

Chinese Film Studies

Film and Society

Chapter 3

Big Shot's Funeral (2001):

大腕

Advertisement and Consumerism in China



1.欣赏电影（四个片段）

先看前 30 分钟，听中文对白，看英语字幕。

2.第二片段至第四片段，听中文对白，无英语字幕，学生推测大意。学生提出一些看不懂的地方，Shannon 用英语解释。

三、电影讨论环节

1、什么是“喜剧葬礼”？真的存在喜剧葬礼嘛？

学生就中国，美国，墨西哥葬礼进行描述，比较。学生讲述自己曾参加过的葬礼的情况。

2、谁是你最喜欢的演员？为什么？

学生回答，并阐述理由。 忠诚、教堂、西红柿、土豆、葬礼。

3、你同意电影网站上的评论吗？（IMDB 网站、rottentomatoes 网站）

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/american-dreams-china-film-review-524792>

Movie Summary

This article seeks to demonstrate director Feng's urban humor and comedy movie for reflecting the "consumerist society" in 2001. American film director, Rob Tyler, is shooting a remake of *The Last Emperor* in Beijing. The director discovers he is ill and is fired. His assistant Lucy and a Beijing cameraman are assigned to plan his "funeral". Yoyo discovers there is no money to pay for the funeral and enlists the help of a businessman to attract sponsors for the funeral. Then, Tyler miraculously recovers and is determined to help with the planning of his own funeral. During the filming of his staged funeral, a romance blossoms between Yoyo and Lucy. The funeral of an important person is usually a big deal in China and Tyler the foreign director from Hollywood was a "big shot" director. So the advertisement companies were taking an advantage of his "Body" and tried advertising their product as a part of the funeral.

Critics' Perspective

Zhang (2008) discusses Feng Xiaogang's *Big Shot's Funeral* as a post-modern comedy. Zhang states that from a foreign critic's perspective, *Big Shot's Funeral* is a "meta-cinematic construction" of domestic partnership between cinema and real estate through advertisements. A meta-cinematic film, or a film within a film, is one that acknowledges the circumstances of its production (e.g. a film about corporate sponsorship is being sponsored by corporations), its audience (e.g. breaking the fourth wall), and itself (Hub, 2013).

Post-modern characteristics include a "loose structure, fragmented details, and lack of depth and purpose" (Zhang, 2008, p. 17). The film conveys a post-modern irony, as it vilifies commercial advertising in contemporary China. The film's ridiculous premise and its use of meta-advertising brings to attention that an increasingly commercialized China is being saturated with advertisements placed in all conceivable spaces such as balloons, banners, bill boards, etc. Film critic Hu Ke points out that it is "self-contradictory for a film to be critical of advertising to rake in money from advertising companies" (Zhang, 2008, p18) in reference to the director Feng Xiaogang and his use of soft advertisement, which reduces the effectiveness of the film's irony.

In the film, Tyler's funeral preparation becomes a post-modern comedy through a series of advertisement bids, high-profile public auctions, extensive media coverage and direct interference from gangsters. Apparently, this post-comedic film also serves as director Feng's subversion of the Western authority by portraying China as an uber-dynamic entity that can hold its own in globalization.

境界 Jìngjiè

When Lucy asks Yoyo what is 境界 Jìngjiè) means, some of the Western audiences may be confused about its definition. China's culture is based on Confucianism; while most of them are Buddhists, the Chinese believe that Buddha is the top of this world, and Buddha ~~can see wider~~ has a wider perspective than the common people. This belief was depicted in the film when Yoyo threw the stone that represents the Buddha's vision in front of Lucy's visions.

Funeral Differences

In the Chinese version of the film, the title was only advertised as "Big Shot" (大腕) not "Big Shot's Funeral" (大腕的葬礼). The funeral was ~~taken off~~ (removed) from the Chinese title and "the film thus ends happily as a comedy without a funeral" (Zhang, 2008, p.23). Actually, the director explains in his book, "*wo ba qing chun xian gei ni*" that the director Feng Xiaogang ~~going through a severe heart attack himself while making the movie~~ (experienced a severe heart attack himself during film production). It was also a challenge to work with Don Tyler (Donal Sutherland), a Hollywood actor with a Hollywood style. As other Chinese movie directors, it is common to be superstitious. The directors did not want to have any bad luck from the movie that they will have made.

In ~~a Chinese traditional~~ traditional Chinese funeral, the atmosphere of a funeral is very solemn. The non-immediate funeral guests wear black-colored formal suits, but family members wear white clothing. If people who are in 80s passed away and lived beyond the average expectancy, people say that the person lived well and it is called (known as) a "happy/comedy funeral."

While attendants typically cry aloud during Chinese funerals, funerals in America vary, and are dependent on one's tradition. Some even attend funerals solemnly, but ~~afterward the funeral~~ after the service is over, they are celebrating each other. For example, Mexican Americans drink afterward. They are predominantly Catholics, and hold open-casket funerals. ~~Mexican Americans are mainly Catholics. Mostly open-casket funerals.~~ They usually share stories about the deceased and pray on the rosary on the first day, and have mass and the burial on the second day.

