Scripting Extra-Marital Affairs:
Marital Mores, Gender Politics and Infidelity in Taiwan

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Acknowledgments:

This research was made possible by an Australian Research Council Small Grant. I wish to thank the Women Awakening Foundation (Fu-nu-hsin-chih) in Taipei for access to their extensive newspaper clippings. I wish to thank Richard Volpato at the University of Melbourne for providing valuable insights into sexual mores from a comparative perspective and giving comments on this paper. I also wish to thank the following scholars in Taiwan who kindly helped me locate background information and literatures about contemporary Taiwanese society: Ben-chang Hsia at Fu-jen University, Mei-ling Hsu at Cheng-jhi University, Ya-seng Hsueh at National Taiwan University and Jui-te Chang at Academia Sinica. Finally, I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers in Modern China for their useful comments on the earlier draft of this paper.

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Introduction

In historical Chinese culture, sexuality in general was seen more as a natural urge than as a social encounter. The exercise of sex was not normally associated with a feeling of sin or moral guilt as long as sex was with the right party in the right place (Hsu, 1983; van Gulik, 1974). Historically, the ‘right’ party for Chinese men within the household could included the group denoted by the phrase ‘three wives and four concubines’ (*san-chi-tssu-chieh*) (Lang, 1968). In addition, the operation of prostitution provided a further outlet for sexual drives (Baker, 1979; Lang, 1968). In this society based on familism, a large extended household with *san-chi-tssu-chieh* and ‘five generations’ under the same roof was seen as a cultural ideal (for men) across all social classes – even if in reality only wealthy men could afford and achieve this ideal (Baker, 1978). Although concubines and polygamy have been replaced by modern ‘monogamous’ marriage arrangements since early in this century, this cultural legacy is argued to have kept Chinese women’s tolerance towards their husbands’ extra-marital activity relatively high (Lin, 1996; Chien, 1996). Extra-marital affairs should therefore be relatively invisible.

Nevertheless, in recent decades, a new term, *wai-yu*, has emerged and become part of the common lexicon. The popular press in Taiwan has described the occurrence of *wai-yu* as akin to a new ‘epidemic’, with wives being depicted as apprehensive of its implications. This paper analyzes newspaper reports of extra-marital affairs to discern how issues of marital mores, gender politics and sexuality are revealed by *wai-yu*. Four areas of concern have fuelled the media interest in *wai-yu*.

First, during the 1990s, the divorce rate in Taiwan (which had been low) has been increasing at a rate faster than other countries in Asia (Yu, 1997). The increase in the divorce rate can be evidenced by the figures of the gross divorce rates which doubled from 0.77 to 1.57 for the period 1970 to 1995 (Yu,
1997). The popular press has reported on this trend and linked it to a corresponding growth in extramarital adventures\(^3\). Of course no research has been done on whether there has been a corresponding and even larger increase in the infidelity rate. The important point is that the reporting of divorce has tended to bring into salience an interest in affairs (justified or not)\(^4\) and that these affairs are structured in a way that reflects aspects of social change in Taiwan today.

Second, although people perceive that the majority of the affairs have been conducted by husbands, wives are now to be found engaging in such behaviour\(^5\). Because there is no traditional legitimation for this situation, it is expected that such transgression produces disproportionately more news coverage and advice when it is found. Commentaries (Tsao, 1996) and the counselling profession (Chien, 1996) consider the ‘damage’ caused by unfaithful wives to husbands is more destructive than the other way round. Men simply have to wear the humiliation, known colloquially as ‘wearing a green hat’\(^6\) (tai-lu-mao). This involves a major loss of ‘face’, which in Chinese contexts remains a central personal attribute (Bond, 1986; Li and Yang, 1973), and a loss of self-esteem.

Third, the news that the police broke up a small number of ‘wife swapping clubs’\(^7\), indicates that for some Taiwanese people (although they may be very few), marital and sexual mores have been reworked in ‘innovative’ ways. Despite their rarity, these kinds of events provoke interest and extended reporting in Taiwan.

Fourth, world-wide awareness of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases has underlined the seriousness of extra-marital sexual behaviours and highlighted the new ‘risks’ that surround deviations from a monogamous sexual relationship.

All of these social phenomena have, I would argue, greatly heighten the salience of, and generated discourses about, extra-marital affairs in Taiwanese society. Specifically this study examines how extra-marital affairs are reported as real events in news; how they are dealt with in social commentaries; and how these ‘problems’ of extra-marital affairs are addressed in the advice columns. This paper uses the
extensive detail about such issues in newspapers to reveal various scripts which underlie Taiwanese newspaper reports of extra-marital affairs (wai-yu). These scripts are then used to show the impacts of a modernizing social structure and changing gender roles on marital mores, gender politics and sexuality in contemporary Taiwan.

Modernization, Gender Relations and Infidelity in Taiwan

As a result of the expansion of education, industrialization and urbanization, more women in Taiwan have obtained higher education and entered the labor force since the 1960s. Higher education and labor force participation, in turn, have impacts on women’s self-definition and career expectations as well as impacts on the system of marriage and family (Thornton et al. 1994; Hsieh, 1989; Lu, 1989; Yi, 1989; Lu, 1983). For example, while women may see their income as an additional way to repay their natal family (Chang, 1996b; Kung, 1983), personal income also provides a powerful source of autonomy once Confucian elements of filial piety and marital commitment loosen their hold and the allurements of Western individualism take hold (Chang, 1996a).

Demographically, there may be a growing proportion of women who have pursued high educational qualifications and have developed a professional career only to find that they have disadvantaged themselves in marriage markets (as being too old or too self-assured and aware; or because men can marry ‘down’). Thus one might speculatively suggest that Taiwan’s education-driven modernisation might be leading to a growing proportion of sexually active but maritally disenfranchised women. The critical question, assuming this speculation is well founded, is whether women in this position might construe sexual activity as part of life-style and identity rather than an enactment of familial or marital commitments. In these contexts, such women might see married men as ‘fair game’.

Structurally, the growth of female participation in the work force, particularly in the professional area, means that there is a growing arena in which men and women alike are exposed to more
opportunities for ‘rapport’ and romance, independently of marriage. This phenomenon is sufficiently new and expanding in Taiwan that a certain ‘innocence’ surrounds gender encounters in work contexts — with increased likelihood of unanticipated intimacy. Ironically, for Chinese married men who now operate in the ‘post-concubine’ era, this new setting with mixed genders could potentially be a new outlet for the drives that were once satisfied by that old legacy.

