

# Bringing Gender in Women and Corruption in China

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## ABSTRACT

*Bringing Gender in. Undertitel: Women and Corruption in China*

This article deals with women and corruption in China. The aim is to bring gender in and to make good the lack of focus on gender in studies of corruption in China. The article outlines different forms of female involvement in corruption, introduces various theories of corruption, and elaborates on the relevance of these theories in explaining and understanding the role of gender in the case of corruption in China. The article also proposes a theory of chaotic capital/resource acquisition as a supplement and discusses the potential of this theory in accounting for the role of women in corruption, whether as government officials or as the mistresses and wives (family members) of corrupt male officials.

## KEYWORDS

*Corruption, China, women, gender, transition economy, sexual capital, power abuse*

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In recent years, a great deal of media spotlight has been directed towards women involved in corruption scandals in China. In September 2012, prior to the opening of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) 18<sup>th</sup> Congress in Beijing, Bo Xilai, the former party chief of Chongqing, was sacked for corruption, while his wife Gu Kailai received a suspended death sentence for having killed a British businessman.<sup>1</sup> Early in January 2013 Yi Junqing, the then director of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the CCP Central Committee, was stripped of his office, having been found guilty of following an 'improper lifestyle' after one of his mistresses had exposed their affair in a blog.<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian* reports, 'a blog post on 30 December accused the party secretary of an impoverished county in Yunnan province of purchasing 10 SUVs and getting drunk with a group of attractive women'; 'the vice-mayor of a small city in Guangdong province lost his job after a subordinate exposed his connection to a local drug ring. Blog posts accuse the deputy chief of the province's Land Resource Bureau of having affairs with 47 mistresses and receiving almost £2.8bn in bribes'.<sup>3</sup> *The Times of India* cited a recent report by Renmin University in China, stating that 'about 95 per cent of officials being investigated have mistresses'.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the tabloid media fanfare about women in corruption scandals, scholarly research on corruption in China, both internationally and domestically, has so far said little about women and the role of gender in corruption. Generic corruption studies focused on China attempt to 'answer all the questions that pertain to the phenomenon: Why does it happen (causes); how does it happen (patterns, forms); what effects does it have (consequences, impacts); and how to control it (solutions,

remedies)?' (Lü 2000: 3). While recognizing that corruption 'has spread since the reform period' (Rooij 2005: 293), the most recent studies of corruption in China mainly 'try to determine the origin of this development' (ibid.). Five causal factors have been identified: 1) the development of a market economy, and more specifically the dual price mechanism and the influx of foreign investment, which have 'created graft opportunities' (ibid.); 2) the 'relatively slow increase in public officials' incomes'; 3) the 'weak regulatory system that allowed corruption to grow'; 4) the 'incomplete political reform that resulted in a lack of checks and balances'; and 5) the 'lack of ethics against corruption due to the changes in ideology' and 'the lack of "commercial morality in economic life"' (Rooij 2005: 294). The word 'women' rarely appears, and the relevance of gender in corruption remains seriously under-investigated.

Where gender is indeed treated centrally is in international scholarship on gender and corruption beyond the specific Chinese context, and the central question is which sex is cleaner. Theories within this field can be divided into two camps. The 'idealistic' camp views women as the gender that is more ethical and that has a greater sense of responsibility, hence is less corrupt, or less tolerant of corrupt behavior (Swamy et al. 2001; Dollar et al. 2001). Studies in this camp show that 'women are less involved in bribery, and are less likely to condone bribe-taking', and that 'corruption is less severe where women hold a large share of parliament seats and senior positions in the government, bureaucracy, and comprise a larger share of the labor force' (Swamy et al. 2001: 25). Moreover, 'a very high level of raw correlation between low corruption scores and relatively high numbers of women in parliaments' is also found (Goetz 2007: 93), suggesting that women 'may

have higher standards of ethical behavior and be more concerned with the common good' (Dollar et al. 2001: 427). This view is also reflected in the World Bank's 2001 report, 'Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice', which found that 'societies where women have greater rights and participate more in public life ... have cleaner business and governments and enjoy more productive economies' (quoted from Sung 2006: 139).