All countries worldwide have their own culture; sometimes, it confuses people who ~~do not live or born~~ native inhabitants of that country. There is also a vast cultural barrier between the West and Asia. Because of the cultural barrier, audiences of different countries may have varying viewpoints for the same film. There is an example in "The Big Shot funeral,"

~~China's funeral usually has~~ (Chinese funerals typically have) many additional steps of rituals and ceremonies. Services and rituals that may seem strange, such as hiring funeral professional criers (complete strangers) to cry for the deceased; they need to cry emotionally during the whole funeral to show the surrounded community that the deceased family member was well-loved. Fancy paper house, cars, clothes, phones and fake money is burned to ash, in order for the deceased to receive it in the underworld. Chinese funerals always last for over seven days, and continue to grieve using unique rituals for a month. Funeral timeframes and styles vary among families.

Why "Sugar Daddy"

On a side note, using his dark sense of comedy, Feng Xiaogang also touched the sensitive subject of how modern Chinese materialistic life. The scene when a media company tried to make a young female model famous by spreading to the public stating she is the mistress of Tyler reveal the audience how the particular group of Chinese people think in modern society. The Chinese housing boom refers to the reality that some single women abandoned their boyfriends because they cannot afford the apartment in Beijing or they do not have a Beijing citizenship.

"A man is not a man if he doesn't own a house," said Chen Xiaomin, a contestant on a popular Beijing TV dating game show called *Fei Cheng Wu Rao*. Ma Nuo, from the same show, made another controversial claim: "I'd rather cry in a BMW than smile on the back of my boyfriend's bicycle". The misconception of the Chinese culture will also aggravate social bias, as it encourages social conflicts between rich and poor, the cities and the countryside. Moreover, this leads towards urbanization in China. Most people from the countryside go to the city with their imagination of living wonderful lives. Frankly, the simplest and most appealing way to get there to achieve this is to have a rich boyfriend; many consider themselves successful just by being their masters' mistresses.

Materialism in ancient times is represented as seeking the land and inheritance in old time ancient China. As Tyler once said, "the Forbidden City is all about red and gold, blood and money." In this era, land and silk symbolized wealth. Women's behavior and thoughts were strictly regulated under social oppression because of their low social statuses. Nowadays, people's materialistic goals have changed; they seek for modern living goods such as a home, or cars. Materialistic possessions owned by the wealthy have troubled others; those who are less wealthy may struggle with the idea of their own constructions of misfortune. Successful men partially define their pride through how attractive and

young their mistresses are, as the same way they were judged by their “sugar honeys” on the thickness of their wallets. These two terms became the most popular elements in modern China with the fast developing economics. The notion of a sugar daddy is quite popular in today’s society. Young and attractive females will generally look for men who have stable careers and high social statuses, whilst it is implied that the men are responsible for their mistresses, and their entire family’s financial support.

Ethical Business Issues

When Yoyo was organizing the marketing campaigns at the Forbidden Kingdom, organizing the marketing campaigns, there was a group of Chinese men in black appeared and proposed their interest in placing their company’s advertisement at the funeral. Even before being bluntly rejected by Yoyo, they were very aggressive, intimidating, and were ready to use violence as a persuasion method. When being questioned as to why they were so persistent in advertising such a low quality product, the group leader responded: “If you advertise enough, the fake products will eventually become the real ones.” This particular scene successfully reflected the current state of China’s business ethical and moral issues.

It is considered that China’s business culture has implemented negotiation tactics such as threatening with violence; bribing; blackmailing; and exchanging favors; etc., so, when Yoyo was being violently threatened, he was undoubtedly scared, but was not surprised. Another commonly known business strategy that most Chinese companies adopted was the imitation of intellectual property of others, without consent or permission of usage. This is simply because international copyright protection laws only apply to most countries, but not all. Since China is the world’s largest manufacturer, they have first-hand opportunities of interacting with foreign products. Imitating is one thing; however, who will be held liable for but what about selling products under different brand names without authorization (counterfeit merchandise); reproducing, distributing, displaying or even performing copyrighted digital music, videos, software (digital piracy); intentionally misleading product quality for profit gains (false advertisement)? Companies that adopt these tactics often aim for low capital investment for short-term revenue. Essentially, they tend to produce low-quality products and even consider doing harm to consumers. This also touches the subject of quality control regulation for consumer goods. These are all valid contributing factors in damaging China’s nation reputation as a whole.

Although these business behaviors were viewed as illegal and unethical in many other countries, especially Western countries, it is appropriate to question if Chinese companies are strictly required to

follow the government's rules and regulations. Yet, they **continue** to violate the fair use of intellectual rights. Does **this mean that the Chinese** government does not require for local businesses to follow international laws? No; China's business ethics are **clearly, a controversial** issue, and it is in China's interest to have business relations with foreign investors. However, strictly **enforcing** copyright infringement laws could potentially hurt China's domestic economy, by **demeaning** China's tourism and manufacturing **industry. This places** millions into unemployment. Carrying high risks, this is definitely a difficult challenge for China to accept.

The Real Big Shot of China and Globalization in the Chinese film

The goal of having Hollywood actor, Tyler (Donald Sutherland) in the movie, is to attract international audiences for the globalization of Chinese film.

