also followed up on Weibo. The three most frequent theme categories, "support this poor woman," "'good citizen,' 'fighter,' 'hero,' nothing about the woman," and "it is not sexual assault; it is a trade," are discussed in this section as the major findings for this study.

"Support This Poor Woman"

In her initial report, Wang Dechun constructed herself in a passive, vulnerable, and innocent way to describe her relationship with the officer, Sun Dejiang. She said that she was initially noticed and wanted by him when she was conducting an interview in his factory, and he tried to approach her by various means. Wang Dechun said: "I did not think too much, since he could help us, why don't just accept it?" Such description has portrayed an innocent and naive woman who only passively accepted help from men without noticing any potential danger, creating a weak and good woman image. She described an extreme crime conducted by the officer, saying that he sexually assaulted her at her home when she was seven months pregnant (it is her husband's baby). "The most *non-human* thing of him is, when I was *pregnant for seven months,*… he forced me to open my door and sexually assaulted me, *he is even worse than a beast*." (2012) Wang Dechun was also quoted in a news article by Wang

Ruohan from *Xinmin Weekly*, using the similar passive and naive femininity construction:

> One day, my husband was not in Shuangcheng, and I didn't know where Sun Dejiang got this message from. He went to my home. I was *extremely scared* at that time when he kept running the bell at the unit gate downstairs..... I was afraid of letting the neighbors know..... so I opened the door..... I pleaded badly to him with my uplift belly, but *he didn't even care*……Later, my physical and mental conditions were very bad because of this, which led to some difficulties to give birth to the baby. (2012)

Wang Dechun highlighted her fear and innocence by stating "I was extremely scared at that time." She also highlighted Sun's cruelty by mentioning "he didn't even care." Meanwhile, she further reflected upon her intention to keep her reputation as a "good woman" by stating that she could not let her neighbors know. In this quote, Wang Dechun contrasted her innocence and powerless to the evilness and strong power of the officer. She further revealed the psychological and physical damages caused by the officer, intending to attract more sympathy and support, and put blame on the officer.

Similarly, in Wang Yi's news article (2012) at *Jinghua News*, two photos of Wang Dechun were included: the first one was taken when she was young with a beautiful smile; the second one was taken when she had an interview at a coffee shop, where she looked tired and anxious. By showing the changes in her appearance, the two photos presented the officer's enormous harm to the Wang Dechun. Her narration focused on the mental activities of Wang Dechun, who felt extremely scared, anxious, and worried while waiting for help and investigation. Especially after Sun's sexual

assault when she was pregnant, she became mentally sick and her daughter was “almost dead after birth.” (Wang, 2012) By emphasizing the officer's great damage to Wang Dechun and her daughter, the narration of the news articles tried to contrast the evil, powerful officer to the vulnerable, innocent Wang Dechun. The facts and images used in the news were aligning with the narration and description in Wang Dechun’s initial post, portraying her as a vulnerable and innocent female under the pressure of male power. Therefore, the news reports for Wang Dechun reinforced and resonated with hegemonic femininity, which caused the sympathy from the major public.

To further highlight the weakness inside her personality, Wang Dechun wrote in her original report on November, 23, 2012:

> I cherish my reputation throughout my whole life. Although I look tough from outside, my actual personality is indecisive and fear to get in trouble. Especially after I became a television reporter and anchor, I had been worrying about being criticized behind me for doing a bad job. I never thought that it is this personality that has cost me so much. (Wang, 2012)

She tried making her career passion and weak inner-personality the only reasons for not reporting the officer in the past ten years. In her article (2012), Wang Yi quoted Wang Dechun’s parents, saying that she had been a hardworking girl and tried hard to maintain her successful image in front of others: “This kid was too eager to beat others. She did not want to show anyone her failure and weakness.” (Wang, 2012) The mother said that every time her daughter came home, she pretended to be relaxed and brought a lot of gifts without any hints of becoming poor. The journalist portrayed similar characteristics to Wang Dechun's self-portrait, not only resonating with hegemonic femininity, but also highlighting the features of professional women

who are embracing traditional masculine characteristics, such as ambition and diligence. This has also partially explained why Wang Dechun borrowed 150,000 yuan from the officer: “I didn’t want others to see me becoming poor, so I accepted this offer.” (Wang, 2012) Such statements presented a struggle between the stereotype of high-class professional women and their failure to maintain such femininity. Moreover, Wang Dechun’s eagerness to win and hardworking personality contrasted with her failure in business and life, reflecting her weakness and disadvantage regarding power and social resources in this male-dominant society. It also reinforced her powerless self-portrait to attract more sympathy and public support.

Stating why she reported when she did, she said that she was facing the "great life crisis"(Wang, 2012) of divorce, mental and physical sickness, and having no sense of happiness at all. Therefore, she decided to rebel against the officer under such a desperate situation. She mentioned that he asked his workers to force and threaten her mother to sign for a made-up retired position in his company in order to ruin the evidences of his misconducts. She was so angry after hearing this that she decided to report him as soon as she could. She also said in the *Xinmin Weekly* article that the officer had forced her to return the money several times:

> ..... I could not bear enough and said: if Sun Dejiang forces me one more time, I would sue/report him..... ‘I have no money right now. I have had enough of you. If you force me one more time, I will sue you.’ Sun Dejiang was extremely angry..... whether I return the money or not, he would kill me..... Considering that Sun Dejiang might take revenge on my family, I finally decided to report him in real name on Sina Weibo. (Wang, 2012),i

As mentioned above, Wang Dechun's motivation to report can be interpreted as her revenge on the officer for preventing her from portraying a powerful professional femininity to public; being worried about the safety of her family, she became extremely angry and decided on revenge. Therefore, the motivation for Wang Dechun's report can be seen as the personal revenge for her loss as well as the struggle for her family's safe living. This was further interpreted as an anti-corruption social movement by the public. Although the narration portrayed a weak woman being harmed by a powerful male authority, Wang Dechun's motivation to report revealed her wish to gain more social power.

Therefore, Wang Dechun's initial posts on Sina Weibo, Wang Yi, and Wang Ruohan's news articles have literally performed and constructed a hegemonic femininity in an attempt to increase the general sympathy and support to her from the public. Wang Dechun was portrayed as an innocent, vulnerable and weak woman being harmed by the evil authority; she always wanted to succeed as a high-class woman but failed due to the interference of the officer. Unable to face such failure, she had to ruin her reputation to fight back. Through highlighting her weakness and the harm by the officers, she proactively attracted sympathy and support from the public within the hegemonic femininity framework to gain empowerment.

Such femininity construction appeared to lead to the sympathy and support of many users. Because they recognized her as a vulnerable and unlucky woman, her faults such as taking advantage of the officer and not reporting earlier can be easily tolerated. Lucky loves beauty (2012) told Wang Dechun: "We all hope you can be stronger and use the weapon of law to punish the evil. We believe what you have said, but we hope you stop being indecisive, which has ruined your happy marriage. Now

people across the nation are giving you the courage. Stand up to break through the darkness and the dawn is ahead.” Lili said:

> I am so *sympathetic of her*, if she was not scared at the first time, maybe she would lead a happy life. *This man is worse than a beast*, I *support Wang Dechun*. *As a woma*n her life is tough, especially for *a public figure* that needed to work to raise her family. Once she failed, was abused, and mentally and physically ruined, but she still has the courage to dig such a *great borer*! We support you, have a good life and *the bad people will be punished*. (2012)

Miv2010 (2012) said: "It took great courage for her to expose such a story. I hope everyone *be more tolerant* to her (faults)." A male user even suggested Wang Dechun returning to her ex-husband (CloveDaffodil, 2012): “I really hope you can remarry your ex-husband because you need more comfort and care right now. I hope your life goes to peace again.” This suggested the weakness of women that they should need men to get comfort. This statement had taken it for granted that women could not live well without men, normalizing the male-dominant power. These comments showed the audiences’ complete trust and acceptance of the facts as they were reported. The narrations by Wang Dechun suggested that she was no longer passive or weak, and further constructed the femininity that as a woman, she needed to be braver to fight against the evil, even if her physical power was weak. Hence, she deserved sympathy and empowerment. Despite that these comments were based on the belief that women have less power than men, Wang Dechun's activism and the group empowerment on Weibo challenged the hegemonic femininity by urging the woman to fight against the social evil, challenging the hegemonic femininity.

