Extramarital Affairs in China: A Feminist Approach

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### Abstract

Divorce and extramarital affairs are popular topics in China nowadays. We focus on extramarital sex and analyze this phenomenon using newspaper articles and the 1999-2000 Chinese Health and Family Life Survey (CHFLS), a rare high quality probabilistic survey including a national sample of the adult population aged 20-64. As China going through deeper stratification process, the prevalence of extramarital sex is probably a reflection of redistribution of power, both between and within the two gender groups, with both men and women of higher socio-economic status more likely to stray. Women, like men, will cheat if they have opportunities, though the underlying stories are different: education is only marginally significant for women whereas occupation is only significant for males. Age, the respondents' attitudes on women's status, extramarital affairs and self-rated attractiveness are strongly related to the risk of extramarital affairs, especially for males.

#### Extramarital Affairs in China: A Feminist Approach

China is in a time of drastic change. Chinese people are not only demanding more material goods, but quality as well, including quality marriage and quality sex life. After the revolutionary fervor, Chinese have retreated in the name of "humanity" return and refocused on family and personal life. Thus, divorce and extramarital affairs are becoming popular topics (Platt, 1999). In the United States, extramarital affairs are one of the most common reasons why marriages dissolve (Honig and Hershatter 1988; Xu 2002; Pimentel 2006). About 15 to 42 percent of recent divorces in America are dissolved due to infidelity; the discrepancy depends on who is telling the story as "cheaters" might not attribute infidelity as the reason for the dissolution (South and Lloyd 1995). According to a large nationally reprehensive sample, 22-25 percent of married men compared to 11-15 percent of married women have strayed at least once during their married lives and the percentages for older cohorts are even higher (Allen et al. 2005). Despite these high numbers of extramarital affairs in the United States, few sociologists or feminists have paid attention to this issue when they study divorce and family cohesion, possibly due to a lack of reliable data as data on such sensitive topics usually suffers from social desirability bias. Little is known about the prevalence and correlates of extramarital affairs in a rapidly changing China. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to shed light on understanding extramarital affairs in post-Mao China, which is undergoing dramatic economic and social transformations. Studying extramarital affairs is not only central for understanding current gender inequalities in sexuality, but also a key for understanding surging divorce rates and controlling HIV/AIDs in China (Zhang et al. 1999).

Even the definitions of extramarital affairs can be problematic. Some sociologists believe that there are three kinds of extramarital affairs: (1) emotional involvement with someone other than the marriage partner, but no sexual intercourse; (2) only sexual but no emotional involvement; (3) both emotional and sexual involvement with someone other than the marriage partner (Thompson, 1984). Johnson similarly divides all the extramarital affairs into three categories: "projective, fantasized and actual involvement" (1970:449). Due to data limitations, this paper specifically focuses on extramarital sex, or physical involvement with someone other than one's spouse. We believe we need to adopt the sociological imagination to analyze sexual deviations outside the marriage and understand that these behaviors are not just random incidents that happen to couples. They are closely tied to the broader societal situation and gender inequality issues. In this paper, we intend to look at some of these issues through a lens of a feminist to freshen our ways of thinking and broaden our understandings about this topic.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PRIOR WORK**

Reiss (1986) criticizes sociologists for ignoring developing theories for sexuality. She points out that the existing Freudian theory on sexuality is too psychological and does not help us understand the bigger social impacts on human sexuality (Reiss, 1986). Moreover, the Marxian approach is inadequate in explaining the inequalities between two gender groups within societies without private ownerships, such as the earliest form of human societies based on hunting and gathering, and more importantly, existing societies like socialist China and Cuba (Stacey, 1983). Furthermore, she concludes there is no cross-cultural macro level theory of sexuality in all forms of societies (Reiss, 1986).

Schwartz and Rutter (1998) divide all perspectives on gender differences in sexuality into two dichotomized categories: traditional versus feminist. Traditional biosocial theories reifying the biological differences between men and women as grounds for justifying men's promiscuous behaviors: that men show their masculinity from maximizing their partners in order to inseminate as many women as possible; while women, on the other hand, tend to maximize their births in order to hold onto the relationship (Schwartz and Rutter, 1998). Contrary to the traditional perspectives, feminist perspectives believe that sexuality discrepancies between the genders are socially constructed. In this view, women, like men, will maximize their partners if conditions are available (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998; Phoofolo, 2005).

Moreover, the struggle involved with sexuality is always a power struggle, sometimes between the two gender groups, sometimes within the group itself. Reiss (1986) concludes that sexuality is a showcase for the small group of people in power to show off their dominance by maximizing their sexual pleasure. Historically speaking, women are considered as sex tools for men in most societies, and poor men have less access to multiple wives. Societies developed from men having multiple wives (polygamy had been far more dominant than polyandry in many societies) to men's privileges in enjoying brothels or having a mistress when they have extra needs in the monogamous society. Kanazawa and Still (1999) explain that the reason that the shift from polygamy to monogamy in the patriarchal societies was because there was less inequality among men and therefore, more females chose to marry monogamously and the trend later brought about the institutional change from polygamy to monogamy. Indeed, the shift from polygamy to monogamy was not due to the decline of inequalities between the two genders, but due to the horizontal inequality decline within men themselves (Kanazawa & Still, 1999).