Will it be possible for Chinese to achieve globalization in entertainment?

The Chinese are pushing their interests in the global movie market. The movie *Big Shot's Funeral*, was one of the movies **to be** released overseas, and tried to appeal to the Western market. Even though it was hilarious **to the Chinese**, it was a complicated movie to understand to the Westerners. *"The American college students did not find the movie very funny, but enjoyed the story and characters. The reviews of the movie seemed overly harsh."*

There were so many hidden meanings in this film that are only understood by the Chinese, such as cultural or social aspects. Movies like *Shaolin Soccer*, *Kungfu Hustle* or even *House of Flying Daggers*, have Western taste such as actions that Hollywood films typically have. In *Shaolin Soccer*, **it contained a dry sense of humor, rather than humor with underlying meanings, as demonstrated in *Big Shot's Funeral*.**

The real big shot in China can be referred to the brothers Wang Zhongjun and Wang Zhonglei, the CEO's of Huayi Brothers Media. The company was first developed in 1994 as an advertising production, and expanded into the media industry through investing by making movies, TV shows, talent agencies, music labels, and movie theaters. **The** Huayi Brothers reveals their plans to create the largest TV and film studio in East Asia, aiming to earn 10 billion RMB in the box office by 2016. Movies were produced by Huayi Brothers Media, **with** many well-known actors such as Andy Lau, Tony Leung, and actresses like Carina Lau, Li Bingbing, and Deng Chao.

Another **popular celebrity** in China is Wang Jianlin, a billionaire real estate mogul. He is the first wealthiest man in China and the CEO of Dalian Wanda Group Co. Over the years, the company has expanded into hotels, department stores, and cinemas (Verrier, 2013). The expansion is known as a

cultural industry, defined as “standardizing cultural goods—films, radio programs, magazine. Wanda Cinema line, owned by Dalian Wanda Group Co is the largest cinema in Asia. In May 2012, Dalian Wanda Group Co purchased U.S. movie theater chain AMC for \$2.6 billion USD. The purchase of AMC allows Dalian Wanda Group to become the largest cinema operator throughout the world (Hook, 2012). The purchase of AMC is a leap forward for globalization and is estimated to allow Wanda Group “10 percent of global cinema market, and he hopes to increase the share to 20 percent by 2020” (Hook, 2012). Investing into American theaters has allowed for Wang to introduced Chinese culture to western society, currently a few theaters are offering new Chinese film in theaters.

Aside from the movie theater business, Wang plans for globalization and creating the world’s largest movie studio in China. Wang plans to invest \$8.2 billion into Oriental Movie Metropolis, a new and upcoming movie studio that aims to be the next Hollywood. On September 24, 2013, the unveiling of Oriental Movie Metropolis was introduced to the general public alongside many famous American stars such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Nicole Kidman in the Beijing Hotel. Oriental Movie Metropolis projects would include “20 film and TV sound stages near Qingdao, along with a theme park, wax museum and space for an annual film festival” (Miller, 2013).

A reason that the Chinese have been spreading their words on the film business is through international film festivals such as **The Cannes Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival and Venice Film Festival Golden Lion**. There are international movie fanatics that love to watch foreign films and to critique them. In the United States, if the foreign films are popular enough, they are publicized on online film services such as Netflix or Hulu will be on Netflix or Hulu, which an online film service. Chinese is a top-producing country, and it is never too late to join the international movie business industry. Usually, Chinese actors such as Jackie Chan, who has been successful in both the Chinese and the American films, is one of the ways the two countries could integrate into the film industry.

Suggested Movie’s Scenes:

- 1) Using a major TV producer as their primary investor in exchange of introducing a mystery lady as Tyler’s mistress to promote her acting career
- 2) When Lucy asked Yoyo what is *Jingjie*
- 3) Scene of auction, finding sponsors for funeral
- 4) When Yoyo was threaten by a group of gang members at the Forbidden Kingdom

Chinese Vs. Western

Chinese Funeral

- White Clothes
- Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism
- Music to accompany the corpse and settle the spirit
- Transfer foods, moneys, and valuable goods by burning paper.

Western Funeral

- Black Clothes
- Christianity, Monotheism
- Have a priest and pray for the spirit
- Writing a condolence card to the survivor such as the wife or the kids.

Scene



scene 4

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oggfz71y3wf4&list=PL3A543E2CC78AAF8E>

00:10 → 01:50

scene 6

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSVg1kqjld&list=PL3A543E2CC78AAF8E>

8:30 → 10:10

Advertisement in China

- Monitor by the government
- Growing competition on marketing the company
- Entertainment media such as sports, financial and other entertainment media has little to no government regulations.
- Repression on the internet
- Limited freedom of speech about the country

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Questions: Chapter 3 BIG SHOT FUNERAL (1999)

1.) Who is Yoyo?

- A. A toy maker
- B. A musicians
- C. A cameraman
- D. A director

2.) Why **does the director ~~does~~ want to kill himself?**

- A. Since his name is part of the film that he doesn't want credit for
- B. He felt emo
- C. Drug addiction.
- D. He was insane from intense hunger.

3.) Who was not part of the Jing Jie?