"Good Citizen," "Fighter," "Hero," And Nothing about the Woman

One special feature of some supporters is that they usually referred to Wang Dechun as an anti-corruption "hero." They criticized the corruption in China and appraised Wang Dechun for being brave enough to fight against the social evil in terms of social justice. The positive feature of Wang Dechun's report was highlighted, which evened out the unfavorable facts (not reporting in the past ten years, gaining illegal benefit from him, etc.) and the blames against her. In these posts, she was called "justice citizen," "brave fighter," and "anti-corruption hero." The influence from the anti-corruption movement and governmental agenda can be found in such comments. Such comments also empowered her report and formed a hegemonic group where everyone should support Wang Dechun; otherwise, he or she must be unsupportive to the ongoing anti-corruption movement.

Meant to encourage Wang Dechun to continue reporting and keeping proactively in touch with the audiences, the following comments all erased the feminine aspect of Wang Dechun.

Northern Desert Hero (2012): "I believe you are the *brave fighter*."

Hardyf (2012): "Today you stand out, and have expressed what you truly want to say from your heart. *You have exposed an ugly side in Chinese society*..."

Lucky bulldog (2012): "Support you for sure! The president said: '*it will ruin the society by empty talks, only practices can make a wealthy country*.' *We admire you for your courage to stand out!* China will give you the *justice* back!"

Sean1870 (2012): "*Neither riches nor honors can corrupt him; neither threats nor force can bend him*. What else can be called winning in front of *justice*? It was

just over-emphasizing fame and riches that make you fail. Hope you *insist justice* and *take your responsibility of fighting against evil*!"

By mentioning "brave fighter," "justice," and "responsibility" as a good citizen, the comments above were all relevant to the ideal masculinity in China. Therefore, without mentioning or concerning the specific feminine perspective of Wang Dechun, such supporters tended to equalize the actual power of Chinese men and women by simply stating that she should fight for social justice, thereby eliminating the distinction between men's and women's roles in the anti-corruption movement. These comments were clearly influenced by the governmental agenda that encouraged the citizens to report corruptions and governmental misconducts, which became the citizens' essential social responsibility. Especially Sean1870 (2012) quoted the famous proverb by Mencius, which was often applied in the contexts of telling a man to be incorruptible. In general, they expected Wang Dechun to be brave enough against the corrupted officer for social justice.

Some users took one step further to highlight the potential outcome of Wang Dechun's actions, in an effort to create a hero image for her and make her an anti-corruption celebrity. The angriest man (2012) wrote:

> To Ms. Wang Dechun: Don't think your reputation has been ruined -- quite the opposite, because of your *justice* report, China has one less (and potentially much less) such ugly officer. So all citizens should appreciate your report! From now on, each day of yours will be brand-new! I have thought of the ` song: *Don't Cry for Me, Argentina*. From now on, *all Chinese will be touched by you*... (2012).

Fenzizhenduan directly asked her to be an online celebrity to fight against corruption:

> As long as you wish, after this you can apply your social influence to help other people who are in similar situations. Your daughter and your family will be *proud of you*, and Chinese citizens will support you. This is the new start and you will be the new type of media person in new era. Don't you love this career? (2012).

Rebirth happy man (2012): "No matter what the result is, as long as you can reveal the truth to the public, *you will be our best and loyal friend*. Come on, be safe!"

Longyutaihou (2012): "I support Ms. Wang to give up everything, stand out decisively, report in real name, and punish the corrupted officer. Don’t be bothered by rumors and criticisms. You will become the *anti-corruption hero* to defend your own rights."

These comments, regardless of the unfavorable facts to Wang Dechun, highlighted the potential results of the report and provided her with very positive titles. Moreover, such titles were trying to drive Wang Dechun away from her gender identity. It seemed that they were equalizing the power of males and females regardless of the gender differences just as Maoist era's propaganda on gender. They tried to erase the feminine features of her based on the potential acknowledgement of weak femininity. Have a couple wine (2012) said: "How to say. *You might as well not to treat yourself as a woman*. Fame is nothing. As long as you have done things right, you will be happy with bread and water only." The author clearly suggested Wang Dechun discarding her gender identity to get empowered. Different from the

sympathetic supporting group, this group had recalled the current political context, which allowed a certain degree of freedom for citizens to report and criticize some corrupted officers. They also tried to empower Wang Dechun within the current governmental agenda. This agenda was based on the group mentality in China. Based on that, they explained why the justice report could even out her ruined reputation: this woman was doing a good citizen's responsibility by sacrificing her personal reputation for the anti-corruption movement — the public good. It can also be interpreted as a public reaction to the sex-political scandal, which is highly relevant to social justice, morality, and public interest. There were no terms and discussions about females' characteristics. The presence of Wang's femininity was completely erased in such comments.

"It Is Not Sexual Assault; It Is a Trade"

There were users doubting the motivation for Wang Dechun to report. The most frequent question was: "Why didn't you report earlier?" Many of them assumed that she was having a trade with the officer. Some blamed her for betraying the officer and breaking the "sex-money trade." Meanwhile, the hegemonic femininity based on Chinese patriarchal ideology could be revealed.

One feature of hegemonic femininity reflected in such comments is that women seducing men for her personal benefits and making the man fail are evils. Hegemonic femininity asks women to be “good.” Out of the need for males to control females, the society expects women to be loyal to their husbands and should not betray them; anyone violates the rule should be evil woman. Pan Jinlian is a classic character portrayed in *Outlaws of the Marsh*, a classic novel written in Ming dynasty. The woman cheated her husband and killed him, making her a representation of evil

women and often blamed in later social discourses. As early as Shang dynasty, Dan Ji, a beautiful woman and concubine of King Zhou, the last king of the dynasty, badly obsessed the man who later lost the entire kingdom. Chinese merely blamed the woman and concluded that the most beautiful woman could even ruin a nation, regardless of the mistakes of men (Tang, 2005). They also made the analogy that referred to such women to snakes, who often bite the hand that feeds them. As long as a failed man was in love with a woman, she would take all the blames for his failure. Similarly, many Weibo users perceived Wang Dechun as a beautiful but evil woman:

Chan Wu V (2012): "This is a great man who treats the woman he likes at the risk of violating the law. But this woman is too greedy. She doesn't know what gratitude is and *even bites him*. *I seriously belittle her* and I think Sun is wronged."

Tuba's Weibo (2012): "Women are bitches nowadays. *Women are genius to bite the hand that feeds them*..... "

In the exemplars, the phrases "greedy," "doesn't know what gratitude is," "bitch," and "bite the hand that feeds them" all referred to an evil and unfaithful femininity constructed in traditional Chinese literature such as Pan Jinlian, who was unfaithful and killed her husband in order to become the mistress of Xi Menqing, a local authority and childe in *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Such users assumed that the Wang Dechun admitted trading with the officer and betrayed him, so they blamed her. They spoke for the officer, thinking that he should be the actual victim in this trade. From males' perspective and based on the hegemonic femininity, they believed that Wang Dechun should have been grateful to the officer and maintained the sexual relationship with him. They only focused on the losses of the man and chose to neglect Wang Dechun's sufferings and damages caused by him. Such blame not only

reflects the male-dominant culture of “good woman” rules, but also indicates the weak power of women in relationship with men.