Furthermore, men, throughout history, have carefully confined and mutilated women's sexuality both psychologically and physically within the family arena. One underlying assumption is men's legitimate promiscuity, both before and after marriage; whereas women are seen as men's private property of father/brother before marriage, later of husband, and are not allowed access to the same behaviors. According to Marx and Engles, a patriarchal husband "...sees in his wife a mere instrument of production of prostitution both public and private" (1848:101). For about 1000 years, Chinese men were fascinated by the erotic beauty of the small feet, which were usually built upon the pain of the women, even though the unspoken purpose was to ensure women's fidelity (Mackie 1996). Folbre (1983: 268) points out that the "Father's desire to ensure the legitimacy of his offspring was a primary motive for control over women's sexuality." In Asian countries, in particular, men like to relate family honor with female purity and fidelity. Thus, the punishment for women who commit adultery is much more severe than for men (Brown, 1952). Moreover, even in contemporary times, women bear more risks than men in terms of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, contracting AIDs/HIV due to irresponsible sex partners (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998).

Gender inequalities in sexuality usually manifest into men's double standards regarding gender and sexuality. Asian men, as brothers will defend their family honor by protecting the sisters from getting sexually involved or raped by other males; but at the same time, they will try to sexually engage with girls from other families to prove their culturally-defined masculinity. In many developing countries, from Indonesia to Mexico, women are indoctrinated to preserve their virginity until marriage and stay loyal to their husband, and males are expected to seek premarital sex, sometimes extramarital sex for developing and maintaining their masculinity (Kliem 1993; Viadro and Earp 2000). In the developed world, when old constraints about sex outside marriage bounds have faded, women still do not have as much freedom as men do. Internalized since childhood, women are socialized, according to the cultural prescription, only to have sex with someone she loves and to sexually serve men's "needs" instead of seeking pleasure herself. Thus, Gage (2000) calls for broader notions of empowerment in teaching women about controlling one's own body, learning to say "No" to unwanted or unprotected sex, and other means of self-determination in seeking out sexual equality.

Sexuality within the marriage bound can be depressive for men too even though women are always the victims. Some Asian media, several Japanese films and TV serials as preeminent examples, romanticize extramarital affair stories and show understanding of such behaviors by portraying marital unfaithfulness and the tragic ending as a protest against enormous societal pressure that is suffocating and impossible to surmount, for both individual men and women. From feminist perspectives, we know this is especially true for women. To sum up, as previously discussed, we should not simply denounce extramarital affairs or other femaleinvolved sexual deviations because of their destructive nature to family and marriage. Instead, we should understand these controversial issues by looking at why do men and women have extramarital affairs and see how far we need to go in terms of achieving the ultimate goal of truly empowering women with sexual equality.

## Gender and Extramarital Affairs in China

Marriage is almost universal in China (Coale 1984; Zeng, Vaupel and Yashin 1985; Wolf 1985) and is more stable than in the West, though there has been an upward trend of divorce in recent years (Diamant 2000; *China Daily* 2005). The communist Chinese government banned many feudal marital practices such as child marriages and the use of concubines, outlawed prostitution, and encouraged women to pursue a career outside of marriage (Pimentel 2006). For

the past three decades, China witnessed unprecedented economic growth. As a result, Chinese society is going through major social and ideational transformations, including family formations, and thus, divorce and extramarital affairs are becoming popular topics and practices (Platt 1999). However for a country like China, with thousands of years of feudal baggage and a sudden lift from a semi-colonial, semi-feudal peasant society into a socialist one, removal of private ownership did not seem to bring about the instant true equality between men and women, nor did it help men part with deeply entrenched "good old" memories about the concubine tradition.

As the economy booms, new modes of concubinage occur. And unfortunately, many Chinese men identify such kind of sexual practices as a result of modernization (Honig and Hershatter 1988). There is a well known "mistress village" on the outskirts of Shenzhen, the southern boom city of China. Shenzhen borders Hong Kong and the village got the name because of the "tens of thousands of Hong Kong businessmen and workers who make the regular pilgrimage across the border" (Williams 1999: 79). The Chinese media oftentimes calls the mistress second wives (ernai), which means businessmen pay for separate housing and other material goods so as to own the "exclusive rights" to their mistress (Shen 2005). Hong Kong businessmen's lifestyles are the kind of lives many Chinese men, or men in other developing countries desire. As more and more inland Chinese men get rich, from the corrupted officials to other upstarts, the first thing many wealthy Chinese men want is a mistress whom they can show off to others as a status symbol and evidence of personal wealth (Williams 1999). Williams (1999) explains that the contradiction in Chinese men is because of the twist of deep-rooted feudalist male-dominance mingled with the modern, imported ideology of commercialized sexuality, yielding a new version of sexual inequalities with some western flavors.