- A. Buddha
- B. Yoyo
- C. Tyler
- D. Mitsutomo

4.) What kind of funeral does Tyler want?

- A. Tragedy
- B. Comedy
- C. All white
- D. All black

5.) Who is in charge of Tyler's funeral?

- A. A random Chinese person
- B. Lucy
- C. Buddha
- D. Yoyo

6.) Who was the last person to know about Tyler still being alive?

- a.) Lucy
- b.) Yoyo
- c.) Mitsumoto
- d.) God

7.) How large do they **want the commercials to be?**

- A. China only
- B. In Asia
- C. Globally

D. Universally

8. When Lucy asks Yoyo what is 境界Jingjiè means, some of the Western audiences might be confuse about it. How did Yoyo explained 境界Jingjiè to Lucy?

- A. Yoyo said showed China's culture is based on Confucianism and most of them are Christian
- B. Yoyo said China's culture is based on Confucianism and most of them are Muslimism
- C. Yoyo threw the stone, representing the Buddha's vision in front of Lucy's vision
- D. Yoyo threw the stone, representing the Tyler's vision in front of Lucy's vision

9. In the Chinese version of the film, the title was only advertised as “Big Shot” (大腕) not “Big Shot's Funeral” (大腕的葬礼). Why the funeral was taken off from the Chinese title?

- A. Actually, the director said in his book “wo ba qing chun xian gei ni” that the Hollywood Actor Donal Sutherland was going through a severe heart attack himself while making the movie.
- B. American audiences thought that the title of “Big Shot's Funeral” means Don Tyler (Donal Sutherland) Hollywood actor's funeral and Hollywood will not like it.
- C. As other Chinese movie directors, it's \common to be superstitious and the directors don't want to **risk having** bad luck from the movie that they will make.
- D. If Chinese people who are in the 80's pass away and lived beyond the average expectancy, people say that the person **had lived well**, and it's called “happy/comedy Funeral”.

10. In May 2012, Dalian Wanda Group Co purchased U.S. movie theaters for \$2.6 billion USD. The purchased of American movie theater allows Dalian Wanda Group the largest cinema operator throughout the world (Hook, 2012). It is a leap forward for globalization and is estimated to allow him “10 percent of global cinema market, and he hopes to increase the share to 20 percent by 2020” (Hook, 2012). The movie theatre is

- A. Regal Entertainment Group, with sites: 580
- B. AMC Entertainment Inc with sites: 483
- C. Cinemark Theatres with sites: 298
- D. Carmike Cinemas, Inc. with sites: 232

Chapter 4

Caught in Web (2012) 搜索 Media and Privacy

Modern Day Red Guard

Caught in the Web (2011), directed by Chen Kaige, is one of the Fifth Generation filmmakers, alongside Zhang Yimou, Tian Zhuangzhuang, and Zhang Junzhao. Chen was the son of well-known filmmaker, Chen Huaiaia, in the 1950's and 1960's. The relationship between the father and his son was strained, due to their different ideologies during the Cultural Revolution. Also, the enrollment of Chen as a Red Guard has caused him to denounce his father. As Chen became older, he regretted that moment in his life. The Cultural Revolution was a chaotic period, which has led Chen to produce films that are related to the Cultural Revolution, such as *Farewell for My Concubine* (1993) and *Yellow Earth* (1986). Chen is constantly progressing as a director and has turned to produce film sets in modern China, with the same intention of exposing reality to the general public. Chen feels that "if everyone only goes back to historical pieces, then there is no hope for Chinese cinema" (Pennington, 2012).

In his most recent production: *Caught in the Web* (2012), Chen focuses on the issue of the cyber web and views the cyber web in its negative aspects. In the film, main lead, Ye Lanqiu, refuses to forfeit her seat to an elderly man, and humiliated him. This incident soon became viral on the cyber web, and Internet bullying began from netizen (Wang Min). The intention of the film and the bullying by netizen is comparable that of the Cultural Revolution. The online bullies are unaware that they hold similar characteristics to the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. Online bullies and Red Guards both believe they are doing justice to the public, and

bringing justice where it is needed; but their actions are not based on evidence, rather on pure assumption and gossip.

In the film, netizen run human flesh (??) search to obtain information on Ye Lanqiu and is not shameful on exposing her information to the public. Their constant harassment and humiliation is similar to that of the Red Guards, as they make false claims of individuals being traitors to the party, and evidently leading to execution.

The Abuse of Contemporary Media

The film *Caught in the Web* (2012) portrays how the media can be manipulated for destructive ends. The story began when Ye Lanqiu is diagnosed with lymphatic cancer. After asking her boss, Shen Liushu, for time off from work, ~~the distraught~~ Ye Lanqiu was harassed on the bus, after refusing to give up her seat to an elderly man; and an intern reporter, Yang Jiaqi, captured the incident on video; then went to Chen Ruoxi to put up the video on the news. Ye Lanqiu, at the mercy of Chen Ruoxi's ambitions, were subjected to public humiliation and "human flesh search" on the Internet after the video went viral. Things were blown out of proportion. The already depressed Ye Lanqiu eventually committed suicide.

