

WUHAO: THE FIVE GOODS MOVEMENT AND EVOLVING FORMS OF STATE
GOVERNANCE OVER DOMESTIC SPACE AND FAMILY LIFE IN THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 1956-1958

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ABSTRACT

DONALD SANTACATERINA: *Wuhao*: The Five Goods Movement and Evolving Forms of State Governance Over Domestic Space and Family Life in the People's Republic of China, 1956-1958

This study uses the *People's Daily* newspaper as a source to investigate the “Five Goods Movement” (五好活动 *wuhao huodong*), a campaign carried out in the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1956-1958. The Five Goods movement sought to regulate productive socialist families by celebrating a positive “Five Goods housewife” while denigrating a negative, shrewish housewife who threatened domestic harmony. The Chinese state propagated these two models in the *People's Daily* newspaper to assert an ideological power over domestic space in tandem with the more physical presence of neighborhood “mutual aid teams” which were employed to surveil, comment on, commend, and criticize mothers and wives on their ability (or inability) to maintain a harmonious domestic space in line with movement's values. The movement illustrates a case of state negotiation over its position as a legitimate actor in domestic space and Chinese family life.

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INTRODUCTION

The “Five Goods Movement” (五好活动 *wuhao huodong*) was a mobilization campaign carried out in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) from 1956-1958 that pointedly reflected state visions of where housewives and “family dependents” (家属 *jiashu*) belonged within China’s emerging socialist order. The movement began in earnest in February of 1956, when the All China Women’s Federation (全国妇联 *quanguo fulian*, hereafter referred to as the “Women’s Federation”) began to promote a concrete list of Five Goods (五好 *wuhao*) for urban housewives to aspire to.¹ Carried out in tandem with branches of local government (primarily “street committees”) and various organs of the Women’s Federation, this Five Goods movement encouraged housewives to educate their children on socialist values and to support male spouses in their work outside the home through performance of several domestically-oriented ideals of motherhood and wifedom.² The initial Five Goods of the campaign were: 1) to promote mutual assistance between neighborhoods and households; 2) to properly arrange domestic life; 3) to educate children; 4) to encourage and support the production, work, and study of (male) spouses;

¹ Zhou Lei, “Suzao he biao Zhang: dui ershi shiji wuliushi niandai ‘wuhao’ huodong de lishi kaocha zhoulai” [Modeling and Commending: A Historical Review of Twenty Years of the ‘Five Good’ Role Model Campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s], *Collection of Women’s Studies* 1 (2015): 57-58.

² The “Five Goods movement” is never referred to explicitly as a project of the All China’s Women Federation, however, it was heavily promoted by both members of the All China Women’s Federation (some of whom were “Five Goods activists” and model housewives themselves) as well as “cadres” (干部 *ganbu*). Wang Zheng’s article on the All China Women’s Federation (ACWF) explains that the ACWF often held an ambiguous ground within government party structures, blurring the line between official party organ and an unofficial local bureau. This argument fits well with the model of Five Goods campaign promotion. Wang Zheng, “State Feminism?: Gender and Socialist State Formation in Maoist China,” *Feminist Studies* 31 (2005): 521-522.

and 5) for housewives to earnestly study themselves.³ In this case “study” refers to study of government issued works intended to promote socialist thought.⁴

Through the Five Goods movement, the state championed a “good” socialist housewife who practiced socialist values while simultaneously denigrating a “shrewish” housewife who disrupted domestic harmony through gossip, a disposition to quarrel, and an inability to cooperate with their husbands and mothers-in-law towards the fulfillment of socialist ideals. The five tenets of the movement and the negative model of the “shrewish” housewife changed slightly over the next three years of the movement, but retained their initial purpose: to facilitate greater efficiency of men at the workplace by emphasizing women’s ability to maintain a harmonious domestic space, in turn building stronger socialist communities and a stronger nation. This paper argues that the Five Goods movement’s utilization of the national *People’s Daily* newspaper (*Renmin Ribao* 人民日报) in tandem with local neighborhood committees extended the scope and power of the PRC state’s ability to define “good” and “bad” socialist housewives, and justified this negotiation over the proper way to organize family life and domestic affairs in the name of national efficiency. It also argues that this strategy of state governance over domestic space and family life, where women are simultaneously praised and denigrated towards the achievement of state goals, continued in conspicuous fashion into the late 1970’s and early 1980’s.