In terms of extramarital affairs and divorce, Chinese feminists have divergent opinions (Eckholm 1998). Some believe that divorce should be harder to grant and divorce laws should punish men and the third party, while making adultery a criminal offense (Eckholm 1998; Economist 1998; Wan 1998); whereas others believe that the increasing divorce rate can be viewed as female empowerment (Eckholm 1998). In 2001, China National People's Congress passed several modifications to China's 1980 Marriage Law, making extramarital affairs illegal, which took more punitive action towards violators, and added more protection for women, senior citizens and children (Zhang 2002). However, even with the law protection and other agencies help detecting the "guilty party" (e.g. there are many private law firms in China which specialize in investing the extramarital affairs), extramarital affairs seem to be on the rise.

#### **RESERCH QUESTIONS**

Tensions between the two feminist perspectives make us ponder over several questions:

- What percentage of married men and women in China engage in extramarital sex? Are married men disproportionately more likely to cheat than married women in China?
- 2) Is having extramarital sex a reflection of privileges regardless of gender? That is, whether men and women of higher socioeconomic status (SES), as usually measured by education, income and occupational prestige scores, are more likely to cheat as compared to Chinese persons of lower SES?
- 3) What kinds of characteristics do women who engage in extramarital sex in China have? Are women who are more liberal (as indicated by their more feminist views on gender status and less likely to do more household chores) more likely to stray?

To answer the above questions, we will use mixed methods by analyzing a combination of statistical data and newspaper articles.

#### **DATA & METHODOLOGY**

## **Statistical Data & Methods**

Distinct from other methodologies, feminist research methodology tends to aim at research *for* women instead of simply *about* women. Feminists especially favor qualitative methods such as story sharing or in-depth interviews or a mixed method of analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data to better capture the complexities of life and women's personal feelings (Thompson, 1984). Thus, for this paper, both an analysis of statistical data and content from Chinese newspaper articles are presented. The statistical data for this paper is from the 1999-2000 Chinese Health and Family Life Survey (CHFLS), a rare high quality probabilistic survey including a national sample of the adult population aged 20-64. For details about the survey, see Parish et al. (2004). We limit our sample to couples who are currently married. Descriptive statistics and logistic regression have been adopted to analyze the statistical data. For the qualitative section, we have analyzed 15 scripts of the recent Chinese newspaper articles.

## Variables in CHFLS

*Extramarital Sex.* The focus dependent variable is a dummy-coded variable with respondent ever had an extramarital sex (even just once) coded as 1. This is a recoded variable, constructed by the Chicago CHFLS team.

*Gender (MALE).* As indicated above, each gender brings in different motivations and attitudes when having affairs (Allen et al. 2005). *Extramarital Sex* is more purely sexual for men and more than just sexual for women (Glass and Wright 1985; Thompson 1984; Allen et al.

2005). For Chinese men, *extramarital sex* is about entitlement; and for Chinese women, it can sometimes be deemed as self-enhancement or in searching for greater autonomy (Weils 2003). Because gender difference is highly significant, males and females are studied separately.

*Age (AGE).* The CHFLS asked respondents "What is your current full age?" Specifically, age should be the respondent's full Western age. Only adults ages 20-64 in the Chinese population were included in the CHFLS. Taking time and cohort effect into consideration, Atkins et al. (2001) reported a curvilinear pattern between age and lifetime prevalence of extramarital involvement in which middle-age groups report the highest lifetime prevalence of such involvement even though the younger age groups actually experience the highest incidence rates in the prior year. In China, Zeng et al. (1995) reported that the 30-39 age group is most likely to divorce due to extramarital affairs. Thus with CHFLS, both age and a squared term of age are included in the model. Other important variables for predicting extramarital sex include age of first sex with the spouse and age when married the current spouse. Unfortunately, age at current marriage is in categories. This also made it impossible for us to calculate the marriage duration variable.

*Remarriage (REMAR).* Remarriage rate is prevalent among the divorcees in China (Zeng 1991). However, as an incomplete institution, people who are remarried are also more likely to divorce again (Cherlin 1978). Remarriage is a dummy coded variable with people who have remarried coded as 1. furthermore, remarriage is only used to predict male's extramarital affairs as no remarried females cheat on their spouse.

*Education (EDUC).* The relationship between education and extramarital involvement is not a clear-cut one (Allen et al. 2005). Smith (1994) reported people of higher education hold more permissive attitudes about extramarital involvement, but others found that this is only true

for people with prior divorce history (Atkins et al. 2001). Also, there are other important moderators such as race, religion and age that may influence the effect of education on *extramarital sex* (Allen et al. 2005). In the CHFLS, respondents' level of education is a six category variable with 1= Never attended school, 2= Elementary school, 3= Junior high school, 4= Senior high school, professional training school / vocational high school, 5= Junior college, 6= University/ graduate school. Education and age interaction has also been created to test the interaction effect of age and education as suggested by the literature (Allen et al. 2005).

Income (INCRM). Respondent's personal monthly income has also been reconstructed by the CHFLS team. Missing values were imputed using annual income, income category, or regression. [Rounded to 10ths for income<100; rounded to 100ths for income between 100 and 999 Yuan per month; rounded 1000ths for income between 1,000 and 9,999; top-coded to 10,000 for income>=10,000]. For this study, the logarithm of the monthly income is going to be used instead of income.