The 'realistic' camp, however, questions the perception of women as the 'fairer and cleaner' sex and is highly skeptical of women's probity and their assumed corruption-reducing effect. Esarey and Chirillo's study finds

evidence that the relationship between gender and corruption differs by institutional context. (...) Where corruption is stigmatized, women will be less tolerant of corruption and less likely to participate compared to men. But if 'corrupt' behaviors are an ordinary part of governance supported by political institutions, there will be no corruption gender gap. (Esarey and Chirillo 2012: 24)<sup>5</sup>

Alhassan-Alolo concludes,

women may not prove less corrupt in the public sector if corrupt opportunities and networks are not restrained. Besides, the very gender system, which is used to justify women's proclivity to less corrupt behavior and subsequent integration into the public sector, could itself be the source of corruption as women attempt to fulfill their gender roles. (Alhassan-Alolo 2007: 227)

According to Sung, 'Control over resources and influence makes corruption possible and attractive': 'in theory, the redistribution of political power triggered by the political emancipation of women should not change the general prevalence of corrupt incidents because the overall

levels of motivation and opportunities for corruption remain the same'. Sung even predicts that 'an increase in the proportion of appointed and elected female officials in government should increase the number of corrupt female officials and simultaneously decrease the number of corrupt male officials' (Sung 2006: 140).

As far as China is concerned, it has been rather difficult to discern which gender is more or less corrupt due to the scarcity of corruption statistics distinguished by gender. The figures for corruption cases in 1999, 2000 and 2001, for example, are respectively 38,382, 45,113 and 36,447, involving respectively 2,200, 2,680 and 2,670 government officials of county-level and above (see Rooij 2005: 304), but figures like this are usually not distinguished by gender. However, a recent anti-corruption report by the Research Institute of State Development and Strategy, the People's University, does suggest that female officials are cleaner than their male counterparts. According to the report, women represented 3 % of the country's corrupt officials at department level who were prosecuted between 2000 and 2014, and about 1 % of the 219 so-called 'No.1 leader corruptions' during the same period. The report further shows that women account for 11 % of China's government officials at province-ministry level, 13.7 % at prefecture-department level and 16.6 % at county-section level (as of 2009). In comparison to the proportion of women in these government positions, the ratio of female corruption appears much lower than that of males.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the low percentage of female corruption in general, however, corruption cases involving women have hit the media headlines here and there in recent decades, reminding the general public that corruption in China is not entirely a male preserve. Women become corrupt as well, and female corruption has actually been increas-

ing over the past five years (Yang 2014). According to a recent article by Yang Jing, the number of crimes involving an abuse of power committed by female professionals, including government officials, rose from 4125 in 2009 to 4169 in 2010, 4214 in 2011, 4459 in 2012 and 5516 in 2013 (from January to November) (*ibid.*: 2). Women's (increasing) involvement in corruption in China raises the question of gender and calls urgently for a thorough treatment of gender in corruption studies. However, due to the gap between the corruption literature on China, which often omits gender, and general theories of gender and corruption which are not specifically about China, many aspects of corruption related to gender have either gone unnoticed or been overlooked.

This article attempts to bring gender in by examining women's involvement in corruption and reflecting upon the relevance of gender in corruption and corruption studies. The aim is to focus on women and gender and make explicit what deeper insights might be lost by not taking gender into account and what we may gain by taking gender on board. The article consists of four sections. Section one focuses on women in power, that is, on female government officials. It examines the role and behavior of female corruption and discusses the inadequacy of general theories of corruption in accounting for possible or potential gender differences in corruption. Section two deals with women's involvement in corruption as the mistresses and wives (family members) of male officials, and examines how women outside the formal political system can play a pivotal role in sustaining the ecology of corruption. Section three engages in a theoretical discussion elaborating on the relevance of some of the existing theories and proposing some theoretical thoughts of our own. Section four summarizes our reflections upon the role of gender in corruption and con-

cludes the article. Due to limitations of space, a detailed discussion of the concept of 'corruption' is left aside here. For the purposes of this article, corruption refers to the misdeeds of government officials typically involving the 'misuse of public authority for private interests' (Rooij 2005: 292).

#### WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CORRUPTION AS GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Corruption is not a new phenomenon in China. In the reform era, however, '(the) forms, extent and characteristics of corruption have changed greatly...' (Dai 2010: 59). Over the past thirty years or more, several tens of thousands of corruption cases have been prosecuted each year, revealing the scale and gravity of the problem. Regarding female corruption, we have identified seventeen cases from 2000 to the present, while the total national figure for female corruption remains unknown (see Table 1).<sup>7</sup> These women were identified because their (crime) stories have been widely circulated in the media. These seventeen cases will serve as a sample for our analysis, even though the number is small and certainly not statistically representative.