Others in this category believed that it was the fault of both sides and assumed that this was a “fair” sex-money trade. Some blamed Wang Dechun for taking advantage of the officer; some thought that her motivation to report was personal revenge. It's Good Being Cared By You said:

> At that time maybe you (Wang Dechun) were too weak to get rid of him..... I am sympathetic to you because you are too funny. Your parents said you were desperate to win, but was that the excuse for all your faults? It is not only because you have found your conscience, but also because you could not conceive things any longer! Be honest, didn't you pretend to be weak to gain more sympathy? Good luck. (2012)

The author of the post blamed Wang Dechun for not reporting the officer earlier and only reporting when she could not conceal her relationship with Sun anymore. Then the author criticized Wang Dechun for using the eager-to-win personality as an excuse for taking advantage of the officer, and blamed her for pretending to be "weak" to gain sympathy. This comment, as well as the comments listed below, only found fault with Wang Dechun without caring about her own motivations and the social context, such as her limited options to raise her family and keep them safe. Little soldier's badge wrote: "You just failed to *play with men*. The man is not good; you are not either." (2012) "*Away goes the devil when he finds the door shut against him.* Your moral bottom-line is too low. You have sold yourself for the pension of 1,000 yuan a month." (vYi2Yi6v, 2012) "Failed to play with men," "not good," "moral bottom-line is too low," and "have sold yourself" all expressed the doubts and belittling to Wang

Dechun's motivation. These blames tried to stop the woman from alternating the male-dominant power, erased her injuries and struggles in life, and further reinforced the hegemonic femininity.

The socioeconomic status of Wang Dechun was also taken into account when someone judged her. Specifically, it was perceived that she had relatively high social class, economic status, education level, resources, and social power, so it was unlikely for her to be forced or threatened. City Spring (2012) said: "Have you ever seen a female news anchor in trouble? It is always the weak females who lost their jobs or lower-level clerks that are in trouble. The female news anchors *gain both money and power* once they are in affairs with governmental officers. They are the advanced-level prostitutes." The author straightly denied the possibility of a female news anchor being the victim of sexual assaults, as he believed that the anchor's high socioeconomic status could keep her away from such harms. Furthermore, the post also normalized the sex-money trade and even prostitution. The post below expressed similar doubt to the likelihood of a Communist Party member to be the victim of sexual assaults. Eastern Han Kingdom 888 (2012) said: "*As a well-known news anchor and a member of Communist Party,* do you believe that she can be sexually assaulted for ten years? *It is impossible even for an idiot.* Plus that man is not her boss who can fire her." They assumed that females with high social class and advanced professions should have made their own choices to trade their body for money and social power; thus, they should not be identified as weak, but evil and greedy. This can be interpreted as a simplified perception of the power of females with high socioeconomic status.

It is also discussed that the female anchors are the ideal wife for these people because they are usually well-educated with stable careers and good public image (Financial Officer, 2013). Yet having marriages or affairs with rich people has become a stigma for female news anchors. As the mass media often cover the affairs of female celebrities, such as news anchors, singers, and actresses, with social authorities, such as governmental officers and business men, the female celebrities are high-likely to be perceived as the "mistresses" of social authorities ("The Official Mistresses: Someone Likes Actresses, Someone Likes Female Anchors," 2014). One well-known case is the adultery between a central-level officer called Fan Yue and Ji Yingnan, a female anchor in China Central Television. Consequently, the public tends to suspect that all female celebrities on mass media are mistresses or have affairs with social authorities and they trade for personal benefits, including the sex-money trade (Fang, 2013).

Other judgments of Wang Dechun badly disrespected her. Someone called her "broken shoes," referring to women unfaithful to their husbands, or lover, the second wife, bitch, and whore. Their tones were usually critical, sarcastic, or insulting, believing that she just betrayed the officer. Although they were only a small portion of the population, they indicated extreme anger and disrespect to the females who tried to alternate the male-dominant power and challenge the hegemonic femininity. Similar reflections are common in other countries' news coverage of domestic violence on females, influenced or dominated by male power (Berns, 2001). A typical blame in the news reports is that such violence (including rape) is not completely the man's fault because the woman may not be completely innocent and vulnerable. Some even put more blame on female victims (especially the attractive ones) because it is their fault to seduce or obsess the male perpetrators. This can indicate that women are

in weak position in the power relationship with men, as they are judged by males' perspectives. Unfortunately, this study finds similar blame from some female users, implying that women are also deeply influenced by the normalization of hegemonic femininity and men's dominant power.

Almost no comment straightly challenged or blamed the hegemonic femininity and male-dominant power in this society, which were apparently normalized. Users merely discussed or judged the officer or Wang Dechun's individual behaviors. It is common in many news stories of sexual assaults that focus on individual cases instead of the discussion on an entire culture (Friedman & Johnston, 2013). Both the news articles in this study fell into the same category, which might partially influence the users' blames on the individual characters and the absence of public discourse on hegemonic femininity in a larger cultural setting.

Conclusion

The news articles and the Sina Weibo posts indicate the process of female empowerment on Wang Dechun. Along with Sina Weibo platform, the journalists have given Wang Dechun the agency to tell the story from her own perspectives, including the damages caused by the officer, the detail of her psychological activities, and her motivation to report. The hegemonic femininity of weak woman and good woman images have been performed and reinforced. By highlighting her weakness, she successfully gained sympathy; by repeating that she wanted to return to her family as a good wife and mother, she gained more agreements. Such femininity framework allowed her gaining more alliances and supporters, who finally empowered her. The group empowerment has changed the tone of Wang Dechun in her later posts from

being passive and humble to strong enough to criticize social authorities and push the government to respond. This transmission is an evidence of empowerment.

The current contexts of Chinese culture and politics are revealed from these posts. Three types of hegemonic femininity, highly influenced by traditional Chinese culture, were represented by the major Weibo comments. For users who were sympathetic to Wang Dechun, women were perceived as powerless. For those blaming Wang Dechun, the hegemonic femininity about good and evil women was presented. These results all reflect the normalization of male-dominant hegemonic femininity. The title "anti-corruption hero" given by a supporting group implies the tendency to separate Wang Dechun from her gender identity. This not only recalls the Maoist era's femininity that equalizes females with males to encourage females to contribute to physical labors, but also indicates the intention to neglect the actual features of females, which is also an overlook of femininity and female power.

Social media have provided a public sphere where members can contribute individual opinions (Castells, 2007; Wellman, Salaff, Dimitrova, Garton, Gulia & Haythornthwaite, 1996; Wellman, 2001). Even if social elites and mainstream journalists often initiate the discussions and form the heterogeneous groups online, the individual and diverse opinions still exist and it is individual choice to receive various information and opinions (Wellman, 2001). Specifically in femininity construction, it is argued that the individual contribution and performance of diverse femininities may indirectly challenge the hegemonic femininity (Harris, 2004; Dobson, 2012). Although the influence of diverse femininity is not as significant as the hegemonic femininity, some Weibo users completely respect Wang Dechun as a women and ask

her to live her own life without over thinking about the society's judgments and blames, indicating the intention to break the hegemonic femininity.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions: The Struggle of Transformation

This section concludes the results of the study, including the similarities and differences between both cases in this study. Applying Foss, Domenico, and Foss' (2013) identity analysis on the agencies and performances in the narration about the major case actors, the researcher intends to study the construction, challenge, and empowerment of Chinese femininity. Using Mckee's (2003) textual analysis method, this study analyzes the narration and agency in the major news stories of the cases as well as the context, ideology, and motivations of the Sina Weibo comments. Such analysis could find the power relation between males and females within the hegemonic and diversified femininity. Moreover, the process of empowerment on Sina Weibo and how each agency impacted this process could be implied. The first case is a video exposed by two male citizen journalists about a twelve-second sexual activity of a corrupted officer called Lei Zhengfu and a young woman named Zhao Hongxia. The second case is the Weibo report of a former female news anchor called Wang Dechun that another corrupted officer Sun Dejiang has sexually assaulted her. In order to distinguish the cases, Zhao Hongxia's case is called the "sex-video case," while Wang Dechun's case is called the "self-report case," based on the original sources of the cases. The comparisons are organized by the research questions below.