Furthermore, a demographic ‘myth’ emerged in Taiwan during the 1980s and 1990s which maintained that there are more single women than single men of marriageable ages, thereby creating some concern among single women. In addition, Taiwan’s investment and business driven modernization has been producing a new supply of ‘brides’ from mainland China and southeast Asia, which is perceived as making the situation of unmarried women worse in the marriage market. As a result, these perceived demographic factors could not only increase the value of unmarried men in the marital market but also increase the possibility of married men becoming romantically involved with unmarried women.

Another consequence of modernisation for Taiwan has been the expanded opportunities for establishing and doing business. Within such business contexts, the system for engendering trust, making contracts and keeping ‘in touch’ with developments involve a range of social encounters between businessmen which are supported by hospitality and escort services (Chen, 1995). Sometimes businessmen have to travel to other societies for business — particularly mainland China. In contexts in which there is a great disparity of incomes, such as between Taiwan and mainland China, businessmen may find themselves exposed to opportunities for extra-marital adventures which are consistent with cultural legacy and can be managed far more cost-effectively than would occur ‘back home’ (Li, 1996).

Modernisation in Taiwan has had its own share of unintended consequences for gender relations and the marriage system. These can be summarised under four trends: the marital disenfranchisement of some educated professional women in the marriage market as well as the extra-supply of potential brides from other countries; the increased opportunity for work based relationships becoming romantic; and the wider access to business trip based opportunities for extra marital adventures. Regardless of the actual
proportions involved within each of these consequences of modernisation, these theoretical speculations can be seen as a background to define the kinds of extra-marital ‘encounters’ that are reported as real events in newspapers and/or as questions that require answers in advice columns. They all provide new challenges for existing values and thus new norms to be specified.

In the wake of so much social change, a wide range of messages have become embedded in public discourses on, and cultural representations of, gender roles and sexual mores in this modern Chinese setting. These messages involve both a mix of, and a moving beyond, Chinese familism or Western individualism.

Regarding changing gender roles, a new term Nu-chiang-jen (the direct English translation is ‘female strong person’) refers to a modern woman (unlike ‘ordinary’ women) who is strong, career minded, financially independent and who does not necessarily set marriage as her ultimate goal (Hung, 1997; Wang, 1997; Feng, 1989). Nu-chiang-jen are distinct in work places, because they are successful (Feng, 1989). They are also important figures in everyday gossip as well as in contemporary Taiwanese soapies and fictions10, because they are seen as being a ‘free-spirit’ in their romantic lives and not working on a 'must get married' assumption (or agenda) as ‘ordinary’ women are typified as being. A related new term tan-shen-kuei-tsu (‘single noble’) refers to wealthy unmarried people who are not willing to compromise their high standards for an ideal mate just for the sake of having someone to marry. They thus are seen as not interested in being locked into marital commitment (Wang, 1997; Feng, 1989). Both nu-chiang-jen and female tan-shen-kuei-tsu are seen as threatening to ‘ordinary’ wives, and in particular, the intersection of the two categories is seen as the most threatening figure to wives (Lin, 1996). Such 'free-spirit' attitudes of this kind of 'female single noble' have often been disseminated through modern women's magazines. For example, the popular Taiwanese version of 'Cosmopolitan' ran interviews with famous and successful unmarried Taiwanese women. In these interviews a common depiction of these women is that they yearn for, and enjoy the wonder of, romantic love. If romance with a man led to marriage, it would be ideal. But if this romance reveals the man as not being an ideal husband, the relationship cannot progress to marriage — similarly if the man is ideal but already
married. While these women still treasure the genuineness of love and romance, they will not compromise their standards in order to get married.

Regarding sexual mores for ‘ordinary’ unmarried women, the concept of ‘second chastity’ (erlu-tu-cheng-tsao) has been promoted by ‘mainstream’ authorities for more than two decades. This concept encourages those women who have lost virginity and felt ‘loss of worth’ to have a new sense of future: losing virginity is not the end of the world and, as long as the same mistake is not repeated, the second ‘chastity’ should also be valued by men (Chang, 1997). In the last ten years, there have been alternative concepts promoted by feminists and for all women such as ‘no sexual harassment but sexual orgasm’, ‘autonomy in creating and enjoying sexual pleasure for women themselves’ and ‘women’s bodies should be controlled by women themselves’ (He, 1996; Chuang, 1995). In addition, a few celebrities have deliberately chosen the path to be a ‘happily unwed mothers’ by having a child but not wanting a husband.

This study examines the nature and forms of, and the gender politics implicated in, extra-marital affairs presented in news items, social commentaries and letters to advice columns in Taiwanese newspapers. Taiwan provides an important opportunity for a case study of such topic in a modern Chinese context. This is because the reports of extra-marital affairs can reveal typifications of the process by which a person gets involved in such an affair. These typifications can reveal gender politics in both marital and extra-marital settings and the meanings of affairs for both genders.

Past research done about extra-marital affairs in Chinese societies was only at a descriptive level. Lee, in 1994, interviewed a sample of 47 women who were drawn from a ‘snow-ball’ sample in China and found that the husbands of some of these women as well as the women themselves had had extra-marital affairs (Lee, 1996). Wang and Wen, in 1993, conducted surveys in Taipei, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing to ask people “if a married person committed adultery, what do you think this person’s spouse should do?” The survey data showed that most respondents in these four cities think that the spouse who is suffering the infidelity should be patient and persuade his or her unfaithful spouse to come
home. Also, more respondents in Taipei tended to have this ‘soft’ attitude than those in the three cities in China (Wang and Wen, 1994). These studies have not provided sociological explanations or generated theoretical insights about gender politics and sexuality about extra-marital affairs in a contemporary Chinese context. It is the purpose of this paper to provide such explanations and insights.

Methodology

The Unit of Analysis and Data

Each reported extra-marital affair (in news, articles, commentaries and advice columns) is the unit of analysis and there are 68 such reported affairs analyzed for this study. The data for this study are taken from newspaper clippings collected by the Women Awakening Foundation (Fu-nu-hsin-chih) in Taiwan. Its holding of newspaper clippings (including news, columns, commentary and articles) has been drawn from nine widely circulated newspapers under many subjects/indexes on women’s issues. These newspaper archives are open to all researchers.

There are two advantages of using these archives. First, since women’s issues are their focus, they can be expected to ‘clip’ the relevant information more thoroughly. Second, the ideology of the group provides a particularly sensitive ‘lens’ through which relevant clippings might be identified and selected. Their sensibilities are going to be particularly attuned to the rare ‘odd’ cases that are especially ‘progressive’ (in their terms) or especially patriarchal. In this way, there is likely to be a bias towards over-sampling the extremes. But for the purpose of covering all the possible types of affairs and discerning gender politics involved for each type, this kind of bias actually becomes a ‘plus’. The logic of the sampling is therefore ‘theoretical’ rather than enumerative (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Barton and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Turner, 1953) and the analytical inductions can be developed from the data.