³ “*Quanguo fulian deng shisan ge danwei: guanyu jinian ‘sanba’ funü jie de lianhe tongzhi*” [All China Women’s Federation and Thirteen Other Work Units Joint Notice on Commemorating ‘March 8th’ Women’s Day], *Renmin Ribao*, February 10, 1956: 3.

⁴ Shi fulian tongxun zu [Women’s Federation City Correspondence Group], “You gian rushen: Shimin zhizi keben shoudao huanying” [From the Easy to the Difficult: City Residents’ Literacy Textbooks Receive Welcome], *Renmin Ribao*, July 24, 1956: 4.

In the only English language article on the subject, scholar Song Shaopeng argues that the Five Goods movement proves useful in demonstrating how “housework” (家务 *jiawu*) fit in to the Communist Party’s larger visions of socialist order, focusing on the movement’s ability to articulate developing notions of the merits of housework as worthy to a greater socialist cause. Song tracks the shifting arguments over housework (家务 *jiawu*) in Chinese political discourse, highlighting that it was first considered “parasitic” in the early 1950’s, then honorable and a worthy part of socialist construction during the Five Goods movement from 1956-1958, and later deemphasized in favor of women’s engagement with “external” production work outside the home from 1958-1960.⁵ Her study, however, focuses primarily on the political implications of “women’s work” and the political status of *jiashu* “family dependents” in Chinese society, while offering precious little on actual state promotion of the Five Goods movement at the local level.

Chinese scholarship on the movement overwhelmingly emphasizes the state’s thrust to glorify women’s work, and the positive value of the state’s decision to recognize women’s work in the home as directly influential to national production levels, further integrating women into a socialist production network where every individual was to play a significant role in the project of “socialist construction.”⁶ Other works also emphasize the pedagogical intent of the Five Goods project, as it focused on educating illiterate women while simultaneously “promoting socialist education” (*jinxing shehuizhuyi sixiang jiaoyu* 进行社会主义思想教育) among

⁵ Song Shaopeng, “State Discourse on Housewives and Housework in the 1950’s in China,” *Rethinking China in the 1950’s*, ed. Mechthild Leutner, Berliner China-Hefte/Chinese History and Society 31, (VIT Verlag Munster: Munster, 2007).

⁶ Zhou Lei 周蕾, “Suzao he biao Zhang: dui ershi shiji wuliushi niandai ‘wuhao’ huodong de lishi kaocha zhoulai” 塑造和表彰: 对二十世纪五六十年代“五好”活动的历史考察 [Modeling and Commending: A Historical Review of Twenty Years of the ‘Five Good’ Role Model Campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s], *Collection of Women’s Studies* 1, no. 127 (2015): 55-60.

housewives and family dependents, thereby raising women's political status not only through affirming the value of women's work but also through raising their political consciousness.⁷

The Five Goods movement shared many similarities with previous projects concerning domestic life in 20th century China, which largely viewed the *xiao jiating* (小家庭 “small family”) as a “training ground” for national struggle and a site where family life became integrally linked to state order.⁸ State prescriptions over domestic affairs in the name of increasing national production levels would have been familiar to Chinese families of the 20th century. Colonial projects in treaty-port cities,⁹ Republican-era “New Life Movement” regulations over domestic life in Nanchang,¹⁰ slum-clearing initiatives in Republican Nanjing,¹¹ “domestic outreach” missions under the Nationalist government in Sichuan province,¹² and the Nationalist government's wartime obsession with hygienic management of public spaces in

⁷ Hong Wei 洪蔚, “‘Wuhao’ huodong” ‘五好’活动 [‘Five Goods’ Movement], in *Hubei fuyun wushi nian shangce* [Records of Fifty Years of the Hubei Women's Movement], ed. Wu, Yanyan 吴雁雁, (Hubei: Hubei Women's Federation Press, 2000).

⁸ Susan Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State: 1915-1913*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4-6.

⁹ Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Chiang Kai-Shek, *Outline of the New Life Movement*, trans. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek (Nanchang: Association for the Promotion of the New Life Movement, Date of publication not specified, est. 1934). See also Wennan Liu, “Redefining the Moral and Legal Roles of the State in Everyday Life: The New Life Movement in China in the Mid-1930s,” *Cross Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 7 (2013): 30-59.