The Journalists' Construction of Femininity

The journalists constructed the femininity of Zhao and Wang quite differently. In their reports in the sex-video case, Ji and Zhu simply referred Zhao as the

"mistress," regardless of her motivation to get involved as a major character in the video. The fact that she was actually controlled by a third person was neglected. By implying that Zhao gained personal benefits from Lei, Ji's Weibo posts constructing Zhao as a "bad woman" might cause blame to her from the public. The journalists also showed disrespect to Zhao's privacy and personal life. Specifically, the visual materials (the video and screenshots) invaded Zhao's privacy by exposing her nudity without consent. In general, the journalists' construction of Zhao's femininity was simply "evil"——a mistress who took advantage of "her man" just for money, betrayed him, and transgressed the hegemonic femininity that women should be loyal to men.

By contrast, Wang Dechun portrayed herself a weak but nice woman who always wanted to stay away from Sun, return to her family, and be a good mother, wife, and daughter. The professional journalists Wang Yi and Wang Ruohan portrayed her similarly. Moreover, they highlighted Wang Dechun's courage to challenge Sun's authority given her poor living conditions. In a caring and supportive tone, they also described her poor mental and physical damages in detail. Although Wang Ruohan provided a few unfavorable facts towards Wang Dechun, she gave her the agency to respond to the public. Therefore, both herself and the two journalists have constructed Wang Dechun as a weak and innocent woman within the framework of hegemonic femininity, but highlighted her courage to fight against evil.

Comparing the two cases, there are major differences in the agencies of news narration. On the one hand, in sex video case, only two male citizen journalists——Zhu Ruifeng and Ji Xuguang——were the agencies in narration. Their reports only focused on themselves and Lei Zhengfu—the corrupted officer. The journalists had a

clear personal goal that is to become socially influential. Therefore, they completely ignored Zhao Hongxia, an ordinary woman who was irrelevant to their goal. On the other hand, in the self-report case, the authorities of the narration included the former news anchor Wang Dechun and two female professional journalists——Wang Yi and Wang Ruohan. In the reports of both journalists, Wang Dechun was the focus. She was the major agency of narration, source of information, and the initiator to the anti-corruption movement against Sun.

As an authority in the narration, the journalists' attitudes and perspectives on femininity may influence the public discourse. As a typical "titillation without incrimination" (Oakley, 2007, p.9), meaning that journalists usually report a case in a way to the mainstream's interest, Ji and Zhu enlarged the sexual and criminal aspect of the case, similar to the recent coverage of sexual political scandals that tended to be deviant to entertain the public (Apostolidis & Williams, 2004). Moreover, journalists tended to simplify the femininity of socially disadvantaged women (Oakley, 2007). As a disadvantaged woman in low socioeconomic status, it was easier for reporters to simplify Zhao's story. Furthermore, Toughill (2007) argued that citizen journalists often focus on themselves in the narration. Therefore, Ji's and Zhu’s agencies reflect their strong efforts to fit into the hegemonic code in society, thereby reinforcing hegemonic femininity. On Zhao's side, as agreed by Bar On (1993), there is usually no power for the marginalized social groups, especially when they are oppressed by the mainstream. Therefore, no agency was given to Zhao, as she was intentionally marginalized by the journalists.

In the self-report case, even if they reported unfavorable facts towards Wang Dechun, Wang Yi and Wang Ruohan showed more sympathy to her. However, their

stories tended to focus on the individual cause of the case, not the social and cultural causes. As argued by Cuklanz (2014), such coverage could not empower the female victims of violence as it restricted social attention, help, and resources for them. Such distinction could also be explained by multicultural feminism theory that the empowerment of women varies across different social groups (Yoder, Snell, & Tobias, 2012; Enns & Fischer, 2012). As Wang Dechun had higher socioeconomic status than Zhao Hongxia, she was more socially advantaged to gain more empowerment by the public. Additionally, Wang's journalistic experience enabled her to be more influential on media than Zhao.

As suggested by Daly and Saraceno (2002), the analysis on social discourse on gender should go in depth towards power relations, understanding the procedure of any changes. In the news articles for both the cases, the agencies given, the attitudes, and the femininity construction of the journalists are found to be effective in the procedure. Specifically, as Ji and Zhu were not on the side of Zhao, they simply portrayed her as an “evil woman,” a marginalized female by hegemonic culture. Whereas Wang Yi and Wang Ruohan tended to set the agency for Wang Dechun as the initiator of an anti-corruption movement, they potentially challenged the hegemonic femininity that restricts women to fight against men; even if literally portraying a vulnerable woman, such proactive coverage indicates empowerment of women. Still, the whole empowerment process was within the “good woman” syndrome of hegemonic femininity. In conclusion, the hegemonic femininity was challenged little in both cases because Zhao and Wang were either marginalized or empowered within the hegemonic framework.

The Citizens' Construction of Femininity

A large number of Weibo users blamed both Zhao Hongxia and Wang Dechun for taking advantage of the corrupted officers and also called them prostitutes. In typical sexual political scandals, the mistresses' illicit sexual behaviors with the corrupted officer caused general blame for their transgression within the social sex code and hegemonic femininity (Mandell, 2011). In this study, the blames normalized the Chinese hegemonic femininity that women should be good wives and never betray their husbands. Moreover, although Zhao Hongxia and Wang Dechun were called mistresses, they were generally perceived as sex-traders, close to sex-workers. Some comments normalized sex-money trade and prostitution, showing male-dominant ideology and traditional Chinese culture that treated women as men's private properties. The blames and shames on this under-represented group of women, especially sex-workers, are common and simplified, which is the typical social norm in patriarchal society (Mendes and Silva, 2009). Overall, there were more blames on Zhao Hongxia than Wang Dechun, but the fact that both women were under scrutiny from the public discourse reflected the hegemonic femininity.

It was worth noticing that some female users tended to feel shameful about the "mistresses." According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), women tend to suffer more moral burdens psychologically due to their willingness to fit into the cultural ideals of their social groups. Therefore, they tend to take on more shame, disgust, and depression than men regarding the behaviors outside the boundaries of hegemonic culture (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). For instance, as Zhao’s behavior in the video highly violated the hegemonic value of being a “good woman,” the female users expressed stronger shame than male users.

The simplification of users calling Zhao and Wang prostitutes not only showed the marginalization of the women, but also sex objectification, especially for Zhao's body. Sexual objectification represents patriarchic society where heterosexuality is normalized and usually occurred when women's body or body parts are presented in the media, with the rest of her parts reduced (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). It is closely associated with male gaze on female bodies in media where women are out of control. In other words, women have no power in the process of objectification as males have the only power to present their bodies in sexualized ways (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). The repeatedly posted photos of Zhao's nudity without her face as well as the comments on Zhao's body directly resonated with the theory. Zhao had no agency or power under such discourse, and was judged and discussed as a sex organ or porn actress. Therefore, the objectification of Zhao demonstrated her powerlessness and vulnerability under male gaze.