The coverage period of the newspaper data is from 1987 to the first half of 1994. My field work was undertaken in Taiwan in June and July of 1994. The rationale for using 1987 as the starting point is
that this is the year that Marital Law was abandoned. This political liberalisation has exposed even the ‘tabooed’ ideas of the past to Western and other globally dispersed ideas. The mass media have highlighted the many ways this further societal ‘liberalisation’ and openness have ‘speeded up’ the modification of Chinese people’s thinking about and behaviour toward sexuality and marriage.

Coding and Data Analysis

After reading all of the reported affairs, a coding scheme was developed which codes the components of ‘affairs’, and includes location, duration, the demographic features of first party, the second party and the third party, how the affair happened, the first party’s marital condition, the first party’s ‘explanations' for the affair, the third party’s ‘explanations', who was blamed when the spouse found out, the outcome, columnist advice and columnist attitude (if the reported affair was contained in advice columns)\(^{18}\).

These features described above are relatively easy to observe and code. I first randomly chose ten reports of extra-marital affairs to assess inter-coder reliability. The other coder and I were consistent in our coding. The propensity of people to engage in extra-marital affairs and several major ‘scripts’ of affairs can be identified and discerned from the coded data. Scripts will define the minimum number of components and their relations that can generate an affair. Reports in the data do follow some ‘scripts’ despite these reports being about messy real life events. In other words, there are some basic patterns of plots, moves and resolutions in these affairs. I will then outline various ‘scripts’, noting the relationships between each component in each script. A series of scripts will reveal a few underlying variables that determine a set of types of affairs — realised and unrealised — thus enabling the affair to be arranged into a theoretical typology. Some of the entries in this typology may not be ‘realised’ in any reports but this ‘absence’ is as much a matter of investigation as those that do appear\(^ {19}\).

Propensity for Extra-marital Affairs
Before any specific affair is described in the report, there is always some assumption or suggestion about tendencies — on the part of participants — to engage in the activity in the first place. The reported affairs may well refer to specific situational factors that lured participants into an affair, but they may also imply specific tendencies or drives that predisposed the individuals to have affairs.

Of 68 newspaper reports of extra-marital affairs, three-quarters (51) had the husband as the first party. Nineteen out of these 51 husbands had an obviously powerful status, particularly being rich. Eleven out of these 19 powerful men were involved with young unsophisticated, unmarried female subordinates who thought these men had unhappy marriages. There are a number of colloquial expressions that depict the propensity to engage in extra-marital affairs. Some news reports even use these expression in their ‘headlines’\(^2\). One common expression is ‘Old bulls like fresh grass’ (lao-nie-thih-nen-tsao). Regardless of whether this saying appears in a headline or in the text, it is so common that many a reported affair can be expected to trigger its recollection in readers’ minds.

Two of these 19 powerful men were depicted as having a need to ‘enjoy touching the flowers as well as lying on the grass’ (nien-hua-je-tsao). The reports of these affairs focus on the tendency of men and say less about the women these married men were involved with. In addition, some of these rich or powerful men had what could be described as pseudo-concubines as captured by the phrase ‘a beauty in a hidden golden house’ (chin-wu-tsang-chiao). During recent years the beauty and the ‘golden house’ may be located in Mainland China, with the first party being a Taiwanese husband (who has business trips to and companies in China). A few of the affairs reported revealed that some single women particularly felt attracted to married men because they thought such men looked or were more mature. Some single women were depicted as initiating romance with foreign men (such as Japanese or Western businessmen, and most of the time these foreign men were married)\(^2\). Not all of the first parties, however, were depicted as rich or powerful. Nine out of the 51
husbands were ‘non-powerful’ men, who had ‘normal’ marriages and had affairs with colleagues or with ‘modern’ women who shared the common interests or career goals and who had emotional rapport for each other. Another tendency leading men into affairs was revealed in two reports in which a husband felt oppressed by a feminist-type wife. Only three reports revealed that the affairs occurred when wives were somewhere else. In other words, the majority of these 51 husbands, in these reported affairs, had affairs when their spouses were living with them.

Eighteen out of these 51 ‘first party’ husbands were characterised as promiscuous by nature. Sixteen out these 18 reports depicted the husband as ‘a big white turnip with a colourful core’ (hua-hsin-ta-lo-po) to symbolise the kind of men who are promiscuous by nature. These reports show that this ‘nature’ existed in men regardless of their marital or financial situations. A few other reports also depicted ‘men’s nature’ in this way: for example, a man going through a middle-age crisis in terms of having everything in life but extra-marital affairs. Some men dared to ‘love’ but didn’t dare to divorce, as the Chinese put it: ‘with the feet stepping on two boats’ (chiao-ta-liang-tiao-chuan). This promiscuity is actually a cultural assumption regarding men in general, which provides the ‘background’ tendency for men to engage in extra-marital affairs regardless of what kind of men they might be.

What is written about a wife when she is the first party? Only a quarter of the 68 reports identified a wife as the first party. Eight of these depicted wives as having ‘the nature of water and willow tree’ (shui-hsing-yang-hua), or to be sexually ‘loose’. Alternatively, their extra-marital behaviours were depicted as ‘the red apricot flower climbing out of the wall’ (hung-hsing-chu-chiang). Beyond these depictions of ‘looseness’, not much else was mentioned. The remaining nine reports suggested that a problematic marriage was the cause of a wife’s extra-marital affairs. The problems in the marriages ranged from: being abused by a rough husband; having a husband in prison; exacting ‘revenge’ because the husband was having an extra-marital affair; an unhappy housewife unintentionally attracted to her husband’s friend; or a lonely young wife engaged in a ‘platonic’ romance as a result of seeking ‘love’.

From this brief review, it is apparent that ‘many roads’ can lead to an affair.
The Scripts

The following three ‘scripts’ were isolated from the 68 reported affairs. In each script there is a specific kind of plot and key player that ‘drives’ the action, captured by the titles of the following subsections. Later, I will show that these three scripts are parts of a typology that reveals aspects of gender politics and sexuality in contemporary Taiwan. As the main purpose of examining these cases was to discern the possibilities of types of participants and resulting affairs, it is not appropriate to conduct frequency count for each type of affairs.