The events in the film can be compared with real life cases of suicide that stemmed from the abuse of the social media. Although the circumstances of each case were different, the mechanisms that were used to carry out harassments were similar. Suicide victims, such as Megan Meier, from the United States, and Rehtae Parsons, from Canada were often the center of negative attention on social media websites due to rumors or videos and photos that went viral. As more people have access to computers and cell phones, traditional bullying has gone digital. Digital forms of social media include QQ, Facebook, Twitter, Weibo, RenRen, Instagram, Snapchat, Wechat, Line, Kakaotalk, etc., were created for networking purposes. Nowadays they are often misused as tools for cyber bullying. Social interaction has increasingly moved from personal contact to virtual contact. Compared to bullying face-to-face, cyber-bullying is perceived to result in a heavier emotional toll on the victims. Although Ye Lanqiu isolated herself for the most part in the film, she was still affected by public opinion. Perhaps the negative opinions of others could be a contributing factor for Ye Lanqiu's cancer to develop at a quicker rate, due to peer pressure and emotional distress. In one scene, Ye Lanqiu is surfing the Internet

and reading online posts about her, and the bus incident. Upset and dismay, she consumes a handful of anti-depressants.

In 2012, there was a case of cyber-bullying on Weibo involving Hsu Chi, an A-list Taiwanese actress. Hsu Chi was involved in a dispute between Donnie Yen and Vincent Zhao, where she openly defended Donnie Yen against Vincent Zhao's accusations, which angered Vincent Zhao's fans. Afterward, Hsu Chi's posts on Weibo often received abusive comments from users. Some users even forwarded images from a pornographic film Hsu Chi participated in, at the age of 17. Consequently, Hsu Chi was stigmatized by a relatively conservative society, and was seen in tears, when visiting a friend after the incident. Hsu Chi then deleted all of her posts, and stopped following all accounts on Weibo. Hsu Chi's fellow Taiwanese friend, Vivian Hsu, also a celebrity, was a victim of cyber-bullying on Weibo as well. Vivian Hsu was accused of being a "Japanese dog", which prompted her to discontinue her Weibo account. Since Chinese laws do not explicitly prohibit cyber-bullying or "trolling", not one person was held accountable.

Although victims of cyber scrutiny are not physically harmful, there has been a great deal of damage done to their self-esteem and mental well-being. Because society has become highly integrated with online media, it is becoming more difficult to protect the privacy of the individual. *Caught in the Web's* (2012) criticism of the contemporary media reminds us that although the contemporary media provides convenient means to access and to relay information, it may still be misused. Nowadays, opinions can be freely expressed online with little fear of repercussions, as people shield themselves behind anonymity.

Paparazzi

The paparazzi culture began in England, when the infamous incident of Princess Diana's tragic death was exposed in 1997. While she was traveling with her boyfriend (Dodi), she was encountered by a group of cameramen in Paris. Princess Diana was not expecting her personal, private moments to turn into a public photo-shoot. Surrounded by aggressive paparazzi, Princess Diana's driver attempted to escape the crowd, but unfortunately lost control of the car, and the inevitable happened. This incident is assumed to be an unintentional murder; regardless, the aggressive nature of the British paparazzi culture was the main cause of the scene.

The concept of paparazzi was highly influenced, and spread all over the world, including the conservative countries in Asia. It began in Hong Kong, and expanded outward to other

countries. Where there is a curious audience, a scandalous stardom, and a developed media, these three basic factors are enough to **provoke a demand, and create a great condition for the paparazzi industry expand**. Publishing basic celebrities' personal information was originally intended to connect celebrities to their fan base. Questions about the celebrities' hobbies and habits are typically considered as "connecting" with fans. However, there is a barrier between what is acceptable to share publicly, and what information should remain private. Still, through **obsessive fans' perspectives, they feel closer to their idols with every piece of information they have access to**.

With the same concept of publishing celebrities' daily lives, there is another kind of paparazzi that usually reports interesting topics in the local news. In the film *Caught in the Web* (2012), Jia Qi **was a member of** the hidden paparazzi that caught Lan Qiu's inappropriate behaviors on video, creating **tension** on moral issues. This form of paparazzi is **conducted in a journalistic manner**; the main **objective is to create "hot" topics that encourage the viewers' discussions**. **Once a topic has gained the viewers' attention, these journalists will continue to exploit others angles of this topic**. In the film, during the interview of Rouxi and Lan Qiu's elementary teacher, Rouxi was intentionally fishing for negative comments about Lan Qiu. **Clearly, Rouxi was feeding** the hatred in society and continued to portray the negative images that society had already painted of Lan Qiu. However, **from a journalist's point of view, Rouxi was simply focusing on her job, to maintain the TV viewership by keeping the topic popular**.

Generally speaking, most people believe that **participating in the paparazzi** is a tough career to pursue. Most celebrities are ~~not too friendly when it comes to encounter camera men intruding their private lives~~. **seek to avoid the cameramen who seem to be intruding into their private lives**. **Being a part of the paparazzi** requires long, tedious working hours and intensive commitment. In addition, it usually **involves running and transporting** expensive equipment. The **pay rate is unstable**, and sometimes involves risks. Since today's media is continuing to develop, viewers have **many options to decide on following topics of their choice**. Due to globalization, viewers are exposed to tremendous amounts of daily events **worldwide**. **Hence, it is natural when journalists or the paparazzi** bypass their work ethic to deliver outrageous news. An example of this issue is when Rouxi takes the credits from Jia Qi's internship, and chooses to withhold Lan Qiu's apology clip. This is an **undoubtedly selfish and unethical decision** on Rouxi's part, which also reflects her personality and work ethic.