Occupation (OCCUP). CHFLS asked the respondents "What kind of work do you mainly do (If currently unemployed/retired, please tell us about your previous job)?" with the following categories as 1= agricultural producer [farmer], 2= manual worker, 3= sales, service, entertainment industry worker, 4= self-employed, independent worker [<8 workers, *geti hu, geti laodong zhe*], 5= clerical worker, low-rank bureaucrat, office worker, 6= technical worker, teacher, intellectual [i.e., professional / technical worker], 7= manager, factory director, business-owner, 8= government official (including rural officials), 9= other occupation. The Chinese version of SES can also be captured by one's income and occupation prestige score, even though some discrepancies occur in recent years as many of the first batch of rich people, usually self-employed (*geti hu*) with lower occupation prestige in the job hierarchy make more money than,

for example, a professor. Thus, the above occupations have been recoded into 8 dummy variables.

Spousal Factors. From a micro perspective, psychologists emphasize the intra-household power inequalities between partners when study the causes for extramarital relationships. According to Prins and associates (1993), people who either are over-benefiting or underbenefiting (defined as self-perceived contribution to the relationship as compared to their partners) from the marital relationship are both likely to have extramarital affairs, but this is only significant for women (Prins, Buunk, VanYperen, 1993). This finding seems convoluted at first, but supporting evidence show this makes perfect sense. Shen's study (2005) on Taiwanese businessmen in China shows that no matter whether these men are engaging in extramarital affairs has nothing to do with their marital quality or equity in the household and they feel perfectly fine in enjoying a happy family in Taiwan and a mistress in Mainland. While women, on the other hand, have affairs usually because they are unsatisfied with their current relationships. Women also more likely to leave their un-satisfactory relationship once the affairs work out. The Equity variable is measured by the following question, "Does your partner spend more time on chores than you do?" and with 5 answers, 1= Much more than me, 2= A bit more than me, 3= both about the same, 4= A bit less than me, 5= Much less than me. Other spousal factors include spouse's monthly income, educational level and social actives frequency as measured by the following question "During the past 12 months, how often did you participate in social activities after work (Excluding activities with family or relatives)?" as measured by l = On average 2 - 3 times a week or more, 2 = On average once a week, 3 = On average 2 - 3 times a month, 4 = On average once a month or less, 5 = Never.

*Urban (URBAN).* Even though communism supposedly eliminated the social classes, the rigid Hukou system has apparently naturally divided the post-communism China into a distinct two tiered rural-urban class system. In general, extramarital affairs are more or less an urban luxury as people in the urban areas enjoy far better communication and other material goods. Urban is a constructed variable by the CHFLS team and the site was identified as Urban if it has less than 15% farmers. Due to over-sampling, about 80% of the respondents are from urban cites.

*Geographic region (REGION).* Geographic region can be deemed as another contextual variable as people in the south coastal China have more migrant population and also opened to the outside world first as compared to other parts of China. Region has been reconstructed by the Chicago CHFLS team and has following categories: 1= Coastal South, 2= Coastal East, 3= Inlands, 4= North, 5= Northeast, 6= Central West. Region is a dummied coded variable with coastal south as omitted category.

*Opportunity (OPP).* Opportunity factors have been recognized by many as an important predictor variable for having extramarital sex (Gerstel 1979; Allen et al. 2005). The opportunity may be largely affected by one's occupation, e.g., people who are in business, entertainment, communication or transportation fields may have more opportunities to meet potential partners and the subculture of each job can also be very different. Through years of ethnography study, Shen (2005) described that the business men from Taiwan in China are expected to be the "player" and provision of commercial sex are common corporate practice for winning the contract or do business. In the CHFLS, opportunity was captured by the question "In the past 12 months, regardless of reason, how many days altogether did your partner leave home by himself/herself?" (Count only days stayed away overnight) with following answers 1= Never, or

less than a week, 2= Less than a month, 3= Less than 3 months, 4= Less than 6 months, 5= More than 6 months. Other than urban/rural locality, region and whether the respondent is always away from home, we also include another contextual variable on the respondent's living conditions to see whether the immediate living environment has any impact on whether they will stray. This is due to the reality that most of the people in less-developed countries are living in multi-generation households and housing shortage is a reality (Zeng 1991; Zhou et al. 2001). The data includes the question "How seriously do your living conditions affect your sex life?" with possible answers 1= A lot, 2= Not much, 3= No interference.

*Patriarchal View.* Patriarchal view in CHFLS was measured by whether the respondent agrees with the following statement "Some say that a wife should be responsible for the family and domestic tasks while a husband should focus on career and matters outside home (so-called, "men focus on the outside, women focus on the inside"). Do you agree?" 1= completely agree, 2= somewhat agree, 3= somewhat disagree, 4= completely disagree.

*Normative Disapproval of Extramarital Sex (ATT).* Not surprisingly, attitudes on extramarital sex and extramarital behaviors are closely related (Kinsey et al. 1953; Glass and Wright 1992; Allen et al. 2005). Based on the Chicago sex study in the U.S. and a parallel study in China, men in general are more open about unfaithful sexual behavior than women. The Chicago sex study reveals that 75 percent of married men compared to 85 percent of married women say they have remained faithful and 89 percent of American men felt that extramarital sex is wrong compared to 94 percent of women. Men's greater permissiveness towards extramarital affairs is strongly related to their desire of having extramarital affairs and later the actual pursue of having affairs outside the marriage (Prins, Buunk, VanYperen, 1993). Attitude towards extramarital affairs in CHFLS is measured by the following question "Nowadays in our

society, some married people have sex with those other than their spouse (extramarital affair, third party). Do you think that each such case should be treated individually or that these people should all be punished?" with 4 possible answers: 1= definitely should be treated individually, 2= maybe should be treated individually, 3= maybe should all be punished, 4= definitely should all be punished.