¹¹ Zvia Lipkin, *Useless to the State: “Social Problems” and Social Engineering in Nationalist Nanjing, 1927-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 2006), 105.

¹² For “domestic outreach” programs in Chongqing city and Sichuan province that sent home economics “experts” to rural homes in the countryside in order to advise housewives on “scientific” domestic management practices, see Helen M. Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China* (Vancouver: UCB Press, 2010).

Chongqing¹³ all enabled some level of state governance over family life and intervened in domestic space to varying degrees in the name of state modernization projects.

The shrewish, discordant, and feminine “targets” of the Five Goods movement were also by no means a new concept in Chinese society or history, and neither was the “model mother” character propagated as a remedy to this state-propagated societal issue. These two archetypes were particularly prevalent in Ming and Qing-era fiction. In these male-authored novels, model mothers closely followed Confucian propriety, “thereby bringing order and harmony to domestic life,” while the shrews were “jealous, fierce, even lascivious, and thus they bring disorder to their families.”¹⁴ These cautionary tales of the anecdotal shrew were used to regulate a certain cultural value in Chinese society, namely keeping women subordinate to the Confucian family hierarchy. Model wives and mothers of dynastic China were a primary means by which various Chinese states regulated society and promoted obedience to state government above all other matters.¹⁵ For example, exemplary mothers were commended by dynastic historians under the Tang for convincing their scholar-official sons to return embezzled grain to the state and to lead their lives

¹³ The Nationalist government’s obsession with managing dirt, filth, and trash manifested in the form of enforced quarantines, compulsory vaccinations, and confiscation/disinfection of personal goods. See Nicole Elizabeth Barnes, “Protecting the National Body: Gender and Public Health in Southwest China during the War with Japan, 1937-1945” (Ph.D Diss, University of California-Irvine, 2012), 116, 120-3, 145-8.

¹⁴ Wenjia Liu, “Virtuous Wives and Shrews in Feng Shuangfei: Empowering Female Characters through a Revision of Stereotypes,” *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 3, no. 1 (April 2016): 59. For discussions of the “shrewish women” archetype and general stereotypes regarding women as “gossip mongers” who threaten Confucian family orders, see Richard W. Guisso, “Thunder over the Lake: The Five Classics and the Perception of Woman in Early China,” *Historical Reflections* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 55. Also see Victoria Cass, *Dangerous Women: Warriors, Geisha, and Grannies of the Ming* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 118. As well as Rebecca Doran, *Transgressive Typologies: Constructions of Gender and Power in Early Tang China* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 2016) 187-8.

¹⁵ Anne Behnkey Kinney, ed., *Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lienü Zhuan of Liu Xiang* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2014). The *Lienü Zhuan* (列女传 “Biographies of Exemplary Women”) of the Han dynasty provides one example of this state-led regulation. Half-mythic tales of model women practicing Confucian values were used by Chinese men throughout the next two millennia as a prescriptive antidote to the (female induced) cultural ills of Chinese society.

in harmony with state interests, and these models were again promoted in biographies and histories under later dynasties.¹⁶ The promotion of “model mothers” to encourage state-building processes was closely paralleled by the PRC state’s Five Goods movement, which aimed to improve national production levels by utilizing a “model mother” to regulate the family unit in concordance with the advancement of state-planned objectives. The Five Goods movement’s ability to draw on these two archetypes would add a powerful dimension of familiarity to the movement, using familiar tropes to illustrate and elaborate on contemporary issues.

Despite historical continuities, the Five Goods movement in practice also reflected a radically new state role in the articulation of domestic space and family makeup. First, the Five Goods movement garnered intense national media coverage through the *People’s Daily* newspaper and was enacted throughout a larger China than the colonial projects in treaty ports and Guomindang Nationalist projects in Nanjing, Nanchang, and Chongqing. In addition, the Five Goods movement’s use of local women (as opposed to outside “experts”) to enforce programs of mutual assistance and surveillance of domestic chores allowed the state to engender a substantially new discourse over domestic space by empowering both close neighbors and abstract national models to define, surveil, comment on, and criticize family relations and the organization of domestic space in the interests of the state. This study seeks to use the *People’s Daily* newspaper as a source to investigate the changing relationship between the state and the family under socialism from 1956-1958, and elaborate on how the model women of the Five Goods campaign (in tandem with the “anti-Five Goods” model) were used to renegotiate and redefine domestic space as an area open to surveillance, investigation, comment, and criticism by the Chinese state.