The influence of traditional Chinese culture and male-dominant ideology was more obvious in the self-report case. Both herself and the journalists tried hard to portray Wang Dechun as mostly vulnerable and positive, but there was still a major perception that Wang was willing to have sex with the officer. As an ideological extension of concubine culture and the introduction of the term "sex worker" from Western countries, the idea of sex-money trade between men and women tends to be normalized (Zhang, 2009). Such social discourse is attempting to marginalize socially disadvantaged women and imposes little empowerment on them (Baldwin and Orchard, 2009). Therefore, the discourse on the "trade" did not help empower Zhao and Wang in this study.

Indeed, Wang Dechun was positively commented upon and empowered from her hegemonic masculine feature. She was frequently called "justice citizen," "brave fighter," and "anti-corruption hero" for being brave to fight against the social evil and corruption. As being "brave," "responsible to society," and "hero" are hegemonic masculinity (Foss, Domenico, Foss, 2013), the public enlarged Wang's hegemonic masculine features. Many comments were influenced by the Eighteenth National People's Congress Conference agenda, also similar to the Maoist agenda that eliminated the distinction between males and females. In such agenda, women's power was equalized to men's power without the examination of specific feminine features (Luo & Hao, 2007; Yang, 2011). They also formed the homogeneous group on Sina Weibo, supporting Wang and the anti-corruption movement. Wang Dechun was empowered only on her "brave" and "just" traditional masculine features, not her femininity.

There was also power inequality between Zhao and Wang, with Wang being more powerful, which might come from the difference in Zhao and Wang's socioeconomic status. Zhao only had a high school diploma and vocational school education. She worked as an ordinary salesperson for Xiao Ye and became his mistress. She was asked to be the "bait" to blackmail several local officers in Chongqing by having sex with them and shooting sex videos (Zhang, 2012). She was already married and living in the country. Wang Dechun had a college degree in broadcast journalism and was a former local news anchor for over ten years in Shuangcheng, Heilongjiang province. Being popular locally, she was married with a daughter and once had owned two private businesses. It is obvious that Zhao and Wang have completely different education, income, career, and social class. As agreed by Baldwin and Orchard (2009), the media often simplify the coverage of the

disadvantaged women by stating that such women were driven by desires and indicating that they have made their own choices to get involved. Therefore, as a more disadvantaged woman than Wang, Zhao was simply marginalized as a prostitute with almost no empowerment. As agreed by multiple scholars (Zinn & Dill, 1996; Butler, 1990; Schippers, 2007), the female empowerment and the challenge to hegemony often begin in one dimension, such as class. Women with a higher socioeconomic status tend to experience empowerment before women with a lower status. Therefore, the result showed that there were unequal female empowerment and different levels of challenge to hegemonic femininity across social classes.

Challenges on Sina Weibo

As agreed by Bar On (1993), there is usually no power for the marginalized social groups. However, with effective and influential actors, it is easy to impact the members of the marginal groups (Bar On, 1993). The more powerful the supporters and alliances are, the more influential their gender performance and construction are (Butler, 1988; Bordt, 1997). A social network, once it becomes a platform for a hegemonic group in the public sphere, is able to allow more social engagement and collaboration from ordinary citizens to reconstruct and transform identities and empower the group members (Castells, 2007; Beck, Dalton, Greene & Huckfeldt, 2002; Carter, 2014). Thus, with her effective media strategies and powerful online network with mainstream journalists, media organizations, and online opinion leaders, Wang Dechun was effectively empowered in the center of the femininity transformation movement, and had successfully influenced more people to care and respect her. With their empowerment, she was expected to engage more in the public sphere——a domain that provides potential opportunities for marginalized female

groups to challenge hegemonic femininity (Carter, 2014). As the case went on, Wang's change of tone from being humble to much braver performed and constructed an "empowered" female image under the acceptance and encouragement of her supporters. Sina Weibo as a public sphere has recorded Wang Dechun's group empowerment as well as her challenges to hegemonic femininity.

Social media allow citizens independently challenging the hegemonic ideologies and social norms (Dobson, 2012). The diverse, marginal voices on Sina Weibo are potentially influencing the reconstruction of Chinese femininity. In the self-report case, the complements of Wang Dechun show empowerment to her femininity. Such empowerment can urge women to challenge men's power in an attempt to break the hegemonic rules.

It was found that Habermas' social network as public sphere model only benefits the socially advantaged members and does not give agency to minorities (Marques-Pereira and Siim, 2002; Carstensen, 2014). In order to better transform social identities, a more heterogeneous social network model needs to include the representation and agency of social minorities who are different from the mainstream (Marques-Pereira and Siim, 2002, Dobson, 2012; Carstensen, 2014). Such a heterogeneous model not only could make people aware of the diversity and minorities, but also let each individual control their own identity creation and performance (Carstenten, 2014). After all the facts behind the scene were released by the end of November, a few more commentators began to speak for Zhao. Not representing the homogeneous group of Weibo users, these voices may still influence the construction of femininity by performing more tolerance and consideration towards a "bad," "shameful," and marginalized woman. Such comments are also

significant in the context without strategic mobilization as in the self-report case, as the comments are individual opinions that are unaffected by the hegemony, potentially empowering diverse femininity.

Social media as a public stage could still reinforce the moral code and mainstream ideologies (Dobson, 2012). On Sina Weibo, hegemonic femininity was repeated and reinforced by the construction of journalists and mainstream audiences. Journalists in the sex-video case influenced the public to blame and disrespect Zhao, maintained the hegemonic femininity and failed to empower Zhao. In the self-report case, the empowerment of Wang Dechun still fell under the hegemonic femininity syndrome of being a "good woman." Users asked her to forget about the officer and start a new life——a male-dominant voice that asked Wang to stop further advocacy and return to a subordinate position with males. Therefore, the procedure suggests that the empowerment on Sina Weibo was still influenced by hegemonic culture.

As a public sphere where various ideologies and identities can be collected and performed, social media provide opportunities for marginalized social groups to speak up and get empowered (Castells, 2007; Dobson, 2012; Carstensen, 2014). The sex-video case finds the power of hegemony; however, there are still diversified voices trying to understand the marginalized woman Zhao and challenging the hegemony. Moreover, the actualized identity transformation needs the involvement of individual performance, repetition, and a powerful amount of supporters (Foss, Domenico, & Foss, 2013; Butler, 1988; Bordt, 1997). The self-report case examines such process where Wang Dechun got actual group empowerment from her social network, together performing and transforming Chinese femininity. Social media provide the enormous opportunities for female empowerment as well as a challenge

against hegemonic femininity (Carstensen, 2014; Carter, 2014). Through instant interactions, marginalized female groups can gain support, opinions, and resources more efficiently than offline campaigns, powerfully influence more audiences, and eventually challenge the hegemonic culture (Carstensen, 2014; Carter, 2014).

Discussion

This textual analysis study explored the challenge of Sina Weibo users on hegemonic femininity and the role of the journalists in this process. Through contrast and comparison, this study applied the lens of multicultural feminism theory to analyze the process of female empowerment and the challenge to hegemonic femininity in multiple social categories. Meanwhile, the involvement of social media and traditional Chinese culture was also examined in the process.

The sex-video case is about two male citizen journalists publishing a sex video featuring a corrupted officer, Lei Zhengfu, and the victim, Zhao Hongxia. In their reports, the journalists mainly focused on portraying themselves as heroes, while Zhao was simplified and marginalized as a "mistress" or "lover" and even indicated as a sex trader. As a result, the public expressed shame on her, calling her "prostitute" or "bad woman." Many sexually objectified Zhao as a porn actress and mocked their sexual behavior. The general disrespect and reductive discourse reflect the overall weak power of disadvantaged females in the hegemonic femininity. Only a few audiences expressed marginalized opinions trying to understand or care about the victim. Thus, although Zhao was depicted as an “evil” mistress who “chose” to take advantage of the officer, her lack of agency and actual vulnerability in the public discourse did not empower her. Instead, she was marginalized due to her violation against hegemonic femininity, which was reinforced on Weibo comments.