Chinese Style Marriage

In ancient times, men were privileged to be in polygamous relationships, as long as they had the abilities to financially support their wives. Nowadays, although Chinese men are no longer able to officially have multiple wives, the expectation of being a main provider for their families is still present. In exchange, men are able to dictate their spouse's lives, especially when their wives are not providing any source of income. However, under the influence of Western education and lifestyles, most women nowadays may freely enter the workforce, and provide for themselves. As a result, instead of being a dependent of the husband, both spouses may share equal responsibility in providing for their families and raising children.

In the film *Caught in the Web* (2012), by Director Chen, Kaige portrays an ideological modern Chinese marriage through two characters, a rich man and his wife. Shen Liushu is a successful businessman, and Mo Xiaoyu is a typical housewife. In the film, Shen offers Mo a credit card, ~~that can buy almost everything from the store~~ that enables for her to afford nearly all items from the store; however, when Mo questions Shen about his loyalty, he immediately canceled her card. Mo is understandably angry with her husband, because the cashier from the luxury store tells her that her card is declined. Before Mo leaves Shen, she moves all of her valuable jewelry away in order to secure her escape financially. Does Mo love material goods more than she loves her husband?

Mo loves her husband; simultaneously, she cannot leave the security that material goods bring to her. Mo Xiaoyu is the symbol of Chinese housewives nowadays. With the traditional concept of ~~listening to the husband and staying at home be quiet from the old time culture~~ being docile and subservient to their husbands, housewives are lonely and insecure in today's society. Therefore, making purchases becomes the goal of their lives. The [Shanghai Daily](#) reported on a "Voice of China," a radio program claiming that Chinese housewives are sustaining gold prices. The program says that these women reportedly spent 100 billion yuan (\$16 billion) in the span of two weeks; buying up to 300 tons of gold and helping prices remain steady at approximately \$1,468 an ounce (Web, 2013). Bluffing to other housewives and creating self-security has shaped Chinese housewives to be everything but positive in every news reports.

In the Qing Dynasty, ~~when a woman is married, she is not supposed~~ married women were forbidden to interact with other men anymore. Hence, the meaning of the idiom "相夫教子" in

the Chinese culture, is that the primary duties of a woman are to be in the service of her husband and to teach her children well. Housewives are considered to be the most popular occupation that most married women ended up having. A majority of married women eventually become housewives, a popular occupation for women during the Qing Dynasty. This brings the disposition that having a daughter instead of a son is devaluing to a family. People today still prefer having sons over daughters; not only will a male earn a sufficient amount of wealth than his female counterpart in the workforce, but also a son will also carry the last name of his family to future generations. Another idiom, “嫁出去的女儿，泼出去的水”，is used to describe a situation in which a daughter is “thrown into the water”; her parents are unable to take her back when she is married.

More women are now well educated, and the social class of a female is rising. The status of a husband and his wife has become equal in modern, educated families. However, many women are still accepting of reality and lack ambition when their roles are to be stay-at-home wives. Besides house cleaning, providing meals on the table, and raising kids, the new class of housewives believes that it is enough to keep a man by maintaining or improving their physical appearances. Model-type housewives mainly focus in supporting their husbands' careers. A wife may enrich her husband's social status by appearing “beautiful” or “classy”. She may also de-stress her husband by actively listening to his complications and providing valuable advice. A wife must strengthen the foundation of her marriage by being trustful and being respectful, while still maintaining the intimacy and romance in the relationship. Although this task is plentiful to accomplish in order to become the ideal housewife; after all, her life is still expected to be completely dedicated to their husbands and children, once she is married.

A Misconception of Respect

In many different cultures, the concept of age is considered to be directly proportional to wisdom, knowledge, maturity, and life experience. Therefore, many often seek guidance from the elders, as they believe that the elderly have set the foundations for the way of life as we know it today. Directly and indirectly, senior citizens are the key of our history, whether they helped build or witnessed it. Perhaps even the fact that everybody will eventually grow old someday is considered to be good karma. Showing respect to the elders is expected of the younger generation, is to show respect to the elders.

Religiously, the Bible from the West, and Confucian literature from the East both address the need to show respect for the elders. It is most common in East Asia **for** older generations to expect respect from younger generations; **the main reason is that** they were teachers and caretakers of the young. **Although this is generally true**, respecting the **elders does not coincide with** admiration, or agreeing with their opinions and beliefs. **It is common** to encounter situations of when the elders themselves “demand” respect from society whilst behaving exceptionally rude. Anyone, regardless of age, that carries the mindset of “being right just because of being older” may show an ill understanding **of what composes the concept of** respect.