¹⁶ Josephine Chiu-Duke, “Mothers and the Well-Being of the State in Tang China,” *Nan Nü* 8, no. 1 (2006): 84.

On Sources: The *People's Daily*

This study seeks to deeply investigate the textual “feel” of a lesser known episode of state roles in domestic life, a process which is facilitated by access to one of the most far-reaching sources available to us from the Maoist period, the *People's Daily* newspaper (人民日报 *Renmin Ribao*). The *People's Daily* published its first edition on May 15th, 1946, but in a matter of years it would become China's first truly national newspaper.¹⁷ During the turbulent years of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Chinese Civil war (1945-1949), both physical and ideological power over a national China was disunified and scattered, and no one authority was able to print a paper that could convincingly claim the position of a “national” newspaper over all of China.¹⁸ By 1949, the *People's Daily* could uphold this claim more than any other newspaper in Chinese history. The paper also carried an authoritative political voice after 1949, as it was deemed the official “mouthpiece” of the Chinese Communist Party and thus the state government.¹⁹

Chinese newspapers under socialism, including the *People's Daily*, were frequently used to uphold a particular political standpoint rather than to objectively report facts.²⁰ Such sources must be evaluated with caution, but they also provide an opportunity to better understand and

¹⁷ By “national newspaper” I mean to express that the *People's Daily* held a substantial claim over an abstract, imagined Chinese nation, not that it held ideological power over a physical, national China with defined borders and unified political consciousness.

¹⁸ The Guomindang published *Central Daily News* also attempted to claim authority over this national Chinese space during the mid 1900's, but was forced cease printing and move locations several times, first moving from Nanjing to Chongqing in 1937 due to Japanese invasion and then from Nanjing to Taipei, Taiwan in 1949 due to the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War. The *Central Daily News* still vehemently claimed to represent a national China into the post-1949 period while printing from Taiwan, a stance that aligned with Guomindang political and diplomatic policy.

¹⁹ The *People's Daily* did lose authority during the Cultural Revolution, but from 1956-8 it was definitively China's largest and most influential newspaper. Chang Man, *The People's Daily and the Red Flag Magazine During the Cultural Revolution* (Hong Kong: Union Press, 1969).

²⁰ Neil Diamant effectively summarizes the ways in which researchers should cautiously evaluate Chinese newspaper sources from this post-1949 period. See Neil Diamant, *Revolutionizing the Family: Politics, Love, and Divorce in Rural China 1949-1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 28.

analyze consolidated and deliberately structured “party lines” and the publicized position of the state on a given issue, from agricultural methods, to China’s relationship with the Soviet Union, to the role of women workers in socialist society. Any given article in the *People’s Daily* would have had to pass through several levels of CCP-influenced editing and approval before publication, thus reflecting a deliberate showcase of state opinion.²¹ In addition, local-level newspapers and publications were consistently obliged to reprint material from the *People’s Daily*, increasing the proliferation of ideas touted by the paper and thus the state.²²

Articles in the *People’s Daily* often began with the declaration of conditions or problems in a particular locality, yet were permeated with “universal” declarations of the ways in which consumers of the paper’s content could remedy these local problems in their own corner of Chinese society. Local examples were brought to the national level through the *People’s Daily*, presented as representative of problems throughout a greater ideological “China,” and then echoed throughout cities and villages across the country as stories were read and reprinted at the local level. In this manner, the *People’s Daily* portrayed an image of an abstract China that was local yet national, where scenarios in articles were representative of a larger “authentic” yet immaterial society. As Chinese citizens consumed the articles that will be the topic of this paper, they likely saw the issues at hand as problems that potentially existed *everywhere*, as the framing of *People’s Daily* articles suggest. These were the national problems of the national newspaper, yet they were framed as local problems to be solved by local people.

²¹ For info on the *People’s Daily* editorial process and screening and approval through the CCP Central Committee Propaganda Department, see Chang-Tai Hung, “Inside a Chinese Communist Municipal Newspaper: Purges at the *Beijing Daily*,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 49, no. 2 (2014): 350. For information on the consolidation of the *People’s Daily* as an official CCP “mouthpiece,” see Gucheng Li, *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People’s Republic of China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1995), 232-3.