The self-report case is that a former local news anchor reported a corrupted officer who sexually assaulted her and the story was covered by two female professional journalists. Different from the sex-video case, it shows the process of female empowerment and the challenge to the male-dominant hegemonic femininity. Although there were still voices speaking for the male power (the officer) and blaming Wang for her betrayal to the officer, the organization of a powerful amount of alliances and supporters has successfully empowered Wang and challenged the hegemonic femininity. It is worth noticing that the normalization of the sex-money trade and even prostitution still exists in the social discourse. On the one hand, Wang was empowered via social engagement and her proactivity; on the other hand, hegemonic femininity still played a big role to mobilize supporters.

The multicultural feminism theory suggests that we examine the femininity construction in multiple dimensions, as well as the contextual changes within one dimension (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Bulter, 1995; Lorber, 2000; Budgeon, 2013). The findings of this study support and strengthen the theory. For example, the public generally perceive the women's relationships with the officers as sex trades. On the one hand, this indicates the influence of the Western culture that accepts and normalizes prostitutes as "sex workers"; on the other hand, this shows the unique concubine culture in China, implying the male-dominant ideology that treats women as men's private property and status symbol. Additionally, the Weibo users' desire and enjoyment of Zhao's body show the influence of the Western culture that consumes young and pretty girls' body.

Another example is that with higher socioeconomic status and more knowledge of media than Zhao, Wang can be effectively empowered by the

journalists and the public. Her performance and organization have successfully engaged the public to reconstruct her femininity. Such transformation in femininity suggests the contextual change in Chinese politics and culture -- while traditional ideology still asked women to be the "good mother" and "good wife," more people are encouraging women to be more active in the public sphere and pursue their own power. However, Wang's feminine perspectives were neglected by many supporters due to the influence of the Maoist femininity that equalized men and women's physical power.

Therefore, the empowerment and femininity construction of the two women are different across the dimension of socioeconomic status; the influence of Chinese culture and the influence from the Western culture all indicate the unique Chinese cultural context to construct the women's femininity. Moreover, these reflect the power inequality between males and females, also among women with different socioeconomic status. Wang's supporters have collectively challenged the hegemonic femininity, indicating the process of group empowerment and the formation of a subculture against the mainstream culture. These findings have systematically presented the process of femininity reconstruction and female empowerment in a non-Western cultural setting and contributed more grounded support to the multicultural feminism theory within the Chinese context.

Despite the significant influence of the journalists' agency and construction of femininity, social media as public sphere allow instant communications for users to influence each other, gain supporters and alliances, and eventually impact the mainstream to get actually empowered. It was found that although hegemonic femininity was reinforced by the hegemonic groups on social media, the diverse,

independent opinions still existed in an effort to challenge the hegemonic norms through online performances. Moreover, this diverse structure in social media networks provides opportunities for minority groups to speak up and get organized, such that the anti-corruption movement initiated and organized by Wang Dechun, which eventually achieved her goal to challenge the male's (Sun's) power. This effective empowerment on her femininity successfully challenged the hegemonic femininity that upheld women's social power.

Due to the subjectivity of the analysis procedure and the restricted data source, less contextual information regarding the social and political system could be interpreted. Still, it should be cautious to state that social media have empowered the women in the study because the empowerment of marginalized group is often relevant to the ongoing political context (Daly & Saraceno, 2002). Despite the differences in personal motivation and life experiences, it is important to consider the contextual differences between Chinese and Western culture, as the challenge on hegemonic power may be reflected in different discourses across cultures, economic status, and polities (Daly & Saraceno, 2002). Therefore, even if the discourse on Weibo did not touch the potential external causes of the culture and social system, the empowering comments only focusing on the individuals could still challenge the hegemonic femininity, which already deeply rooted within the mainstream's mindset (Yang, 2011). Moreover, the finding that Wang with higher socioeconomic status tends to be empowered easier than Zhao shows the inequality of female empowerment across social class categories. Therefore, the process of femininity transformation was a struggle; however, such struggle is moving slowly towards female empowerment.

Some scholars doubt that all of these accounts are active. Indeed, there are still large amounts of active audiences based on the large population. This study only focuses on the active accounts during the case, which is irrelevant to the inactive accounts. The Weibo account of Zhu Ruifeng was deleted several times due to the governmental and the website's censorship. Therefore, this study was unable to analyze the original Weibo posts by Zhu, but only analyzed Zhu's reports on People's Supervision Net as well as the Weibo users' comments upon him. According to the analysis, Zhu's narration and agency were similar to Ji Xuguang, whose entire posts related to the case were still available on Sina Weibo.

The textual analysis of Weibo posts can reflect the subjective emotions and power through analyzing the comments posted by users themselves; however, information such as the exact situation where the posts were composed and the motivation remained uncertain. Although the majority of the users had a complete portfolio for their accounts, it was impossible to validate the identity for each of them. Furthermore, some users created multiple accounts just to express specific opinions and attempted to get more people see them, which could influence data representation. These factors could all influence the validity of the information.

Due to the linguistic and cultural differences, there might be some information missing, especially regarding the cultural context of the cases. As a female herself, the researcher might side with the women with more sympathy. This might help better perceive the motivations, conditions, and cultural context of the women, but might miss the accuracy in how the general public perceived the mistresses. Therefore, the researcher co-translated the exemplars in the text with two other graduate students from China, one male and one female. The analysis was based on the agreement of

the three on the interpretations and translations of the exemplars. Perhaps more translators from different social backgrounds might help better interpret these exemplars.

It was also worth noticing that the journalists in the sex-video case published much more visual materials than the self-report case, which was mostly reported in text. Especially on Ji Xuguang's Weibo, the screenshots of Lei having sex with Zhao were posted repeatedly. Perhaps the difference between visual and text materials might influence the different reactions from the audiences. As argued by Thussu (2008), the application of visual materials in the news could better attract public attention for entertainment purposes. Therefore, it was likely that the visual exposure of Zhao's body caused a teasing and disrespectful attitudes from the public towards her femininity. The potential impact of visual materials on the public attitudes towards the femininity in the news could be studied more in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Exemplars in Chinese

The Sex-Video Case

All the posts below are retrieved from http://www.weibo.com/laojishuoshi?topnav=1&wvr=5&topsug=1

---------. [ZZ-冒失小姐]. (2012, November 22). 老鼠眉，斜视眼，蒜头鼻，猪肠嘴 [Weibo].

---------. [稀风]. (2012, November 22). 重庆除了 bo 太子比较帅之外，真没几个官员长得像人的，跟这个意思外形异形的生物赤裸裸的来一场，绝对重口味。 [Weibo].

---------. [ttttyyykllmnbv]. (2012, November 30). 说得对。这老男人丑得要死跟猪一样。恶心 [Weibo].

---------. [Vivi 丫咪]. (2012, November 30). 这女的比这男的还恶心~为了钱这样的丑八怪也要 [Weibo].

---------. [shinning 琳姑娘]. (2012, November 24). 为什么叫冠希，跟人家有什么关系，人家那是你情我愿，无权钱交易，这个无论是长相还是性质，都没法比！ [Weibo].

---------. [lee 小饼饼]. (2012, November 23). 那么大年龄了，还跟一个和自己女儿差不多大的女孩子做这种事，下得去手吗，也不嫌丢人！都那么老了，有那么大瘾吗！[Weibo].