In the film, Lanqiu was asked to forgo her bus seat to an older man. **This type of situation is very common and occurs often in the Chinese society.** ~~actually everyday real life experiences that occur quite often, especially in China's society.~~ It is **in the Chinese** culture interest to hold traditional virtues “中华民族传统美德,” such as considering children and the elders’ needs as a priority, because they usually **require a greater amount of** care. However, not every person is willing to follow that commandment. **Some believe that it is not disrespectful to remain still in their seats instead of offering their space to the elderly.** ~~not offering their seats to the elders does not mean it is disrespectful.~~ **It is a matter of kindness; therefore, this should be a voluntary choice, and should not feel any form of obligation to proceed.** At times, the elders are stronger and healthier than the **youth**, but still take the privilege for granted, and **are ungrateful toward those who offer their seats to them.** ~~Douban~~, a Chinese critics website, launching the campaign **and** calling many to join the movement to “never give up your bus seat”. **Those who felt a sense of entitlement to the privilege, yet carried negative attitudes, created this movement.** **This also** indicates that young people are **bearing** the burden of society, **so they, too**, deserve a few minutes of rest during their commutes. **Because Lanqiu had not offered her seat to the elderly man on the bus, does this make her a disrespectful person?** No; however, offering her lap for the old man to sit, was definitely inappropriate. The concept of **offering one's seat** should be based on one's physical needs, not age. **Although the two factors may concur**, this is not necessarily the case. **As long as it is still considered as an act of kindness, instead of a requirement, the attitude of the receiver should be judged as much as the morality** of the giver.

MEDIA AND PRIVACY

Caught in the Web (2012) has an intention to expose the undesirable aspects of media. Shen Liushu's character developed throughout the film, and encapsulated the many facets of media in China today. When asked why he only showed the negative aspects of the Internet in his film, Chen Kaige says, "It was raising a real problem. I am not suggesting a solution." (NY Times, Pennington, 2012) When media spreads a story and when justice is taken in to the hands of the public, it may potentially lead to larger problems. Mass media is an interesting creature with an innate function to expose the truth, while dragging its victims through society's cruelty and influence.

In an interview with the director, Chen Kaige, explicitly says, "My feeling toward the websites in China is very mixed. On the one hand I've seen the positive side, on the other hand, can you abuse the freedom of speech to attack people? Are you going to play a role like a judge? Because that reminds me of the Cultural Revolution" (NY Times, Pennington, 2012). Throughout the film *Caught in the Web* (2012), Shen Liushu held many interactions that reflect his opinion on the media. The many facets of his perception, manipulation, and belligerence towards media represent a progression that encompasses the mass population's varying views of media today. An analysis of Shen Liushu will provide insight to understanding the role of the media, influence, and various opinions in China. A comparison of the media in China and America will also provide some perspective on this controversial issue.

In the beginning of the film, Shen Liushu believes that every person experiences hardship and suffering, and it is unfortunate that Ye Lanqiu is caught on film and shouldn't be news. Ye Lanqiu attempted to apologize, but it was not aired on the news. In the U.S., there are often many unreliable tabloids, and sources that others believe to be true.

In America there exists a certain caveat with any celebrity news. People believe that it is interesting, and are willing to follow the gossip on Twitter, Magazines, interviews, etc., but celebrity news often seems to be the most exciting when he or she is caught off guard, especially when their personal lives are plastered out of context. Often times, celebrities do not have control over the material that is released by mass media. If the news is so libelous, they have the opportunity to speak out to the public. In China, the rights for the people and celebrities are seemingly different than that of the U.S.; but the media is similar however, they share similarities in how mass media is spread. Media of any kind wants to sell a good story, and it is not above editing its clips, quotes, or pictures to make a better story. Any form of media seeks to upsell its

story; editing clips, quotes, or pictures to enhance an improved story is unreliable. (Is this what you want to say in this sentence? What is the meaning?)

Another progression of Shen Liushu's view of media is demonstrated when he decides to be manipulative. Because his wife suggested that Ye Lanqiu was having an affair with her boss, the media constructed negative claims about Shen Liushu's company during an important merging process. He decided to release photos of himself with his wife; to create a fake scandal implying that was having an affair with another woman. Later, he releases that the affair is actually with his wife, both a happily married couple.

A similar example in America is when celebrities advertise their babies' photos, and wait for the highest bidder to purchase them for use in their tabloids. The releasing of these photographs is to make money for both the celebrity and the publisher. Moreover, the publisher is higher likely to portray the celebrity in a positive light, such as being a fully dedicated family member. The most expensive set of celebrity baby photos belongs to Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, who sold photos of their twins for \$15 million in 2008 (Forbes, Lacey, 2009).

The justice system and rights of the media and people are different in China. The media continues to harass Ye Lanqiu, and Shen Liushu decides to directly attack Ruoxi. His scheme involves contacting Yaqi to provide fake advertising services from Ruoxi. Therefore, Ruoxi gives Yaqi her bank account information, under the assumption that she would be paid for involving in these advertising services. However, Shen Liushu had called the boss at the TV station and reported Ruoxi for taking bribes; eventually Ruoxi loses her job. This leads people to believe that in China, it is common for the authority to be vengeful to those who cross their boundaries. However, in America, it is difficult for the celebrities to punish their offenders because the paparazzi have rights, and actions against them must be settled in the court. For example, celebrities including Halle Berry and Jennifer Garner had testified on the behalf of Senate Bill 606, which was passed by Gov. Jerry Brown. This increases the possible punishment for harassing celebrity kids, and clarifies the legal definition to include "conduct in the course of the actual or attempted recording of children's images and/or voices, without express parental consent, by following their activities or lying in wait"(E!News, Finn, 2013).