Traditional Masculine ‘Saviours’

The first script had a key player depicted as a materially powerful ‘saviour’ who initiates the affair. The reports have the following plot. First, the man has power, money and/or the opportunity to provide ‘material’ support and to be a paternal figure for a ‘subordinate’ (usually in a work context). The subordinate is depicted as young, pretty, and often a virgin. Second, the young woman has a poor family background and an ingenuous disposition. Third, there are ‘excuses’ from this man about a weak marriage with a wife who is bossy, tough or uncultured. Such accounts are shown as provoking compassion and enticing the young subordinate to ‘listen’. Fourth, divorce is revealed to be a possibility, but no definite deadline is given. Fifth, the young woman feels ‘honoured’ by the attention and rapport, and compassionate about the man’s situation, which together provide the context for the woman to ‘fall in love.’ The prospects of marriage give the love a purpose and a justification. This is the first part of the plot.

The next part concerns the ‘exposure’ of the affair. Usually the woman provokes exposure: either the young woman begins to question the deadline for marriage (perhaps due to pregnancy), or the wife finds out and demands resolution. This phase deals with explanations: the man ‘explains’ to his
wife. The kind of explanation used here is similar to that found in soap operas. Cliched statements abound: ‘She is very understanding and a good listener to my problems’; ‘She is obliging and has been providing tremendous help to my work’; ‘I am just sympathetic to her poor situation and had hoped to help her’. At this moment, there are three kinds of ‘blame’ for this affair: First, the wife blames the third party with recriminations like, ‘She is a fox! She has been stealing my husband!’ Second, the husband blames the wife, with such ‘excuses’ as, ‘You don’t understand me. I can not share my pressure from work with you. You don’t emotionally support me enough but just make demands on me!’ Third, the third party blames herself, engaging in a monologue like, ‘Why was I so stupid to trust the man’s “promises” which have been revealed to be false’.

The finale concerns outcomes. First, the wife confronts and humiliates the third party or the two women fight with the wife awaiting the return of the husband to fidelity. Second, the husband, in some contexts with the assistance of the wife, finds a mechanism to get rid of this young person. Normally, the husband explains that his wife does not want a divorce, and gives the third party money and asks her to leave. Third, the third party feels heart-broken, cheated, humiliated and regretful. Finally, in some cases the wife develops mental problems (is depressed, neurotic, insecure, suspicious) after the event.

It is at this moment that a stage is set for the columnist’s ‘voice’. It is directed particularly to the ‘wronged’ wife and to some extent to the third party. Little advice is offered to the husband. First, the wife should calm down and definitely try not to fight with the husband. More fights will only push him away and toward the woman. Second, the wife should not simply try to be nicer to the husband in the hope that it will make him feel guilty and come home. Sometimes in this circumstance good treatment produces more annoyance, and he feels more pressured. The wife should be ‘strong’; only by being strong can she work through this crisis. Some advice given to the wife is even to communicate with the third party and convert this crisis into a manageable situation. At this critical time, it is also recommended that the wife should seek professional counselling or legal help. Third, the wife should try rationally and honestly to discuss the marriage/family problems with her husband, because the fundamental cause of this event is the problems in this marriage/family. The extra-marital affair is just a
symptom of ‘marital sickness’. The couple should take advantage of this ‘disaster’, learn from it and improve the marriage. Extra-marital events can be the ‘catalyst’ for a better marriage. Such is the tone and content of the advice.

There is also moral advice for all those readers who think about but do not engage in extra-marital affairs: married couples should not ‘try out’ this kind of thing. Having an extra-marital affair can cause life-long damage to the relationship. If there are problems in the marriage or family, communication will solve them. Having an affair will not solve the problems. Even if you leave the lover and go back to your marriage, this marriage will never be the same and intact as before. This also applies to the young women. They should be rational and protect themselves: they should never get involved with married men, because it costs so much and they, as the ‘third party’, will be always the biggest loser in this kind of game — both physically and mentally. The advice to men is relatively straightforward: they should be conscious of the consequences as illustrated in the Western movie ‘Fatal Attraction’ and they should not hurt two women!

I call this type of script ‘Male Saviours’, because the relationship is not symmetrical. The man can construct a rationale that is shown to appeal to the third party woman even though it turns out to have been spoken in bad faith.

Soul Mates

This script involves a new form of ‘woman’ and ‘man’. First, in this script the man does not have power or money, but has the opportunity to be a colleague with an unmarried woman who is mature, intellectual, career oriented and depicted as a ‘modern woman’. Second, there is no ‘excuse’ needed from the man in this affair. He tells the woman that he has a fine marriage, divorce is not envisaged, the relationship with his wife is not exciting but harmonious. Nevertheless, he is interested in the colleague’s concerns, aspirations and is responsive (say, to her sense of humour). Third, the woman is depicted as seeking romance and as enjoying the ‘spiritual’ support from the man, does not want money
and does not care about marriage. She does not need any excuse or promise from the man. The affair occurs for whatever reasons — office politics create frictions, similar interests flourish, or intensive work projects bring them together. The affair takes on a life of its own. She promises not to break his marriage. Fourth, there is no future plan, but both enjoy the romance and treasure the ‘free spirit’ — no feeling of responsibility or duty. Such a construction makes this ‘script’ contrast nicely with established Chinese mores regarding personal relationships in which duty, piety and responsibility are central. The man feels he can share so much more with this woman (particularly work related matters and emotional support) than with his spouse, but he may also be depicted in a sub-plot as feeling guilty towards his spouse.

Next there is the episode which reveals how the wife finds out. Another plot follows the ‘moment of revelation’. Initially, the wife feels shocked and hurt. The man explains to his wife that he is innocent. Here it becomes possible for him to claim that, if anything, the third party initiated the affair. A common gloss might be, ‘It is actually she who initiated the relationship, even though I told her in the beginning that I have a fine marriage.’ On top of this, ‘We do have endless common interests and topics.’ Alternatively, put on the spot, he may seek a divorce (or be driven to it by the wife).

In the process of resolving this situation, the question of blame will come to the fore. The wife blames the third party, typically comparing her with a prostitute, ‘This woman is worse than a prostitute, so cheap and even for free!’ Next, the man may partly blame his wife: he cannot share his intellectual interests and ideas regarding his career with her. He may also blame the ‘modern’ woman for initiating the affair. Then, the modern woman does not have anyone to blame, and can be depicted as disinterested (‘easy come easy go’), as lost (‘what does this all mean to me?’) or as tragic (the ‘lot of women’).

Finally, there is the episode which reveals the outcomes. First, the wife humiliates or sues the third party. These reports are more likely to have the wife take on more aggressive ‘retribution roles’ than in the first script. Sometimes the third party woman has to pay a ‘fine’ to the wife, because she has a career and money. Second, the man finds a mechanism by which to quit the relationship. It is not very
difficult to quit, because he did not promise her anything in the first place. Third, the third party feels heart-broken, empty and wonders what this romance means. Fourth, the wife may be shown as sliding into mental problems (depression, neuroticism, insecurity, suspiciousness) as a result of the event.