---------. [六兆吉]. (2012, November 23). 回复@阿达 18951851：抱歉你这话我赞同。三岁小孩都知道的事情，谁会被蒙呢，“当官不捞钱捞女人，当官干嘛“这依然是公认的 [Weibo].

---------. [莎拉泼猴]. (2012, November 22). 此人大热，江湖人称“擦枪哥”，“雷冠希”。长得真特么恶心！[Weibo].

---------. [落叶 michael]. (2012, November 21). 老衲不喜欢以貌取人，但是您老人家，长得也太不像好人了[Weibo].

---------. [Chandler_0606]. (2012, November 21). 民脂民膏在脸上，回家卖红薯去吧，雷哥[Weibo].

---------. [三板斧的诅咒]. (2012, November 21). 这雷人，是否因为党员，所以老婆很漂亮 [Weibo].

---------. [艾夏弥]. (2012, November 21}. 狗屁党章，党章不允许官员做爱了？做爱犯什么罪了？犯了哪条党章了？ [Weibo].

---------. [父与子范]. (2012, November 21). 陈冠希干干净净挺好看的，这家伙长得太脏。[Weibo].

---------. [艾夏弥]. (2012, November 21). 现在的法律有淫乱罪吗？我就不明白了，人家连做爱的权利都没有了？你情我愿，又不是强奸，反腐也讲点人权好不好！！！ [Weibo].

---------. [本舍]. (2012, November 23). 他用了 12 年爬到今天的位置；他用了 12 个月给她买礼物帮她安排工作；他用了 12 天养精蓄锐调养身息；他用了 12 个小时安排好工作抽出时间开好房间静静等她；他用了 12 分钟脱衣洗澡。而这一切，只是为了和她在一起的 12 秒。现在他都为了她被免职了，如果这都不是真爱，那还有真爱吗？ [Weibo].

---------. [亦木-Elaine]. (2012, November 21). 被抓补关押了怎么是二奶？被二奶啊！ [Weibo].

---------. [吴生宝贝]. (2012, November 21). 几张图属不雅，可入《乱伦》系列，冠以《露面内射无码》全程制成 AV 市场价只值 4 元！！！ [Weibo].

---------. [MariadelMar]. (2012, November, 21). 同志们，要宽容，难道只许老百姓包二奶，劈小三？人家雷同志也是男人嘛，二个奶情理之中嘛，只不过若是强迫这性质就不同了，若不是强迫我真真佩服这妹子，雷冠希这尊荣您还真张的开腿 [Weibo].

---------. [深圳发烧大唐]. (2012, November 22). 不就嫖个娼嘛，有什么新闻性。300 快餐，500 全套。严格执行国际 iso 标准。[Weibo].

---------. [胡富贵_kk]. (2012, November 22). 仅就乱搞男女关系的话，我真觉得不是个事。有没有知情人爆料点贪污受贿的硬货？[Weibo].

---------. [TNTDoctor]. (2012, November 25). 除夕夜，妻子烫了一壶酒来犒劳。他正待举杯时手机响了，扫了一眼屏幕，忧心忡忡:“人民更需要我，我得去送温暖了。”说完披着大衣消失在夜色中。他尽心尽力，真抓实干，埋头耕耘，人民连连叫好，称赞他是好公仆。当雷书记筋疲力尽地回到家中时，其酒尚温……[Weibo].

---------. [孔先生 Sun]. (2012, November 24). 我严谨的观察过了，确切的说是 12.5 秒，抽动了 21 下。这 0.5 秒或许只是人类的一小秒，但是对于老雷，那就是全部的 24 分之 1！还他 0.5 秒，给他一个清白，求别黑了！[Weibo].

---------. [醉后一枪]. (2012, November 23). 好像看看如何做到 12 秒的。。求种子，好人一生平安[Weibo].

---------. [润滑油]. (2012, November 23). 怎么这样快啊，才 12 秒，起码得 12 秒钟哦，否则对不起正厅级书记啊！ [Weibo].

---------. [苏秦男]. (2012, November 23). 这厮光长就够判 10 年的！！史上最丑艳照门。。[Weibo].

---------. [阿瑟 king 来了]. (2012, November 23). 带着快枪手的名号，以后在江湖上怎么混？雷叔真不值当。 [Weibo].

---------. [开往春天的铁路]. (2012, November 22). 支持老纪！我老媽的，雷大书记你凭什么干 20 岁嫩 B？而且干了 12 秒就射了！性无能！老子年轻高又帅，可以连续作战 1 小时却没有美女光顾！这社会和谐吗？[Weibo].

---------. [马戈 V5]. (2012, November 21). 【我为雷冠希说情】1 -如有几个情妇但一心为民打黑除恶忘我工作，那也是好官，你体力好又两情相悦我们认了！2 -睡了人家姑娘要承认，只要不动用公款又敢于承当，那也是好男人，你有魅力又两情相悦我们认了！！[Weibo].

---------. [妈妈说就算昵称再长别人也能 at 到]. (2012, November 22). 我真是挺佩服那“情人”的，这点多重的口味才能消化得了他啊~~ [Weibo].

---------. [明亮 0756]. (2012, November 22). 十个贪官九个色，还有一个正要射！[Weibo].

---------. [温州阿四正版]. (2012, November 21). 胡闹！一看照片这厮就是个好官，你实名举报人家干什么？人家不就是玩弄个女孩而已嘛[Weibo].

---------. [闭门种菜]. (2012, November 21). 什么样的女人会和这个长着猪头一样的家伙靠近？这女人估计也比母猪强不到哪去！ [Weibo].

---------. [方块 8]. (2012, November 22). 那姑娘真嫩！[Weibo].

---------. [傻乐 de 女口月]. (2012, November 24). 看样子，底下的那个女的很熟练也很享受嘛~真心佩服你的忍耐力啊……在这么亮的光线下，被一个长相和品行都如此丑陋到爆的贪官污吏压在身下……服了！他到底给了你怎样的好处啊？？以至于你不顾一切的出卖者自己的灵魂和肉体？？人性七宗罪中的性欲和贪婪表露无疑，悲哀！！ [Weibo].

---------. [XoXoXoXoo_M]. (2012, November 25). 好恶心，那个女的手在干嘛啊？在金钱的驱动下，看了她连这只猪都能忍受，很丑，很恶心！为何不好好努力工作，找个像样一点的男友，然后生一个富二代呢？ [Weibo].

---------. [取住广车]. (2012, November 23). 女人内裤反腐，含精安全套反腐其实皆因贪官搞到蛋疼所致 既然效果明显 在现行体制下 强烈建议我党必须坚持蛋蛋反腐特色 作为中国特色的社会主义的重要组成部分写进党章 [Weibo].

---------. [我不是凌玉章]. (2012, November 23]. 这个女的被他奸，亏大的！[Weibo].

---------. [呱呖 xiaoxiao]. (2012, November 23). 十八一枝花，插在牛粪啦[Weibo].

---------. [乃乃滴雄]. (2012, November 22). 听说他的 妹子很不错 好白菜 都让猪拱了[Weibo].

---------. [海瑞 5200]. (2012, November 23). 畜生与垃圾共舞，婊子和贪官打炮 [Weibo].

---------. [凌寒三千岁]. (2012, November 22). 姑娘皮肤真好，身材真好，心理素质尤其好[Weibo].

---------. [白得很性感的潼潼爸爸]. (2012, November 22). 所以说还是私人老板好呀，做官员或者国企老总出了这种事情就完蛋了，私人老板出了这种事情一点没事情 [Weibo].