We shall examine the media's stories about the corruption of these women because they often reveal detailed information about corrupt individuals and their trajectory into corruption, thus providing some valuable insights into corruption and corrupt behavior. We turn to this kind of material to compensate for the difficulties of conducting fieldwork on this issue and the lack of access to formal party and legal corruption documents. We nonetheless believe that media corruption stories can be used as a kind of 'raw material' for corruption analysis if they are read with a cautious and a critical mind. In our analysis, we bear in mind the possible bias of media corruption stories and seek to stay as factual as

TABLE 1. A SAMPLE OF CORRUPTION CONVICTED FEMALE OFFICIALS (SINCE 2000)

Zhang Meifang 张美芳	Zhao Wenjuan 赵文娟	Li Qihong 李启红	Shang Jun 尚军	Yang Xiuzhu 杨秀珠	Luo Yaping 罗亚平	Jiang Yanping 蒋艳萍	An Huijun 安惠君	Dong Jinting 董金亭
Pan Yumei 潘玉梅	Han Guizhi 韩桂芝	Liu Guangming 刘光明	Zhao Shunyi 赵顺义	Jin Hong 靳红	Zhang Gaiping 张改萍	Lao Derong 劳德容	Gu Huijuan 顾慧娟	

Source: 组图：中国近年落马女贪官一览 (17/17), A look at the female officials sacked for corruption in China in recent years.<sup>8</sup>

possible. When in doubt about a fact, we either treat it as hearsay or check it against other sources.

As mentioned above, general studies of corruption in China talk little about gender and are mostly preoccupied with the forms, generalization and categorization of corruption. In Dai's study of corruption in contemporary China, for example, he summarizes the main forms of corruption in the country, stating that they not only share 'the primary characteristics of corruption in other countries', but also constitute a 'transitional Chinese style that reflects its different social, cultural and political background' (Dai 2010: 61). According to Dai, corruption in China can be grouped into five basic forms: 1) 'No. 1 leader' corruption (corruption committed by the main responsible person in a party committee or a government institution); 2) Personnel Management Corruption (cash for jobs); 3) Public Project Corruption; 4) 'Examining and Approval Power' Corruption; and 5) Collectively Practiced Bribery Corruption (ibid.). In the following, we apply Dai's categorization to our sample group in order to show where such theory can lead to when it comes to gender.

First of all, we found evident manifestation of all five forms of the abuse of power in our sample group. All seventeen women occupied a powerful position within the

system of their jurisdiction and functioned as either major decision-makers or as gatekeepers. Of them, eleven were in the so-called 'No. 1 leader' positions, while the remaining six were in 'deputy' positions. Due to the lack of any checks and balances in the power structure and the low degree of transparency in the decision-making process, officials in the No. 1 and No. 2 positions often have highly concentrated and unconstrained power. In most of these cases, corruption was a direct result of excessive power and the abuse of power. One woman among the seventeen was Lao Derong, the former No. 1 leader of the Energy Group in Shenzhen City. After being caught for corruption, Lao confessed and admitted that she had so much power concentrated in her hands that she got carried away.<sup>9</sup>

We have divided the seventeen women into four sub-categories according to their job content for the purposes of seeing what kinds of power they had and how that power became a source of corruption and misdeeds. As indicated by the following table, five of them occupied No. 1 positions in government financial or accounting departments, which gave them both direct access to public funds and the supreme power to manage those funds. The major form of corruption they committed is embezzlement. Two were former heads of

TABLE 2. CORRUPTION BY POWER CATEGORY

Type of power	Number	Proportion
Financial and accounting	5	29%
Manager of state-owned companies	2	11.5%
Chief/deputy party-government head	8	48%
Head of government dealing with land and infrastructure building	2	11.5%