The columnist in this script gives the most advice to the wife. This is similar to the advice provided in the first script except for the question of being ‘nice’ to the husband: the wife should be even nicer to the husband in this circumstance, thereby making him feel guilty and ending the relationship with the other woman more quickly. There is one ethical piece of advice to the third party feminist: modern women should be rational and moral in terms of not getting involved with married men. Modern women should particularly be conscious of, and feel sympathetic about, how another woman would feel if her husband was stolen. A modern woman should not hurt another woman.

The moral advice is overlaid with a cost/benefit view of the affair. ‘If you can stand this kind of relationship, you could do it. It is not so much a moral issue, but the cost of doing it is really high. Very often the woman, particularly the “strong woman” thinks she can engage in and live with such a relationship, but sooner or later she will still feel very much in love with the man and hope to marry him. When this proves impossible, she feels helpless and empty, regardless of how successful her career is.’

The Unhappy Housewife

The preceding two scripts have the husband engaging in the extra-marital affair. This next script concerns the wife who is depicted as the key player who ‘causes’ the affair. The cause is primarily lodged in her ‘situation’ (of unhappiness) rather than in any ‘drives’ she has towards promiscuity or infidelity. This is a less common scenario in Taiwan, but its incidence has been increasing recently, and this has caused crises for some men. Most of such news items were based on the information released by the ‘Hot Line’ counselling services in Taiwan. The ‘Hot Line’ counsellors indicated that Chinese men normally do not seek counselling, but now the number of men (even still a small number) who are calling to deal with their wives’ affairs is
increasing\textsuperscript{35}. These crises in which the wife had an extra-marital affair were reported as much more intolerable for men than the similar crises were for women\textsuperscript{36}.

The plot goes like this. There is an unhappy housewife. The husband takes her for granted or mistreats her. She is not cared for, or satisfied by, her husband. She feels lonely. She does not have many opportunities to meet men by herself. She does meet men who are friends or work mates of her husband. The reports elaborate scenarios in which another man shows care and concern for her. She is attracted to him and/or even willing to give up this marriage for him. For her this is more a psychological need than a sexual one.

Following this, there is an episode dealing with the husband’s reaction when he finds out. The husband is shocked and very angry. He feels he has lost face – the worst thing that can happen to a Chinese man. Emotionally, he is completely out of control; he may beat up the man and/or his wife. There is also another episode showing the wife as ‘brave’ and blaming the husband for not treating her well in marriage. The finale is that the angry husband sues both the wife and the third party. The husband divorces the wife. The wife wants to marry the third party but, in a tragic twist, these reports then have the third party not wanting her and leaving her. Her life is ruined. She feels heart-broken and ends up with nothing but a bad reputation\textsuperscript{37}.

In this script, the columnist has a most sympathetic and worried voice (compared to those in the previous two scripts). The sympathy and worry is directed predominantly toward the husband who is so humiliated by this ‘unfair’ event and bad luck.

The main concern and advice is that the husband should try to calm down in order to rationally deal with the ‘mess’\textsuperscript{38}. Chinese men normally do not consider consulting others on this ‘wearing the green hat’ disaster. The danger of this pattern is that the angry feelings may be very destructive such as killing his wife and the third party. Therefore, it is most strongly recommended that he should seek
professional counselling or legal help. In this script, no advice is given to the first party woman or the third party man. These two ‘actors’ are not the ‘leading player’ in this later part of the plot, which implies that regardless of what happens they deserve it.

In this script, the housewife’s traditionalism has to be seen as marred by some ‘imprisonment’ by her husband. The third party man is caught in a rescue/supplementation role for this unhappy woman.

**Gender Politics and Sexuality**

**Prospects and Possibilities in the Scripting of Affairs: A Theoretical Typology**

Each of the foregoing scripts has an autonomy of its own. Once the article starts along the path set for each script, it does not move to another. One cannot find or envisage an article that reports a ‘saviour’ role which then changes into a ‘soul-mate’ role. The three scripts can be located within a typology that defines the possible modes of encounter. Three variables define this typology: whether the propensity for the affair is situational (external) or a personal need (internal); whether the male is offering material or ‘spiritual’ support; and whether the woman involved is ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’.

The first variable defines the depiction of the propensity for having an ‘affair’. In some accounts, the key force toward having an affair was situational; in other cases the participant was seen as having a ‘need’ or a ‘nature’ for such encounters. There was a tendency for the causes of affairs for female participants to be more likely to be depicted as due to a problematic situation (such as being ignored or mistreated by the husband) than due to their own ‘drives’ (such as having a ‘nature’ or willingness to be promiscuous). By contrast, the propensity of male participants was depicted as more due to ‘drive’ than due to a problematic marital situation. This variable defines the prospects for the affair. The next two variables deal with the two participants and how their ‘meeting’ defines a certain type of relationship.

One of these variables concerns what kind of ‘support’ the male participant in the affair was
depicted as being able to provide to the female participant. One kind of support was depicted as the man being rich or high standing, someone who could provide ‘material’ support for the woman. The lure of the man is seen in terms of his standing and command of resources (and respect). The other kind of support was depicted not as materially powerful but as ‘spiritually’ supportive in terms of providing emotional support, mutual understanding and sharing common interests in a career. Here the lure is the man’s ‘understanding’ of the woman’s needs or situation.

The other variable concerns the female participant in the affair. The woman was depicted in terms of her self-definitions (‘modern’ vs ‘traditional’). A ‘modern’ woman was depicted as highly educated, career oriented, financially independent, self-determined and not necessarily seeing marriage as an ultimate goal. Various terms were used to refer to this kind of women: *nu-chiang-jen* (modern strong women), *hsin-nu-hsing* means (women in the new wave), or *hsing-nu-hsing-chu-yih-che* (a feminist). In this paper I call women with such depictions, ‘modern’, while I call the women without such depictions, ‘traditional’.

Therefore, the three scripts discussed above can be fitted into a typology which can be generated from the three underlying variables. This typology is presented in Diagram 1.
The diagram can be read as follows. Both Taiwanese men and women are reported as having propensities to engage in affairs. However men are more likely to have this propensity described in terms of drives rather than situational factors (D/s). By contrast, women are more likely to be reported in the opposite way (S/d). Once ‘in the affair’, each gender is depicted in terms of a basic orientation. For Taiwanese men, they can provide either material or emotional support (vertical variable in diagram). For
Taiwanese women, they can be categorized in terms of traditional or modern self definitions (horizontal variable in diagram). The result of this ‘encounter’ are four types of affair scripts.