---------. [自由之细无声]. (2012, November 30). 雷案中的利益方简单分析：获胜方，纪许光、朱瑞峰，他们成了红人，粉丝上万，廉政英雄，失败方，当然是雷，但是我们忘了还有两个人，一个是王 LJ，这个人不评论，但是还有一个大家都忽视的小人物——赵红霞，两位伟大的记者把人家的家庭住址，真实姓名全部透露出来，你叫人家怎么活啊，两个伟大的妓者。[Weibo].

Ji, X.-G. [纪许光]. (2012, November, 24). 视频中的女子，知道我为什么没有去打扰你吗？其实，她不值得同情。刚才接受采访，我纠正了同行“女受害

人”的说法。我说，这个女人甘心情愿当了别人的枪。抛开道德、律则层面不说。某种意义上，雷政富才是个受害人。当年他是被人算计了。可是，经年之后流出的视频来源，确实有点意思。稍后继续！ [Weibo].

Ji, X.-G. [纪许光]. (2012, November 21). 重庆市北培区区委书记雷政富。请回答问题：2007 年农历大年初一和初三，你在什么地方？当时，你时任北配区委副书记、区长。你是否曾在重庆市一宾馆与 18 周岁的二奶周晓雪进行性淫乱？经奔波调查，周晓雪，真实姓名赵 X 霞，重庆市开县赵家镇人。请雷书记回答，你是否曾经动用刑警抓捕该女子，并关押 1 个月？PHOTO: [Weibo].

Ji, X.-G. [纪许光]. (2012, November 21). 雷政富的情妇， 原来是垫江县城一个开美容院的小老板，也跟着雷政富在垫江承包起了装饰工程。雷书记，此举报属实否？你和赵 X 霞是不是情人关系？[Weibo].

Ji, X.-G. [纪许光]. (2012, November 20). 求救！如此干部隐私：11 月 20 日本人发出重庆北培区委书记雷政富（正厅级）与情妇淫乱的图文；并要求其回应。随后，本人接到“号码未显示”的恐吓电话称，本人侵犯了干部隐私，要追究本人法律责任。真晕了！干部隐私？求证都不行？好吧，欢迎劳教、诬陷等所有报复手段。请大家围观！http://t.cn/zjLlzU2 [Weibo].

The Self-Report Case

All the posts below are retrieved from http://weibo.com/jinghuawangyi

---------. [夏儿大]. (2012, November 24). 好无辜的王流浪呵呵 人家给她妈妈安排了凭空而来的退休岗位时她咋不说人家胁迫保持性关系哩！ [Weibo].

---------. [益西旺姆 HL]. (2012, December 4). 贪官可恨，寄生于贪官的二奶情妇们可怜也可恨，如果不是好逸恶劳之徒，怎肯过用身体换钱的肮脏日子? [Weibo].

---------. [被你一人心疼就好]. (2012, December 4). 当初可能你是逼不得已身不由己，96 年以前也许你也曾洁身自好，我可怜不仅仅是因为同情你，更多的是觉得你太可笑了，你父母所说的你要强好胜，那就是为你开脱的借口么？你现在极力举报他不仅仅是良心发现，也是纸包不住火受不了舆论谴责了叭。真实一点，别耍小聪明别装可怜求同情了好么？祝一路顺风叭。 [Weibo].

---------. [忄 屮羊冖]. (2012, December 4). 王德春欠别人十几万块钱，还恶人告状，举报别人，无耻之极，她应该改名叫王流氓. [Weibo].

---------. [子晓蛮]. (2012, November 24). 真相就是她要害人! 陷害完别人之后..她就把东西一删! 人间蒸发!!!! 不得好死! 人在作,天在看! [Weibo].

---------. [真惠美的天涯]. (2012, December 3). 色字头上一把刀啊，漂亮媳妇也不是啥好事啊[Weibo].

---------. [老鸭谈谈]. (2012, December 3). 婊子一个，为了钱，破罐破摔。[Weibo].

---------. [v 异 2 异 6v]. (2012, December 1). 苍蝇不叮无缝的蛋，自己的道德底线太低，一个月一千的退休金就把自己卖了 [Weibo].

---------. [几点 vv]. (2012, December 4). 这是一个买卖不成仁义不在的故事 告诉了我们社会最真实的一面 女主播也许因为混不下去了破罐子破摔 男主角为了一个女人终止了自己腐败生涯 事实证明：出来混的始终是要还回去的[Weibo].

---------. [早晨先生-]. (2012, December 4). 婊子和贪官一样即可怜又可恨[Weibo].

---------. [禅悟 V]. (2012, December 10). 给她妈领退休金 借给她 15W 作资本 这是一个伟大的男人 冒着违纪的罪名去对待喜欢的一个女人 可这女人呢 贪

心更重 简直贪得无厌 真正不懂得什么叫感恩 还恩将仇报 严重鄙视 为孙伸冤 [Weibo].

---------. [吐吧的微博]. (2012). 应该是半推半就吧?至少你有很多机会举报。身处绝境是用美色换利益的回报。说白了就是对卖的价格反悔。” [Weibo].

---------. [黑白大侠 wb]. (2012, December 7). 尼妈闭嘴，孙玩了人家电视台的主播这么多年，连 15 万都不舍得，有这么扣门的衰男人，鄙卑无耻到极点。王找人黑了这狗日的都不解恨。[Weibo].

---------. [都市涌泉]. (2012, November 27). 当官的嫖主持人啊，你顶的这个王就是高级妓女嘛! [Weibo].

---------. [都市涌泉]. (2013, January 2). 到南方后再勾搭个大的贪官吗?这个破鞋涮了情人涮网友! [Weibo].

---------. [树上小蚂蚁 2580093047]. (2012, December 4). 这种女人，最后可能要求太高得不到了就报复对方，以前干嘛去了，心里变态啊，有人还同情她？ [Weibo].

---------. [一本阳光]. (2012, December 3). 我表示活该！！！贪贪贪！！究竟是谁害了你？？是谁一步步把你推向了深渊？？你自己！！！这件事早一点曝光你也就早一点结束痛苦，，也许你也不用离婚了，，你太贪图名利了！！最终毁掉了自己！！！ [Weibo].

---------. [最最帅的男子汉]. (2012, December 9). [乱世佳人—王德春好样地！]一个弱女子能够破釜沉舟、孤注一掷和这个病态的社会现象作战实属不易，各种无形的黑恶势力都有可能对她下黑手。。。希望她为了正义和自己的清白坚持到底！[Weibo].

---------. [来杯普洱]. (2012, December 8). 这个女人非常勇敢！一定要支持她！ [Weibo].

---------. [CloveDaffodil]. (2012, December 3). 经历这件事后，真希望你能和前夫复婚，你现在需要安慰，需要人关心。希望你的生活重归平静。。。 [Weibo].

---------. [反方向的钟 365]. (2012, December 4). 支持从以前中走出来！解脱自己。 [Weibo].

---------. [布实 99]. (2012, December 3). 你不会输 活着 就得拿回尊严 那个畜生会得到应有的惩罚[Weibo].

---------. [出走的仓库]. (2012, December 4). 王德春早该出来举发了!女性怎都被当成玩物?贪腐官员随时能用权力染指他人怀孕妻子? [Weibo].

---------. [齐鲁_怀念南洋. (2013, January 25). 哦，希望能振作起来，希望少遇一些歧视，好像她单身好多年了，也希望遇到个合适的结婚 [Weibo].

---------. [木东哥落地 ln]. (2012, December 7). 活出自己就是幸福。[Weibo].

---------. [我爱冰场]. (2012, December 5). 从胆小不敢说不到勇敢维权，一个女人内心要经过多大的改变！！为你祝福，现在开始重新生活！[Weibo].

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