²² Lawrence R. Sullivan, *Historical Dictionary of the People’s Republic of China* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 379.

Citizens of China during the late 1950's were exposed to the *People's Daily* on at least a weekly basis. Literate urbanites read the *People's Daily*, and editions of the paper were brought to the countryside, where the daily issue was read aloud to literate or illiterate village peasants during study sessions and political meetings. The "political study session" figured heavily into the daily routine of all Chinese citizens throughout the Maoist period, as small work or school groups would gather under the guidance of a local party official one to three times a week, depending on the vitality of the political climate, and review *People's Daily* articles, quotes from Chairman Mao, or articles from the *Red Flag* political journal (红旗 *hongqi*) and discuss these works as they related to their own local conditions.²³ In turn, those reading and studying these articles from 1956-1958 would have surely encountered Five Goods propaganda; the first article to publicize the Five Goods movement in February of 1956 recommended that "for ten days before and after March 8th (Women's Day), all newspapers, news agencies, radio broadcasting stations, and other propaganda organizations be required to mobilize all promotional tools available to extensively spread publicity (of the Five Goods movement)."²⁴ While it is difficult to ascertain how this propaganda and promotion of the Five Goods movement would have been absorbed by women and families at the local level, what is important to note is the nearly universal scope of the *People's Daily* as a source, its exposure across all levels of Chinese society, and its "national yet local" connotations.

²³ Xing Lu, *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 45-6. Also, the *Red Flag* did not begin publication until 1958, and then only on a semi-monthly basis.

²⁴ "Quanguo fulian deng shisan ge danwei: guanyu jinian 'sanba' funü jie de lianhe tongzhi" [All China Women's Federation and Thirteen Other Work Units Joint Notice on Commemorating 'March 8th' Women's Day], *Renmin Ribao*, February 10, 1956: 3.

The *People's Daily* represents an imagined space, conjured by the PRC state, through which the government could both hypothesize on societal problems and promote the theoretical benefits of Five Goods organization in order to further engage women and families in the act of socialist construction.²⁵ The content of the *People's Daily* articles do not necessarily reflect any actual execution of physical movement “on the ground” but instead should be viewed as a reflection of the problems that the PRC state saw in Chinese society, and the subsequent prescriptive solutions it offered. In this way, the following publications pointedly display the state’s strategies to increase its power as an arbiter over the “correct” way in which to conduct domestic chores and manage family life, allowing us to expound upon greater themes of the state’s relation to domestic space, family life, and housewives’ position in society.

State Visions of Implementation: Promoting the Five Goods “On the Ground”

The *People's Daily* newspaper primarily promoted the movement in the form of naming model housewives called “Five Goods activists” (五好妇女积极分子 *wuhao funü jijifenzi*) and model families called “Five Goods families” (五好家庭 *wuhao jiating*) who provided an ideal representation of socialist domestic values for local women to aspire to.²⁶ The audience of the Five Goods campaign was not necessarily only “housewives,” but the more abstract category of *jiashu* (家属 “family dependents”). This term was used during this period in a colloquial sense to

²⁵ The term “socialist construction” is very prevalent in the source material analyzed herein. For a discussion of the term “socialist construction,” its prevalence in Maoist rhetoric and citizen’s lives, and the term’s intersection with gender, see Wang Zheng, “Call Me Qingnian but not Funü: A Maoist Youth in Retrospect,” Xueping Zhong, Wang Zheng, Bai Di, eds., *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2001), 37-9.

²⁶ Spreading information on the achievements of model workers was a common strategy of the PRC to encourage participation in various social movements. “Yao bi wangnian de huodong geng guangfan geng shenru shoudu funü choubei jinian ‘sanba’ jie” [The Capital Prepares March 8th Women’s Day Commemoration to be Even Broader and Deeper than Past Years], *Renmin Ribao*, February 21, 1957: 4.