Self-rated Attractiveness & Spouse's Attractiveness. Buunk (1980) found that self-rated physical attractiveness is related to elevated rates of extramarital affairs among both genders. CHFLS includes the question "In your opinion, are you attractive in the eyes of the opposite sex?" Possible answers include 1= very much, 2= somewhat, 3= not much, 4= not at all. The respondents were also asked to rate their spouse's attractiveness.

#### **Preliminary findings from CHFLS**

Table 1 includes some basic descriptive statistics for all the respondents and the ones that had extramarital sex by gender. In this sample, about 21% men as compared to 5% women cheat on their spouse by having at least one extramarital sex. The weighted percentages are 15% for men and 5% for women. Both male and female "cheaters" make more monthly income and are relatively better educated that the average males and females. According to these descriptive statistics, more "patriarchal" males, as indicated by their less likely to do chores and more likely to agree the idea that women's position is at home as compared to average Chinese men are more likely to stray. On the other hand, more "feminist" females, as indicated by their less likely to do chores and less likely to agree the idea that women's position is at home as compared to the average Chinese women are more likely to cheat on their spouse. Both males and females cheaters show more permissive attitudes on extramarital affairs. Model 1 in Table 2 includes respondents' socioeconomic status variables including respondents' monthly income, educational level, and occupation controlling for their age, age squared, age when the respondent had first sex with the spouse and age when the respondent married the spouse and the remarriage status. However, the remarriage status only applies for male as there are no remarried females strayed from their partners in this sample. Model 2 adds spousal factors which include spouse's income, education, spouse's attractiveness rated by the respondent, spouse's relative time spent on doing chores and spouse's frequency of having social activities. Furthermore, Model 3 adds a panel of context variables that measure the respondent is at, rural/urban, days that the respondent are away from home in the past year and whether the living environment is a hinder for sex. Lastly, model 4 adds some of the respondent's attitudinal variables including his/her patriarchal view, whether the respondent think extramarital affair is okay, whether people should judge affairs case by case and the respondent's self-rated attractiveness scores.

As in Table 2, age shows a significant curvilinear pattern for both men and women. However, the underlying stories might be dramatically different depending on one's gender. Middle-aged men and women who are married are both more likely to stray, but men show an accelerated and women show a decelerated pattern of stray as they getting older. Age of first sex is only significant for males and the older they push off having sex with the spouse; the less likely they will stray from their spouse. Age of marriage is not significant for both genders. Remarriage is significant only for males as none of the remarried females stray (0 cell). Remarried men are about four times more likely to stray as compared to other males. Income is highly significant as more financially stable men and women are more likely to initiate the affairs. Education is only significant for women in Model 1 as having a higher degree increases the odds of women having an affair by 48 percent. Occupation is only significant for males. Compared to farmers, males who are doing sales/service or managerial jobs in China are 2-7 times more likely to have an affair. Spousal characteristics only matter for male in predicting them having extramarital affairs and the more affluent their wives, the more likely the husbands will stray.

In terms of extramarital sex opportunities, males in east coast, north and west central part of China are likely to have extramarital sex as compared to male counterparts in south coastal areas. Females in the north part of China are actually more likely to stray, possibly due to the local cultures. For example, females in *Heilongjiang, Jilin* and *Liaoning* provinces locate very close to Russia and women there are believed to be more westernized by many Chinese. Urban/rural is not a significant predictor for having extramarital affairs in China for either gender. Rural women may get involved in affairs as much as urban women, though most rural women are probably only playing the "second wife role (*ernai*)". Oftentimes, newspaper or magazine articles specifically talk about female migrant workers, many from poverty-stricken inland provinces of China, who become a "second wife" of the affluent Hong Kong or Taiwan sojourners (Lang & Smart, 2002). For both gender groups, the more often they are away from home, the more likely they will have an affair. The living environment may be a push factor for females to stray from their husband, but this is not the case for male.

The respondents' attitudes on women's status, affairs and self-rated attractiveness are strongly related to the respondent action of having affairs or not, especially for males. For both men and women, people who definitely say "No" to extramarital affairs are indeed less likely to engage in an affair. For both genders, the more attractive you think you are, the more likely you are going to stray. Finally, men who hold less patriarchal views on gender and who are less tolerant about extramarital affairs also are less likely to engage in an affair, but the same is not true for women.