Source: 组图：中国近年落马女贪官一览 (17/17), A look at the female officials sacked for corruption in China in recent years.<sup>11</sup>

local government departments dealing with land resources and urban infrastructural development. They both committed ‘public project corruption’ by taking bribes from land and public project contractors. The remaining ten women, as directors of large state-owned enterprises or heads or deputy heads of party and government institutions, had all-round power over basically every aspect of their organization and hence committed corruption that can be categorized as ‘No. 1 Leader Corruption’, ‘Personnel Management Corruption’, ‘Examining and Approval Power Corruption’ and ‘Collectively Practiced Bribery Corruption’. For instance, Han Guizhi, former deputy secretary of the Heilongjiang provincial party committee and chairman of the Heilongjiang provincial political consultative congress, traded her power over personnel management for money, offering positions and promotions to lesser officials for payments and gifts. Those officials who received promotions through bribery have in turn ‘sold’ governmental positions under their jurisdiction to other lesser officials.<sup>10</sup>

Apparently, this small sample of female corruption encompasses all the characteristic elements featuring corruption in present-day China. This means that, by applying theories of categorization from generic corruption studies, gender difference does not come to the surface, and corruption appears to have the same pattern regardless of gender. However, a careful reading of

the corruption stories of women does reveal some features of corrupt behavior that are characteristic, if not unique, for women. We know that most of the corruption cases in China involve an exchange of power for sex, but the exchange goes in different directions, depending on whether the corrupt individual is a man or woman. While male officials often trade power for sex, female officials often start by trading sex for power, climbing up the power ladder by utilizing their sexual capital (Yang 2014: 3). Sexual capital ‘refers to a person’s resources, competencies and endowments that provide status as sexual agents within a field’ (Farrer 2010: 75),<sup>12</sup> while sexual attractiveness ‘can be traded for economic and social advantage’ (Davis 1966: 324). One example of this is in Jiang Yanping among our sample group. Jiang was the former deputy director of the Construction Engineering Company in Hunan who was said to have slept with several powerful men. She ‘conquered’ them one by one and was promoted each time. As she obtained more and more power, she began to use that power to advance her own interests.

In our sample group, we also find evidence of female officials trading power for sex like men do. One example is An Huijun, former chief of Luohu police station in Shenzhen, who was said to have demanded sexual services from her male subordinates. Whenever she went on a business trip, she would require the com-

pany of two young, handsome police officers, who would be promoted or given a bonus if they satisfied her sexually.<sup>13</sup> This may suggest a pattern of behavior common to both sexes. Even so, traces of gender difference can still be detected. In the case of male officials, they often share and circulate the women in their 'harem' for purposes of bribery. Young, beautiful women are often passed from one male official to another as a gift, the sender usually expecting some sort of 'payback' from the recipient. Recent media reports suggest that Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo who was recently charged for corruption, shared his mistress with his associate Li Dongsheng and vice versa.<sup>14</sup> However, we uncovered no evidence to suggest that female officials also share their male lovers with each other.

In the above, we pinpoint the possible gendered aspects that might be overlooked when gender is kept out of the equation. Needless to say, much more empirical and theoretical work needs to be done to explore gender differences in corruption further. What we attempt to do in this article is to point out the potential of taking gender into account as a way of enriching the understanding of corruption in China.

#### WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CORRUPTION AS MISTRESSES AND FAMILY MEMBERS

Women become implicated in corruption not only as government officials, but more often than not as mistresses and family members. A distinctive feature of corruption in China is the mistress culture and the coordination between male officials and their mistresses. Since the opening up and reforms of late 1970s, a 'romantic revolution' has swept China (Farrer 2006; Evans 1997; Pan 1993, 1995; Li 2003), leading to a greater degree of 'sexual opening up' than ever before. Promiscuous sexual behavior is now increasingly tolerated, and

a mistress culture has set in, becoming a celebrated norm of masculinity. For corrupt male officials, to possess a mistress or several mistresses is as much about sexual pleasure as it is a status symbol (Ding 2000; Liu 2003; Li 2012). By trading power for money, dishonest government officials quickly convert their 'political capital' into tangible 'economic capital' and hence become a competitive buyer of sexual pleasure in the sex market (Wang, 2005; Ding 2000; Liu 2003), finding various ways to 'consume' women's bodies (Li 2012). However, the majority practice a form of polygamy by taking one or several mistresses.<sup>15</sup> It is hard to say whether it is the 'egg' or the 'chicken' that comes first in the causal link between corruption and mistresses. In some cases, it is the desire to possess beautiful young mistresses that drives dishonest officials into chasing after cash. In other cases, dishonest officials install mistresses as a channel through which to consume the money they have embezzled. Either way, the mistresses have to be fed with lots of cash and high-class luxurious consumer goods.