describe “non-working” (overwhelmingly female) members of the household, but was also an explicitly defined political category that appeared on official state documents.²⁷ On the ground, the primary vehicles used to promote the Five Goods campaign were “neighborhood committees” (街道居民委员会 *jiedao jumin weiyuanhui*) in tandem with local branches of the Women’s Federation like the “Women’s Work Committee” (妇女工作委员会 *funü gongzuo weiyuanhui*), and other local organizations such as “family dependent committees” (家属委员会 *jiashu weiyuanhui*) and “neighborhood study groups” (街道学习小组 *jiedao xuexi xiaozu*), all of which carried out various forms of local campaign work and “day to day tasks” to uphold model housewives in the name of the Five Goods movement.²⁸

Scholar Jiang Jin remembers that during the 1950’s and 1960’s, these “semi-official residence committees” were obliged to “distribute food and clothing coupons, collect small fees, (and) deliver announcements from the street committee.”²⁹ In this fashion, neighborhood committees held substantial power over the general livelihood of local residents. One can imagine that individuals would be obliged to perform towards a certain level of compliance with

²⁷ For the evolution of “housework” throughout 20th century China see Helen M. Schneider, *Keeping the Nation’s House*. For the professionalization of the “housewife” as a global process during this period, see Andrew Gordon, *Fabricating Consumers: The Sewing Machine in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). For the specifically Chinese arguments over the validity and non-validity of housework as productive labor during this period, see Song Shaopeng, “State Discourse on Housewives,” 49-63. *Jiashu* generally referred to any woman who occupied domestic space, such as a housewife (家庭妇女 *jiating funü*), sister-in-law (嫂嫂 *saosao*), nanny (保姆 *baomu*), or mother-in-law (婆婆 *popo*). *Jiashu* was a primarily female category, and despite the possible inclusion of male elderly and children under this “umbrella” category (I found no examples of male *jiashu* under the context of the Five Goods Movement), the term retains the connotation of women contained within a domestic space.

²⁸ For example, city level directives from Xiamen in Fujian Province state that “Housewife committees coordinated with city level branches of the Women’s Federation in order to carry out their everyday work.” “Xiamen Fulian” [Women’s Federation of Xiamen], in *Zhonggong Xiamen difang shi zhuanli yanjiu shehuizhuyi shiqi si* [Local Party History of Socialism in Xiamen, Period 4], ed. Zhonggong Xiamen shi weidang shi yanjiushi bianzhe [Party Committee of Xiamen Editor of the History Research Branch] (Beijing: CCP History Press, 2007), 72.

²⁹ Jiang Jin, “Times Have Changed, Men and Women are the Same,” *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2001), 112-3.

national movements when these neighborhood committees both promoted the “day to day tasks” of the movement as well as distributed the food and clothing rations that determined a family’s standard of living. Using neighborhood committees and small, local organizations to promote political campaigns effectively gave local women extra-political power as policers of communal space who could organize their neighborhood in line with the current socialist “party line,” a gendered strategy which had proven superbly effective at grassroots party organization in urban space since 1953.³⁰

Local organizations primarily utilized a “small forum” meeting format to promote the Five Goods campaign by allowing women to “exchange Five Goods experiences” and chat about the progress of the movement and its effects on their lives.³¹ One article reporting from the Xidan District of Beijing claimed that the Beijing Municipal Democratic Women’s Federation (北京市民主妇女联合会 *Beijing shimin funü lianhehui*) held 965 small meetings in the month of February 1957 alone, and it appears these meetings were a driving force for the promotion of Five Goods values at the neighborhood level.³² Visual labeling also played a role. Urban street organizations held public ceremonies where Five Goods activists were pinned with a flower and

³⁰ In early 1950’s Shanghai, the Women’s Federation was utilized to literally “run” neighborhoods through local street organizations which successfully domesticated social spaces that had been previously associated with gambling, prostitution, and gangland violence. Zheng, “State Feminism?” *Feminist Studies*, 521-522.

³¹ These “small meetings” were referred to as “heart-to-heart talks” (谈心会 *tanxinhui*), “report meetings” (报告会 *baogaohui*), “on-the-spot meetings” (现场会 *xianchanghui*), and “commendation meetings” (表彰会 *biaozhanghui*) amongst other lesser used titles. Wuhan difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui zhubian [Wuhan Local History Commission Editor], ed., *Wuhan shi zhi shehuituanti zhi* [History of Wuhan Community Organizations] (Wuhan: Wuhan University Press, 1998), 260.