#### --Table 1 & 2 about here--

## **Content Analysis of the Chinese Newspaper Articles**

Inspired by Chang (1999) who studied the extramarital affairs in Taiwan by analyzing the scripts of the newspaper articles, we did a similar search of the recent Chinese newspapers. By coding the data from the popular media, Chang (1999) offered a typology of classifying the affairs into four types: "savior" type or the old-fashioned concubinage type (usually rich men with poor women); "unhappy housewife" type (men who are not rich or powerful but can provide "spiritual" support to the traditional women who could or would not want a divorce; the "instrumental women" type which describes a career woman using affairs with powerful men to climb up the social ladder, and lastly; the "soul-mates" type with modern women having an affair with an ordinary guy who she loves.

The Chinese popular media has come a long way from using "adultery" (*tongjian*), to the more neutral "the third party" (*disanzhe*) to the even more tolerant "extramarital love" (*hunwaiqin*) for describing extramarital affairs (Hong Net, 2003). From the 15 newspaper stories, 8 of them described men as initiators and 7 about females as the first party. Women who are the third party usually have a tragic ending, either being abandoned (Modern Express News 2004; Morning News 2004), killed by the male first party (Chutiandushi News 2006) or by their wives (Yangcheng Evening News 2004). The wife may be killed by the husband and the third party (Sanqing City News 2004). For the seven stories with wife who initiated the affairs, two

stories are about the husbands trying to kill the third party male (China Business Morning News, 2006; Chongqing Evening News, 2004); two are about the female initiator being abandoned or killed by the third party male (Xinggui Net 2004; Chutianjin News 2004); and the other three are about females bullying their henpecked husbands (Dayang Net 2004; Xinhua Net 2004; China News Net 2004).

Most of the women in the Chinese news fit into the "savior" type or the "unhappy housewife" type, but not the other two types with women openly challenging family as an institution. Interestingly, the Chinese popular media tends to romanticize extramarital affairs which helps justify people's behaviors, usually men's (Farrer & Sun, 2003). The pseudoconcubines usually are described as "a beauty in a hidden golden house" (*jinwucangjiao*). Men's extramarital behaviors were portrayed as natural or sometimes necessary no matter whether they were happy with their marriages or not. Married women with husbands having affairs are usually portrayed as "bitter victims" but usually are more tolerant about their husbands (Honig & Hershatter, 1988). On the other hand, female initiators are usually described as "loose" women who are unhappy about their marriages. Their husbands usually could not bear their wives' unfaithful behavior. The third party women, especially the younger ones, are vehemently criticized, oftentimes by other women, as the main causes of the extramarital affairs and as destroyers of the harmony of other families (Honig & Hershatter, 1988).

#### CONCLUSION

Our preliminary analysis shows that overall, having extramarital sex is a reflection of privileges in China as both men and women of higher socio-economic status are more likely to cheat on their spouse. As China going through deeper stratification process, the practices of

extramarital sex are probably a reflection of redistribution of power, both between and within the two gender groups. Women, like men, will cheat if they have opportunities, though the extent and degree between the two gender groups can be very different. Both males and females cheaters show more permissive attitudes on extramarital affairs.

Possible shortcomings for this paper include the deficiency of the dependent variable extramarital sex and the data. People who had one-time extramarital sex are not differentiated from people who had multiple times. Extramarital sex can also of different natures. From a male's perspective, the extra-marital sex partners can be Miss (*xiaojie*) (literally "miss", which implies "commercial sex worker"), second wife (*ernai*), secret lover (*qingren*) and for females, partners can be secret lover (*qingren*), lover (*lianren*), old man (*laotouzi*). Depending on how the subjects interpret his/her extramarital relationship, different terminologies may be chosen and the underlying nature of these relationships can be very different. Moreover, CHFLS is a cross-sectional data and was not designed to follow a cohort to study their behavior patterns over time. Even though they asked many sexual history questions, the small sample size as considering the Chinese population may be a shortcoming.

We are calling for a comparative way of thinking about extramarital affairs by studying men and women separately. For married women in traditional marriages who fall in love with other men, this may be deemed as a necessary step toward divorce, which can be liberating. Extramarital affairs may not be the best way for some women to achieve equality, but we should not simply denounce it because of its destructive nature to family and marriage. Furthermore, we disagree with always blaming the women as the solution. We suggest we understand these controversial issues from a feminist point of view, looking at what women want, and untangling the myths of marriage and divorce to see how far we need to go in terms of achieving the ultimate goal of truly empowering Chinese women with sexual equality.