A glimpse into the latest major corruption cases portrays a threefold picture of the mistresses involved. Some of them trade intimacy and sex for money and material goods by entering into a kind of 'sexual contract' with government officials and are, by virtue of this sexual relationship, entitled to the fortunes of their male patrons. They may be characterized as 'gold-diggers', and their role in the ecological chain of corruption is mainly to absorb and consume the money that dishonest officials have collected illegally.<sup>16</sup> Some mistresses, however, are far more ambitious, seeking not only material goods but also policy favors and protection in order to advance their own interests. They may be characterized as 'power-utilizers' (as well as being 'gold-diggers'), and their role in the ecological chain of corruption is both to consume the dirty money of cor-

ruption and to solicit preferential treatment, often circumventing laws and normative administrative procedures to do so. A mistress can have a relationship with several male officials at the same time in order to knit a huge *guanxi* net around her.<sup>17</sup> Some mistresses played a direct role in corruption, providing either moral support or practical assistance to the illegal money-hunting activities of their male patrons, or collaborating in taking bribes or misusing public funds.<sup>18</sup>

Corruption in China is also very often a family business. Chinese officials 'are committed to their family and other members of their social networks' (Kwong 1997: 88). They 'used their influence and broke administrative rules and even laws' (ibid.) for the benefit of their loved ones, but family members, especially wives, are also keen to increase the family fortune by utilizing the power of male officials. Many corruption cases show how a couple entered into corruption as a joint project, with the wife as the collaborator and driving force behind it. As a public saying has it, 'behind every corrupt male official there stands a corrupt wife'.<sup>19</sup> Wives are involved in corruption in various ways. They help lesser officials and entrepreneurs to come into contact with their powerful husbands and then demand money in return for doing so; they may also encourage or compel their husbands to take bribes in order to increase the family's welfare. Many of them store and manage the money for their husbands, and finally they may also 'capitalize' on their positions as wives by directly eliciting money and gifts from the subordinates of their husbands.<sup>20</sup>

Over the last five years, a number of wives have been convicted of corruption together with their husbands. One sensational example is Zhang Yafei, wife of Ma Xiangdong, former executive deputy mayor of Shenyang who was executed in 2001 for corruption.<sup>21</sup> During the period of his

office, Ma received bribes of up to 30,000,000 Yuan, about 68 % of it having been accumulated with the help of his wife Zhang Yafei. In the beginning Zhang merely administered the money for her husband, but then she began chasing after money herself. As the wife of a powerful man, Zhang acted as a gatekeeper. Whoever came to their house and wanted to have a word with Ma had to ask her permission and pay her cash. After Ma was jailed, Zhang bribed a number of judicial workers for information about her husband. Altogether eight people were charged for taking bribes from Zhang, and Zhang herself was also imprisoned.<sup>22</sup>

## DISCUSSION

How, then, do we conceptualize women's involvement in corruption as the mistresses and wives (family members) of male go-vernment officials? First of all, we found the theory of transition economics at the **contextual level** and three theories at the **institutional and cultural level** illuminating regarding female corruption, but because the present focus is on female incumbents of office, these theories fall short when they are used to explain the role of mistresses and wives (family members) in female corruption. According to the theory of transition economics, the transition to a market economy has changed both the goals of life and the extent of social and political control, fashioning a new overall context for living and social mobility. Zhang states,

When Chinese Communists worshiped the "social poor", the social constraints were relatively strong, opportunities were relatively low, and motivations were rather weak for bribery and corruption. However, as China has been transforming to a market economy with the tenet of "getting rich is glorious", official power is becoming a major means for "poor" officials to achieve the goals of get-



ting rich as the old measures of political control lose their power. The flourishing bribery and corruption among officials are a reflection of this 'social anomie' (Zhang, in Liu et al. 2001: 33-34).