The Nature of Extra-Marital Affair Scripts

The ‘Saviours’ script has the man depicted as materially ‘powerful’ and the third party woman depicted as ‘traditional’. This script is the closest to the traditional legacy of concubinage. In the ‘Soul Mates’ script, participants in the affair have opposite characteristics to those in the ‘Saviour’ script: the men offer spiritual rather than material resources; while the women are modern rather than traditional. In the ‘Unhappy Housewife’ script, a traditional woman can also be linked to a non-powerful man, in a way similar to the second script based on ‘soul-mates’. Thus, each of the three scripts described in detail above can be defined theoretically on the basis of the two variables concerning the type of man or woman involved in the affair. It should be already apparent that these two variables can actually indicate dimensions of social change.

As mentioned, the ‘Saviour’ script has the closest affinities with the traditional concubine structure. With modernisation women can become modern and thus have the capacity for ‘romance’ independently of issues of material support. Correspondingly, men in modern contexts can offer ‘spiritual support’ (or empathy) to such a woman. Thus the ‘soul-mate’ model is the most ‘modern’, since both participants have broken from traditional gender roles. The ‘Unhappy Housewife’ script involves a mix of legacies: the women is traditional but her needs are not material, so the man does not need to be rich or powerful.

The question arises as to how a script would read had the man been depicted as materially ‘powerful’ and the woman depicted as ‘modern’. The script can be tied to a modern woman (regardless of marital status), who is shown as taking advantage of a powerful man to achieve benefits for herself. I would call this type of affair script ‘Instrumental Woman’. Although the gender politics revealed in this script appear real and may be common, surprisingly this script is not revealed in any of the Taiwanese
newspaper reports.

One plausible explanation for the ‘absence’ of this script may be related to people’s (including the columnists’) perceptions of modern women in Taiwan. Chinese people perceive and can imagine the possibility that a poor woman takes advantage of a powerful man, because such manipulation still reflects men’s masculinity and resources. Taiwanese male columnists may not like to think about this possibility or may see the scenario that such powerful men are instrumentally used by modern women. Even if such women are perceived as intelligent, less feminine, capable and sometimes threatening, they are still women. Female columnists may not want to depict such a ‘negative’ image for modern women nor admit such cases exist, because they tend to depict ‘modern’ women (in particular, feminists) as conscientious, ethical, pro-justice and super-capable.

Another plausible and complementary explanation for the ‘absence’ of this script may be related to the nature of this kind of affair. For even if this kind of affair existed in reality, its ‘players’ tend not be found out, as instrumental woman will presumably aim to ‘manage’ the invisibility of the affair and not get so involved as to jeopardise its invisibility. Thus the ‘Instrumental Woman’ script may not be appearing in part because the sophistication level of the participants in this type of affair is such that neither is likely to write to ‘advice columns’. By contrast, ‘soul mates’ are more likely to be ‘in love’ with each other thus making it more difficult to control the ‘invisibility’ of the affair. The participants in this ‘Soul Mate’ affair, or the betrayed spouse who suspects something, are more likely to write to advice columns about the difficulties involved in the affair.

Cultural Lag on ‘Advice’

In present day Taiwan, newspaper materials have depicted more and more modern women who have the resources and power to initiate or sustain romantic intimacy without financially depending on men, or having to lower their standards for a marriage partner for the sake of getting married, or even committing to marriage as an ultimate goal. ‘Traditional’ Taiwanese housewives are also depicted as not just ‘swallowing the pain and tears’ any more when they are mistreated by their spouses. This shift in
women’s attitudes and behaviours can be framed in terms of enhanced education and labour force participation of women on the one hand, and a growing awareness and consciousness of gender equality, women’s autonomy and the lure of romantic love on the other. However, most of the ‘advice’ in newspaper columns is still focussed on how women (whether the woman is the first party, the second party or the third party) panic about men’s ‘nature’ in terms of having men’s ‘drive’ and propensity for being promiscuous, and how women should behave or attempt to improve the situation with a mix of patience, competence and ‘empathy’.

This traditionalism is supported by the view that drawing on professional help will get people back to the ‘mainstream’. Most therapy is targeted at women. Men’s extra-marital adventures are seen as provoking problems rather than a sure sign that therapy is needed. The newspapers reporting these extra-marital situations on the one hand heighten awareness of their existence, but the moral tone of the advice reiterates traditional Chinese values. The result is ironic: exposure in the media provokes thoughts that in turn may find the traditional advice, which goes with the exposure, wanting. The exposure ‘leads’ the culture but the advice ‘lags’ behind the reality of what individuals may find plausible.

Women’s Politics

Much discussion about gender relations focuses on politics between men and women. Taiwanese extra-marital affairs analysed in this research redirect attention to relations among women, particularly the awkward tension between wife and mistress. In particular, since most of the affairs implicate two women and one married man, the finale of all the reported affairs reaches a resolution where the ‘two women fight’ and where both women get seriously injured, emotionally and by reputation. There are Western renditions of these scripts in which the two women unite and attack the man for creating the mess in the first place (Cato, 1995), but such resolutions are not to be found in Taiwanese newspaper reports. Instead, the Taiwanese women are depicted as being responsible for solving the problems and cleaning up the mess. In contrast, during the crises, men are depicted as innocent and ‘not at fault’ regardless of whether they are the first party, second party or the third party. The only ‘fault’
revealed in the reports may be the ‘nature’ of men: they are more promiscuous. However, if Taiwanese women assume that this ‘man’s nature’ is universal to all men, it applies to their husbands. This can make women feel vulnerable to the real possibility of their husbands engaging in extra-marital affairs and may create anxieties or panic. The only object a Taiwanese woman can blame, in the circumstance of having an unfaithful husband, is another woman rather than her own husband.

One theoretical implication of these Taiwanese reports and commentaries is that Western feminist theories, which focus on the gender politics of women (as a ‘sisterhood’) fighting with men, tend to ignore the forms of fighting and conflicting interests between women themselves (Weisser, 1996). This research about extra-marital affairs in Taiwan is illuminating on this front. In the ‘Soul Mate’ type of affairs where ‘modern women’ do not set up a marriage prospect and do not want money from the men, the affair itself is still contradictory to the wives’ interest in terms of sharing their husbands with another woman. In the ‘Saviour’ type of affair, the conflicting interests of the two women are significant. In sum, in the arena of marriage, intimacy and sexuality, the primary ‘enemy’ of women in the Taiwanese affairs is not men but rather women themselves. All of the reports depict Taiwanese women as perceiving other women as threatening, and Taiwanese feminists in particular are depicted as most threatening to wives in contemporary Taiwan. The significant feature of this depiction is that the role of ‘wife’ is seen as fundamentally threatened. The competent accomplishment of this role requires more than a commitment to the Chinese values that defined the role of ‘wife’ in the first place. A ‘wife’, it seems, has to become far more informed — about threats and difficulties — and more prepared to seek advice, of a professional kind, when things go wrong. On the other hand, the ‘feminist’ third party receives particular wrath for being a husband ‘stealer’. Therefore, in this kind of fight between two women, both women are the losers in this Taiwanese context.