Feminist Workaholics

According to the *New York Times*, women have been very knowledgeable for decades, and they believe that the conservative idea of men having “power” above them is now obsolete. In earlier times, men once believed that stronger women were more authoritative over them. In China today, strong women have been claimed to be aggressive and bossy. This reflects Ruoxi’s ideology, since she is Chinese and a city folk.

In the movie *Caught in the Web* (2012), both Chen Rouxi and Ye Lanqiu were workaholics, both examples of modern China’s independent women. Ruoxi was described as obnoxious, and a money driven workaholic. To strive for new challenges and successes, her career became her personal life. Not only did being a workaholic destroy her romantic relationship with her boyfriend, she was also suffering from depression. However, this is based on one’s perfection, inflexibility and preoccupation toward his or her work.

In today’s society, workaholics are not frowned upon, and at times are even well respected because of the motivation and purpose they dedicated in building their career. The true victims of workaholics, is the worker and his or her immediate family. Two main issues often arise for a workaholic; time management and making ethical decisions. Time management is taken into consideration, because the worker has trouble balancing the time between work and his or her personal life. The worker willingly eliminates other hobbies, daily activities, and time spent with family and friends, in exchange for more work. Since workaholics are intensely dedicated to their careers, some may began to make questionable decisions that involve personal ethics and morals.

Rouxi, in this case, struggles with making ethical choices. Not only did Rouxi receive JiaQi’s credit in publishing the video clip, she also intrudes into Lan Qiu’s personal life for information that can only be used in continuing to degrade Lan Qiu. Additionally, Ruoxi also chooses to withhold Lan Qiu’s apology clip to end society’s hatred for Lan Qiu. Although many consider the nature of Ruoxi’s task as creating hot topics and obtaining viewership, it is nevertheless unethical that Rouxi only publishes certain pieces of information that may potentially mortify Lan Qiu’s reputation. As Rouxi began to earn respect from her peers and from her boss, she became lustful for money.

Not only does she blindly accept the money that JiaQi claims was from an ad company, Ruoxi does not question her responsibility after she receives the money. Due to a degree of jealousy, Ruoxi intentionally uses the power she has at work to take personal revenge, by ruining

Lan Qiu's life for stealing her boyfriend. In the end, Ruoxi loses her career, her money, and the love of her life. ¹

Ruoxi is also a perfect description of a feminist. Feminists are a group of women that believe in the equality of all genders. Ruoxi exerts her dominance over Lanqiu, making her feel inferior towards Ruoxi.

Feminism

(Feminism is the critiquing of male power with efforts to change it. It is not exactly "feministic" of Ruoxi to show dominance over Lanqiu; she is simply a threatening and emotionally violent person)

¹ Source: <http://drbenkim.com/workaholic-workaholism.html>

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Chapter 4: Caught in the Web (2012)

1) What was Ye Lanqiu diagnosed with?

- A. Lymphatic cancer
- B. She got a cold
- C. SARS from riding public transportation
- D. Breast cancer

2) Who filmed the clip of Ye Lanqiu?

- A. Chen, Ruoxi
- B. Yang, Jiaqi
- C. Yang, Shoucheng
- D. Mo, Xiaoyu

3) Who was given the credit for filming the clip of the girl wearing sunglasses?

- A. Yang Jiaqi
- B. Obama
- C. Chen, Kaige
- D. Ye, Lanqiu

4) What did Ye Lanqiu promise Shoucheng at the end of his service?

- A. A house
- B. Her hand in marriage
- C. 40,000 RMB
- D. 600,000 RMB

5) What happened to Lanqiu at the end of the film?

- A. She overdose on medication
- B. She died from smoking too much
- C. She committed suicide
- D. She was killed by Rouxi, for stealing her boyfriend

6) Which state is correct about media's role from the film *Caught in the Web*?

- A. Media is useful
- B. Media cannot hurt people
- C. Media can be manipulated for destructive ends
- D. Media acts as a bridge between government officials and common people

7) What does Xiaosan (小三)?

- A. Xiaosan is someone who is pretty
- B. Xiaosan is someone's secretary
- C. Xiaosan is someone's love affair
- D. Xiaosan is a husband's love affair with another young girl other than his wife

8) Why did Mo, Xiaoyu thinks Ye, Lanqiu is Xiaosan (小三) ?

- A. Ye, lanqiu told her
- B. Shen, Liushu told her
- C. She saw Shen, Liushu hug Ye, Lanqiu
- D. She drinks and think too much

9) What did Shen, Liushu did to comfort his wife?

- A. tells her he loves him
- B. Bring her travel
- C. Reactive her bank account card
- D. He decided to release photos of himself with his wife

10) What happened to Yang, Shoucheng and Chen, Ruoxi at the end?

- A. They got married
- B. They bought a new house
- C. They went to travel
- D. They broke up