Iwasaki and Suzuki also point out that 'corruption began to take place more for self-interest than as a socially necessary evil in the former socialist states ... in the process of systematic transformation to a capitalist market economy', and that corruption 'has become more widespread in the transition economies' (Iwasaki and Suzuki 2012: 54). Under the transition economy, women are likely to engage in corruption because corrupt behaviors 'are an ordinary part of go-vernance supported by political institutions' (Esarey and Chirillo 2012: 24), because 'collective graft' and 'organizational corruption' have become widespread phenomena in China (Lü 2000; Ngo 2008) and because social culture endows 'personal networks, reciprocity, and gift giving' (Rooij 2005: 294) with importance.

An institutional-cultural level of explanation for the impact of institutionalized corruption culture and praxis on individuals is offered by the following three theories. The first is DAO theory (Differential Association and Opportunity), which stems from the field of criminology and is used to explain 'the process through which an individual comes to engage in criminal behavior'. The theory argues that 'opportunities and networks of criminal behavior are critical determinants of an individual's engagement in a criminal action'. 'In other words, people who commit crime not only have frequent interaction with those who condone such behavior, but also have the opportunity to do so' (Sutherland and Cressey 1977: 77-79, quoted from Alhassan-Alolo 2007: 229). The second theory is social role theory, according to which 'an individual's (public servant's) behavior is influenced by: (a) the individual's cognition of an appropriate behavior for a person

occupying his or her position; (b) the individual's perceptions of expectations that others hold for him or her as an occupant of a given role; and (c) the individual's perceived role pressures-fears of sanctions if she or he deviates from the expectations' (Price 1975 quoted in Alhassan-Alolo 2007: 229). The third theory is the gender role theory, which proposes that, when women go along with corruption, it may be because they 'feel greater pressure to conform to existing norms about corruption' (Esarey and Chirillo 2012: 2). They are 'more averse to the risks of violating political norms', as 'gender discrimination makes violating institutional norms a riskier proposition for women than men' (Esarey and Chirillo 2012: 24).

Although these theories offer some level of explanation for why people (women) can become corrupt, we still found them inadequate in accounting for the role of women in corruption, especially as mistresses and wives in the social reality of corruption in China. First of all, these theories focus primarily on formal office-holders, leaving little space for women as mistresses and wives. Secondly, these theories tend to neglect the ecology of corruption and thus fail to grasp the chain of elements in which individual elements are not necessarily corrupt acts *per se*, but have an essential role to play in sustaining the ecology of corruption. Thirdly, these theories emphasize the impact of a large external environment on individuals without fully considering the 'agency' of individuals in corruption.

We propose a theory of *chaotic capital or resource acquisition* as a supplement to the afore-mentioned theories. By '*chaotic capital/resource acquisition*', we mean the almost anarchical state of resource flows towards the rich/male/powerful end and the lack of effective control over resource distribution in a transitional economy as in China (He 1998). Since the theory is still at its preliminary stage of development, we

shall only outline its potential implications. First, '*chaotic capital/resource acquisition*' covers both the contextual and institutional-cultural aspects emphasized by the theories mentioned above, and, we stress here, the individual 'agency' aspect. This enables us to catch both the impact of a corrupting environment and the active role of individuals as 'agency'. Secondly, '*chaotic capital/resource acquisition*' understands corruption as an ecological chain and thus has greater potential to explain not only the corrupt act of officials, but also the involvement of non-officials, especially the role of women as mistresses and wives (family members).

More specifically, '*chaotic capital or resource acquisition*' allows us to take into account the fact that gender discrimination and the sexualization of women in the Chinese job market obstructs women's career advancement and prevents them from becoming as rich as men. This structural barrier might have diverted (some of) them to more individual-based strategies, such as the utilization of female *sexual capital* in exchange for economic gains. For the mistresses, an intimate relationship with a powerful man provides an easy short-cut to an affluent and respectable life. '*Chaotic capital/resource acquisition*' further illuminates the role of wives (and family members) in supporting and sustaining corruption. As family welfare is at stake, a powerful husband (or family head) is often expected to be able to bring an enormous economic fortune into the family, not only to sustain a lavish lifestyle, but also to mark the family's high status. The easy convertibility between power and money enables the wives (and family members) of government officials to fulfill their dreams of getting rich.

Moreover, '*chaotic capital/resource acquisition*' also helps to shed light on the motives of female corruption. Under the circumstance that huge amounts of economic capital and resources in China's transitional economy flow into the pockets

of male power-holders, corruption might be the only chance for a female official to have a share of the 'cake'. As Yang points out in her analysis of female professional crime, many female professionals consider the power in their hands to be a time-limited ticket to economic fortune, and their aim is to use it before it expires (Yang 2014).