And the second statements of the annual tender of the second second second second second second second second s		All Male	les			Had extra	Had extramartial Sex	
	Z	Range	Mean	S.D.	Z	Range	Mean	S.D.
Ever had extramarital Sex	1595	(0-1)	0.21	0.40	328	(0-1)	1.00	00.0
Age	1596	(20-64)	41.31	9.98	328	(23-64)	38.98	8.45
Age of 1st sex with the spouse	1587	(12-57)	25.66	4.09	328	(17-45)	25.22	4.19
Age when married current spouse (in Categories)	1584	(1-8)	2.80	0.81	323	(1-6)	2.78	0.78
Remarried	1596	(0-1)	0.04	0.19	328	(0-1)	0.06	0.25
Monthly income (in $\mathfrak{X}$ )	1596	(0-10,000)	1033.62	1210.03	328	(0-10,000)	1467.38	1803.05
Education (lo to hi)	1596	(1-6)	3.46	1.12	328	(1-6)	3.61	1.03
Occupation	1584	(1-9)	3.58	2.01	325	(1-9)	3.95	1.94
Spouse's Monthly income (in ¥)	1595	(0-8,000)	564.90	622.84	328	(0-6,000)	763.23	822.59
Spouse's Education (lo to hi)	1592	(1-6)	3.13	1.09	328	(1-6)	3.31	1.03
Spouse's Attractiveness rated by R (hi to lo)	1584	(1-4)	2.52	0.63	328	(1-4)	2.40	0.61
Spouse's relative time on chores (over-benefiting to under)	1568	(1-5)	1.94	1.08	326	(1-5)	1.87	1.10
social activities frequency of the spouse (lo to hi)	1540	(1-5)	3.85	1.28	319	(1-5)	3.70	1.30
Region	1596	(1-6)	3.33	1.75	328	(1-6)	3.02	1.78
Urban	1596	(0-1)	0.79	0.41	328	(0-1)	0.86	0.34
R's Days away in the past year (lo to hi)	1596	(1-5)	1.41	0.92	328	(1-5)	1.64	1.07
living environment hinders sex?	1568	(1-3)	2.60	0.60	326	(1-3)	2.55	0.62
Patriarchal view (very patriarchal to feminist)	1595	(1-4)	2.11	1.00	328	(1-4)	1.98	0.95
Extramarital affair is okay (agree to disagree)	1592	(1-4)	3.49	0.69	326	(1-4)	3.08	0.80
Judge affairs case by case (agree to disagree)	1590	(1-4)	2.33	1.13	328	(1-4)	1.89	0.98
R self-rated attractiveness (hi to lo)	1589	(1-4)	2.65	0.59	327	(1-4)	2.46	0.63
Female		All Females	ales			Had extra	Had extramartial Sex	
Ever had extramarital Sex	1638	(0-1)	0.05	0.23	88	(0-1)	1 00	0 00
Age	1638	(21-64)	40.20	10.04	88	(23-61)	36.80	7.33
Age of 1st sex with the spouse	1635	(17-54)	23.96	3.62	88	(18-31)	23.22	2.65
Age when married current should (in Categories)	1628	(1-8)	2 41		8	(1-21)		0.58
Age when manned current spouse (in Categories) Remarried	1638	(1-0)	0.03	0.77	000	(t-1)	0.00	00.0
Monthly income (in ¥)	1638	(0-10,000)	613.34	755.92	88	(0-10,000)	1161.93	1544.71
Education (lo to hi)	1638	(1-6)	3.19	1.12	88	(2-6)	3.57	1.06
Occupation	1608	(1-9)	3.11	1.76	87	(1-9)	3.51	1.75
Spouse's Monthly income (in ¥)	1638	(0-10,000)	962.55	1149.02	88	(0-10,000)	1517.61	2098.37
Spouse's Education (lo to hi)	1635	(1-6)	3.49	1.13	88	(2-6)	3.78	1.12
Spouse's Attractiveness rated by R (hi to lo)	1634	(1-4)	2.50	0.64	88	(1-4)	2.41	0.65
Spouse's relative time on chores (over-benefiting to under)	1610	(1-5)	3.97	1.11	85	(1-5)	4.14	1.01
social activities frequency of the spouse (lo to hi)	1601	(1-5)	3.01	1.60	83	(1-5)	2.72	1.53
Region	1638	(1-6)	3.29	1.75	88	(1-6)	3.51	1.74
Urban	1638	(0-1)	0.78	0.41	88	(0-1)	0.82	0.39
R's Days away in the past year (lo to hi)	1638	(1-5)	1.07	0.38	88	(1-5)	1.26	0.75
living environment hinders sex?	1608	(1-3)	2.59	0.61	84	(1-3)	2.42	0.66
Patriarchal view (very patriarchal to feminist)	1638	(1-4)	2.06	1.02	88	(1-4)	2.15	1.01
Extramarital affair is okay (agree to disagree)	1638	(1-4)	3.80	0.51	88	(1-4)	3.44	0.68
Judge affairs case by case (agree to disagree)	1634	(1-4)	2.79	1.19	88	(1-4)	2.27	1.10
R self-rated attractiveness (hi to lo)	1635	(1-4)	2.66	0.55	88	(1-3)	2.20	0.57
*Includes couples who are currently married only.								

Source: CHFLS.