**More Beneficial to Men**

For Taiwanese men, in addition to being more innocent and with less fault, the traditional privilege of enjoying extra-marital romance becomes ironically more accessible and achievable in this modern
‘monogamous’ world. This is due to Taiwanese men being able to benefit from modern women’s autonomy (‘I don’t care about money, marriage, but romantic love’). Now many more men, both rich and poor, could potentially enjoy this opportunity in Taiwan, compared to the past when only rich men were able to enjoy such privilege. The implication for the feminist movement and feminist theories is that the process of modernization or change proposed by the feminists is not necessarily a linear progression from inequality towards equality. The process and the contents of change are not merely ‘new’ substitutes for the ‘old’ or the ‘new’ plus the ‘old’. It is likely that the ‘interaction’ effect of these two (in terms of the ‘old’ taking advantage of the ‘new’ and/or vice versa) actually produces worse consequences for women. Therefore, this is another theoretical implication which can be generated from this analysis of marital mores scripted in Taiwanese newspaper reports.

To further illustrate this point, let me go back to the ‘lose-lose’ situation for women involved in affairs discussed in the ‘Women’s Politics’ section above.

This ‘lose-lose’ situation for women is exacerbated by the ‘cultural lag’ that emerges in the wake of modernization mentioned before. The process of modernisation in Taiwan has shifted the arena for extra-marital affairs from the private domestic (i.e., concubinage system) to the public and corporate world (such as office affairs). Affairs eventually affect the domestic arena at the present time in ways that cannot be so easily contained as in the concubinage system of traditional Chinese society. For the latter, the wife and ‘the third party’ (or the fourth party etc.) were both incorporated into, and managed by, the domestic system. Now, the third party woman cannot be taken back and managed at home, but the problems – both in public and domestic – need to be managed and fixed.

Given the cultural presumption that men are ‘not at fault’ (because men are seen as naturally promiscuous), the ‘fault’ and the responsibility must be with women. Thus, in the 'Savior' affair script, it is the wife who is blamed for providing the conditions for her husband going stray as well as being exhorted by advice columnists to take the responsibility to deal with the mess. In the 'Soul Mate' affair script, it is the third party woman who is blamed for husband stealing. And finally, in the 'Unhappy Housewife' affair script, it is the stray wife who gets the worst punishment of all – to be deserted by both
her husband and her lover. In conclusion, the 'lot of women' in this area of extra-marital mishaps could be simply seen as a direct reflection of an underlying patriarchal attitudes, but I think theoretically it merits attention to view their lot as an outcome of modernisation which has increased the opportunities for affairs and a 'cultural lag' which has decreased the means available to deal with the consequences of affairs.

Conclusion

The research questions posed in this paper can now find some answers from the 68 newspaper reports of extra-marital affairs from 1987 to 1994 in Taiwan. The reporting of extra marital affairs does not simply reiterate a same old story or a mishmash of marital mayhem. Rather despite the mess, there appears to be a strong narrative structure to the reported affairs. Real life, it seems, takes on a dramatic form. A series of four distinct ‘scripts’, beneath these reports, has been isolated. Three out of the four types of ‘scripted’ affairs have been found in the reports. One specific type of script – with the key player an instrumental modern Taiwan woman – is missing in these reports but can be expected to exist and/or to emerge soon. The scripts suggest that there is change in sexual mores regarding marriage and affairs in the contemporary Taiwanese setting. If social changes had not been occurring, the variety of scripts that emerged in this study would have been less, for example the ‘Soul-Mate’ script might also have been ‘missing’.

The scripts of Taiwanese extra-marital affairs do indeed reveal a set of gender relations specific to a Chinese setting. They reveal a social world with different dimensions and dynamics in gender politics to those in Western contexts. As summarised in the earlier part of this paper, in Western contexts, extra-marital affairs provide flexible gender roles and opportunities for fulfilling personal desires that are lacking within marriage. In contrast, in a Taiwanese context, the role of men’s resources and women’s self-definitions are pivotal in affairs. In terms of the boundaries set for marriage and the family regarding extra-marital affairs, Taiwan is at present living through a process whereby public discourse and the reporting of affairs are, in effect, still mobilising traditional values which encourage the wayward men return to their families and condemn straying women to divorce.
The importance of the scripts discerned from the Taiwanese newspaper materials is that anxieties about infidelity which may result from the changing social structure and culture in Taiwan are converted into symbolisations that make the anxieties manageable. Taiwanese columnists’ advice provides a view that such problems can be solved by women. Wives can be reassured that Chinese wifely virtues are valid and viable by supplementing them with modern prescriptions about role competence: so husbands will not ‘stray’. Those women who imagine they can manage affairs are exhorted to supplement their newfound autonomy with a moral concern for those other women who, as wives, they threaten: so they should not entice married men to ‘stray’. In this way, complexities of social structure and sexuality are converted into moralising about good people, particularly good women.

There is here an opportunity for Taiwanese feminist practice to develop alternative advice and depictions of marital infidelity. The thrust of this cultural intervention would be to construct new forms of ‘husbandry’ in the contemporary Taiwanese context. There is also an opportunity for refining Confucian values to emphasise gender equality in this modernisation process. The drive for gender equality may well cause tensions but presumably such tensions can be moderated by the Confucian commitment to social harmony.
ENDNOTES

1 A commentary in Lien-ho-pao (November 26, 1993).

2 The gross divorce rate is defined as ‘the number of divorced people divided by the number of people in population and multiplied by 1000’.

3 The news reported in Tzu-li-tsao-pao (January 2, 1993).

4 The news reported in Tai-wan-li-pao (January 2, 1993).

5 A commentary in Min-sheng-pao (May 20, 1991).

6 ‘Wearing green hat’ is a phrase used to ridicule a man whose wife has committed adultery.


8 It is important at this point to distinguish this study — of news, reports and commentaries on actual instances of extra-martial affairs — from the study of ‘representations’ in literature, fictions, TV soapes or advertisements to be found in cultural studies generally. There are many ‘representations’ of extra-marital affairs. They have a far greater scope for fantasy and the collective articulation of societal anxieties, fears, fetishes, rebellion etc. The reports used for this study, by contrast, are all of real affairs and thus are constrained by the social structures and the actual norms within which these affairs occurred.