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we have sought to bring gender in to make good the lack of focus on gender in research on corruption in China by examining women's participation in corruption as both government officials and as the mistresses and wives (family members) of corrupt male officials. We have showed that, despite the low percentage of corruption cases against women, female corruption has actually increased over the last five years. Due to the preliminary nature of this study, we have been limited to pointing out the need to gender corruption, discussing the relevance of some existing theories and putting forward our own theoretical thoughts, rather than offering any proven research findings. In dealing with female corruption, for instance, we have demonstrated which gendered aspects might be overlooked when applying theories of categorization from generic corruption studies without taking gender into account. In dealing with women's involvement in corruption as the mistresses and wives (family members) of corrupt male officials, we found some theories relevant in one way or another, but still inadequate to account fully for the role of non-officials, such as mistresses and wives (and family members). We have proposed a theory of *chaotic capital/resource acquisition* as a supplement, as it treats corruption as an ecological chain rather than an isolated act and emphasizes both the impact of a corrupting environment on the individual and the active 'agency' of the indi-

vidual (men and women, officials and non-officials) in resource acquisition in the political economy of corruption in China. Thus, the theory has the potential to accommodate the role of women in corruption and the gendered aspects of corrupt behavior.

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## NOTES

1. See [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/19/gu-kailai-trial-suspended-death-sentence\\_n\\_1808437.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/19/gu-kailai-trial-suspended-death-sentence_n_1808437.html), accessed 02-05-2013.
2. See <http://www.womenofchina.cn/html/womenofchina/report/149052-1.htm> accessed 02-05-2013 and <http://www.metrovtvbureau.com/mistress-culture-among-officials-embarrassing-chinas-anti-corruption-campaign-media/> accessed 02-05-2013.
3. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/05/chinese-corruption-crackdown> accessed 02-05-2013.
4. See [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-01-24/china/36525990\\_1\\_lei-zhengfu-anti-corruption-campaign-official-media-report](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-01-24/china/36525990_1_lei-zhengfu-anti-corruption-campaign-official-media-report) accessed 02-05-2013.
5. See also Frank et al. 2010; Alatas et al. 2009;

Armantier and Boly 2008; Schulze and Frank 2003.

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7. See [http://slide.book.sina.com.cn/slide\\_14\\_651\\_28784.html#p=13](http://slide.book.sina.com.cn/slide_14_651_28784.html#p=13), accessed 5-16-2013.
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10. See <http://finance.sina.com.cn/20040611/1407809584.shtml>, accessed 21-05-2013.
11. See note 9.
12. For the concept of sexual capital, see also Gonzales and Rolison 2005; Martin and George 2006; Michael 2004; and Hakim 2010.
13. See [www.news.tom.com/1002/2004127/-1619210.html](http://www.news.tom.com/1002/2004127/-1619210.html).
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15. For more about the revival of concubinage in mainland China in the 1980s, see Yue Tao, 'On the manifest and latent functions of the mistress', *IIAS Newsletter* No. 35, November 2004, p.28.
16. For instance, Zhou Bing, mistress of Yang Qianxian, former director of Xianmen custom: <http://blog.people.com.cn/article/1/1346634041989.html>, accessed 25-05-2013.
17. For these women, see, for instance, Wang Xiaomao, former manager of Tianjin Haotian Group, and Zhang Yan, former general manager of Automation Technology Co., Ltd., Zhejiang. <http://blog.people.com.cn/article/1/1346634041989.html>, accessed 25-05-2013.
18. For these women, see, for instance, Mao Xudong, mistress of Yan Yongxi, former deputy head of Mentougou district <http://blog.people.com.cn/article/1/1346634041989.html>, accessed 25-05-2013.
19. See <http://opinion.people.com.cn./GB/1036/3141312.html>, accessed 25-05-2013.
20. Ibid.
21. Ma was executed in Jiangsu Province on 10 October 2001. He was the first person in China to be executed by being given an injection. For more about Ma, see <http://news.sohu.com/31/58/news147305831.shtml>
22. See [www.people.com.cn/GB/shehui/44/20011122/611082.html](http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shehui/44/20011122/611082.html), accessed 25-05-2013.