				Male R	Male Respondent (N=1,496)	Male Respondent (N=1,496)						Femal	e Responde	Female Respondent (N=1,552)	2)		
		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	33	Model 4	4	Model 1	=	Model 2	7	Model 3	<u>el 3</u>	Model 4	14
EMI Involved Partner's	S	B E	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	В	Exp(B)	В	Exp(B)	В	Exp(B)	В	Exp(B)	В	Exp(B)	В	Exp(B)
		-3.86		-2.87		-2.17		2.83		-9.15	0.00	-9.57		-10.08		-5.34	
Respondent's	Age	0.19 **	1.21	0.18 **	1.20	0.18 **	1.20	0.14 *	1.16	0.43 **	1.54	0.43 **	1.54	0.47 **	1.60	0.45 **	1.57
Characteristics	Age squared	0.00 ***	1.00	0.00 **	1.00	0.00 **	1.00	0.00 *	1.00	-0.01 **	0.99	-0.01 **	0.99	-0.01 ***	* 0.99	-0.01 **	0.99
	Age of 1st sex with the spouse	-0.10 **	0.91	-0.09 **	0.92	-0.10 **	0.90	-0.09 **	0.91	-0.12	0.89	-0.12	0.89	-0.13	0.88	-0.12	0.88
	Age when married current spouse	0.15	1.16	0.09	1.10	0.09	1.10	0.06	1.06	-0.17	0.85	-0.16	0.85	-0.16	0.85	-0.18	0.84
	Remarried	1.32 ***	3.72	1.39 ***	4.00	1.47 ***	4.36	1.53 ***	4.62								
Respondent's SES	Monthly income (in ¥)	0.00 ***	1.00	* 00.0	1.00	0.00 *	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00 **	1.00	0.00 **	1.00	0.00 **	1.00	0.00	1.00
	Education (lo to hi)	0.01	1.01	-0.02	0.98	-0.05	0.95	-0.08	0.93	0.39 *	1.48	0.31	1.36	0.18	1.20	0.14	1.15
	Occupation (omitted category is "farmer")	* * *		**													
	manual	0.90 **	2.46	0.92 **	2.51	0.54	1.72	0.58	1.79	0.14	1.16	0.18	1.19	0.43	1.54	0.41	1.51
	sale/service	1.55 ***	4.69	1.51 ***	4.52	1.07 **	2.91	0.92 *	2.50	0.37	1.44	0.41	1.51	0.73	2.07	0.66	1.93
	self-employed	1.04 **	2.82	1.02 **	2.76	0.73	2.08	0.61	1.85	0.55	1.73	0.62	1.86	0.86	2.37	0.74	2.10
	clerical	1.21 ***	3.34	1.16 **	3.19	0.77	2.15	0.60	1.83	-0.23	0.80	-0.28	0.76	0.11	1.12	-0.24	0.79
	professional/technical jobs	1.27 **	3.56	1.25 **	3.49	0.93	2.54	0.70	2.00	-0.09	0.91	-0.19	0.83	0.20	1.22	0.01	1.01
	manager	1.96 ***	7.11	1.84 ***	6.31	1.32 **	3.73	1.12 *	3.08	-0.43	0.65	-0.50	0.61	-0.05	0.95	-0.80	0.45
	administrative	0.90	2.47	0.81	2.25	0.58	1.79	0.33	1.39	0.04	1.04	0.13	1.13	0.70	2.01	0.65	1.91
	other	1.33 *	3.78	1.35 *	3.84	1.08	2.94	0.82	2.28	1.06	2.89	0.92	2.50	1.38	3.96	1.10	2.99
Spousal	Monthly income (in ¥)			0.00 ***	1.00	0.00 **	1.00	0.00 **	1.00			0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Factors	Education (lo to hi)			-0.07	0.93	-0.06	0.94	-0.06	0.94			0.13	1.14	0.13	1.13	0.12	1.13
	Spouse's Attractiveness rated by R (hi to lo)			-0.13	0.87	-0.11	0.90	-0.01	0.99			-0.06	0.95	-0.04	0.96	0.27	1.31
	Spouse's relative time on chores (over-benefiting to under)	der)		-0.11	06.0	-0.10	0.91	-0.06	0.94			0.15	1.16	0.16	1.17	0.13	1.14
	social activities frequency of the spouse (lo to hi)			-0.07	0.93	-0.06	0.94	-0.02	0.98			-0.10	0.90	-0.12	0.89	-0.11	0.90
Context	Region (omitted category is Coastal South)					*		*									1
(Opportunities)	Coastal East					-0.57 **	0.57	-0.56 **	0.57					0.44	1.55	0.28	1.32
	South Inland					-0.40	0.67	-0.44	0.65					0.18	1.19	0.06	1.06
	North					-0.73 **	0.48	-0.71 **	0.49					0.97 *	2.65	0.85 *	2.33
	Northeast					-0.31	0.73	-0.23	0.79					0.66	1.93	0.39	1.47
	West Central					+ 69.0-	0.50	+ 69.0-	0.50					0.62	1.86	0.28	1.33
	Urban					0.39	1.48	0.26	1.29					-0.15	0.86	-0.20	0.82
	R's Days away in the past year (lo to hi)					0.20 **	1.22	0.16 *	1.17					0.68 ***	* 1.98	0.55 **	1.74
	living environment hinders sex?					-0.12	0.89	-0.11	0.90					-0.44 *	0.65	-0.31	0.74
Attitudinal	Patriarchal view (very patriarchal to feminist)							-0.18 *	0.84							-0.01	0.99
Variables	Extramarital affair is okay (agree to disagree)							-0.75 ***	0.47							-0.44 *	0.64
	Judge affairs case by case (agree to disagree)							-0.34 ***	0.72							-0.08	0.92
	R self-rated attractiveness (hi to lo)							-0.38 **	0.69							-1.29 ***	0.28
	Negelkerke R Square	0.12		0.14		0.17		0.27		0.11	_	0.12		0.16	6	0.24	

Includes couples who are currently married only. Source: CHFLS.

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