9 This ‘myth’ was generated and originated from the shocking statistical figures reported in newspapers and provided by Professor Chai Sung-lin, a statistician in Taiwan. I don’t know what exactly the data and figures Professor Chai was using, but for this study I myself have collected relevant demographic data (ie the number of men and women by marital status and by age group across 1974 to 1994 (the year of my fieldwork of this study was conducted) from the Ministry of Interior. I have constructed such data into a statistical table showing the sex ratio for ‘never marrieds’ (ie single: see Table 1 in Appendix). Table 1 shows the opposite fact, namely: that the sex ratio (i.e. the number of men divided by the number of women) for each year from 1974 to 1994 has been always significantly larger than 1 for every age group (ie age 25-29, 30-34, 35-39 and 40-44) among never married people in Taiwan. This is why I call this perceived phenomenon of ‘less single men than single women’ as a ‘myth’. The numbers of men and women under the categories of ‘Divorced’ and ‘Widowed’ are so small, relative to numbers of ‘Never Married’, in the marriage market, they were not included in Table 1 – even though such data were collected and compiled.

10 This term Nu-chiang-jen was actually originated from a best selling novel entitled Nu-chiang-jen written by Chu Hsiou-chuan in the early 1980s.

11 For example, Cosmopolitan interviewed Chang Man-chuan (a never married female writer) and Tien Niu (an actress who is divorced in the March issue of 1997.

12 This slogan was used in a anti-sexual harassment movement occurring in May of 1994 in Taipei. The idea of this slogan is attributed to a controversial book, Hard for Women to Be Free (Nu-jen-nan-shuang), written by He Ch’un-Jui who is a feminist.

13 Examples are Chang Ai-chia (an actress and a film director), Hu Yin-men (ex-actress and a writer), Yin Chi (the president of one of the biggest construction firms in Taiwan).
The view on using Taiwan as a ‘case’ for studying Chinese culture and social change is fully highlighted by a Taiwanese social anthropology, Chen Shao-hsing, in his article “Taiwan As a Laboratory for the Study of Chinese Society and Culture.” (1965).

I photocopied all of the clippings under the subject name of ‘extra-marital affairs’ from 1987 to June 1994. Since the unit of analysis in this study is an ‘affair’, I then ‘cleaned’ these data by screening all of the pieces to see if there was a description of an actual affair in each piece. Most pieces contained at least one ‘affair’ which was ‘eligible’ for this study. Those pieces not containing any reported affair were eliminated. The total number of reported affairs is 68.

This foundation is an influential feminist organisation founded in the early 1980s, which has been actively involved with numerous social reforms regarding Taiwanese women’s issues. It lobbies to change legislation, publish documents/books, and mobilise women’s movements.

These nine newspapers include: Chung-kuo-shih-pao; Lien-ho-pao; Li-pao; Tzu-li-tsa-pao; Tzu-li-wan-pao; Lien-ho-wan-pao; Chung-shih-wan-pao; Tzu-yu-shih-pao; Min-sheng-apo. All of these newspapers are privately owned and normally hold more liberal positions than the newspapers owned by the government or KMT party. Chung-kuo-shih-pao and Lien-ho-pao have the largest circulation among all of the newspapers in Taiwan (Tien, 1989).

The ideal coding scheme should include a code for the gender of the author who could be a news reporter, commentator, or columnist, or a writer of the reported affair, because theoretically the author’s gender can be expected to be associated with his/her own view on extra-marital affairs. Unfortunately there is not enough information to identify the author’s gender, because more than half the authors use gender-neutral ‘pen name’.

This is the argument in the area of ‘sociology of the lack of knowledge’ in which the exclusion of material is a matter of theoretical and empirical interest in the feminist research area. (see Jane Haggis quoted in Reinharz, 1992 p.163).

For example, the headline in an article is “How Old Bulls Steal Fresh Grass?” in Tzu-li-tsa-pao (April 19, 1992).

For example, a news with a headline “Are Taiwanese Women too ‘Generous’? – Japanese Wives Worry about Husbands Having Affairs” in Min-sheng-pao (May 17, 1989).

For example, a story entitled “The Fault of a Piece of Paper” depicted how a man felt about having a feminist wife. (Chung-shih-wan-pao, July 30, 1989). A similar view was presented in an article entitled “I Don’t Need More! – I Only Want You to Be Gentle” (Chung-kuo-shih-pao, January 10, 1990).

Such instances were depicted in three ‘cases’ in a column of Tzu-yu-wan-pao (July 4, 1991).

A typical story with such ‘script’ can be seen in an article entitled “A Third Party Story” (Tzu-li-wan-pao, March 19, 1992).

For example, see a story entitled “Dare to Love but Don’t Dare to Divorce” (Lien-ho-pao, July 5, 1990).

See an example of such advice in a news reported in Min-sheng-pao (August 3, 1989).

For example, this view was revealed in an article with a headline: “Can Extra-marital Affairs Rescue Marriage?” (Min-sheng-pao, July 13, 1989) and another advice column in Tzu-yu-shih-pao (November 14, 1990).
For example, the columns in *Tzu-li-tsao-pao* (September 22, 1991) and in *Min-sheng-pao* (December 11, 1989).


An example of this script is depicted in a commentary “Don’t Need to Say Sorry?” (*Lien-ho-pao*, September 21, 1991).

An example of such view was presented in a commentary “A Triangle Relation in Extra-marital Affair” (*Lien-ho-pao*, November 4, 1991).

See an example of such view in a commentary with this headline “It Is All the Fault of Modern Women! – Wife Always Blames the Third Party” (*Min-sheng-bao*, July 20, 1989).


Chinese men normally would not be psychologically ‘prepared’ for things to happen like this. It might be suggested that men might not be prepared for this in any culture, but there are specific problems within Chinese contexts. Mostly notably sex is linked (in the case of women) to procreation and (in the case of men) as a natural urge. The only exception is a perceived potential danger from a widow or divorced woman due to her ambiguous status of being sexually active but having no ‘outlet’ (Honig and Hershatter, 1988; Waltner, 1981). Even in the context of being a widow, the tradition demands chastity (Elvin, 1984).

An example of such script can be seen in a story in *Lien-ho-pao* (August 16, 1989).


It has been argued that, even if both men and women benefit from engaging in extra-marital affairs in Western contexts, men are still in a more ‘advantageous’ position than women in such extra-marital context (Lawson, 1988), on top of the fact that men are in a more advantageous position in a marital relationship (Holland et al., 1996; Elliott, 1996; Duncombe and Marsden, 1996). Some radical feminists even insist that ‘heterosexual relationship is *invariably* involves male domination’. (This quotation about Dworkin is obtained from Duncombe and Marsden, 1996, p. 223, citing Dworkin, 1993).