³² “Beijing shi fulian kaizhan ‘wu hao’ xuanchuan: Jiating funü pubian shoudao jiaoyu” [Beijing’s Women’s Federation Launches ‘Five Goods’ Propaganda: Housewives Universally Receive Education], *Renmin Ribao*, March 2, 1957: 4. Also note that the “All China Democratic Women’s Federation” changed its name to the “All China Women’s Federation” in 1957.

awarded a certificate of merit.³³ In some cases, the names of these activists were published in local and national newspapers the next day. Five Goods plaques and certificates were also distributed to hang on doorways.³⁴ Such a public and performative labeling of those who achieved Five Goods status, in tandem with the anti-Five Goods model propagated in newspapers, would surely have contributed to the power and “reach” of the movement into local family life and domestic space. Propaganda in different mediums also played a role in Five Goods dissemination; a party directive from 1956 states; “assist the *jiashu* committees in hosting their ‘Five Goods’ study meetings... convene big meetings, broadcast the message on radio, use blackboard bulletins, etc... to the fullest extent possible use every propaganda tool available.”³⁵ The PRC government also published literacy textbooks which championed Five Goods values and circulated these books to housewives through street committees and study groups.³⁶

A directive to local cadres from the city of Wuhan elaborated on how both the street/neighborhood committees and the Women’s Federation branches at local levels ought to implement Five Goods work. The directive states that “every single *jiashu* of the (factory) workers should arrange, assign, and inspect (布置和检查 *buzhi he jiancha*) Five Goods work, and unify leadership (with the local party street committee).” The directive goes on to summarize that “the main point is, focus on *jiashu*’s work; (if they live in the factory *danwei* unit) the trade union can manage (管 *guan* “oversee” or “manage”) their work a bit more, but if they live in

³³ “Qinjian chijia quanmian zuodao ‘wuhao:’ Tianjin shi hedong qu jiangli sibai duo jiating funü” [Thriftily Running the Household and Achieving ‘Five Goods’ from Every Angle: City of Tianjin’s Hedong District Awards Over Four Hundred Housewives], *Renmin Ribao*, March 7, 1957.

³⁴ Zhang Wei, “Liu Ruizhen shi ge hao mama” [Liu Ruizhen is a Good Mother], *Renmin Ribao*, March 5, 1957: 4.

³⁵ Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui nugong bu bian [Editor of the China National Trade Union Women’s Work Bureau], ed., *Zhigong jiashu gongzuo jingyan* [The Experience of Family Dependents of Workers] (no publication information listed), 88-94.

³⁶ Shi fulian tongxun zu, “You qian rushen” [From the Easy to the Difficult].

dispersed areas let the Women's Federation manage their work... every street committee, trade union, party organization, and local branch of the Women's Federation should pay attention to researching this topic.”³⁷ Surveillance, through “inspecting” and “overseeing” Five Goods work, is the key concept here. The Five Goods movement was designed to become an intimate part of family life during this period through the cooperation of local-level organizations with party organs, both of whom would then be tasked with mutual inspection and surveillance of domestic habits.

The *Wuhao* Model at the National Level: Five Goods in the People's Daily

The inaugural statement issued by the All China Women's Federation in the *People's Daily* on February 10th, 1956 summarizes the goal of the Five Goods campaign as such; “(Adhering to these Five Goods) will thereby spread and promote the integration of family dependents into useful roles within the process of socialist construction and transformation.”³⁸ According to the state, delegating women to these “useful roles” freed up male workers to conduct more productive work in their own workplaces, and in turn built a stronger nation. In the eye of the state, domestic harmony directly influenced national productivity, and dictated healthy or poor levels of production in both the city factories and the village fields.³⁹ In order to promote

³⁷ “Zhonggong Wuhanshi wei guanyu guanche ‘wuhao’ gongzuo dezhibiao” [Directive from the Communist Party of Wuhan City in regards to Initiating ‘Five Goods’ Work], dated September 26, 1956. In Wuhanshi qing bianjibu [Wuhan Qing Editing Division], ed., *Wuhan dadian diyijuan (1949-1976)* [First Volume of the Wuhan Canonical Writings (1949-1976)] (Wuhan: Wuhan Press, 1998), 368-8.

³⁸ “Quanguo fulian deng shisan ge danwei: guanyu jinian ‘sanba’ funü jie de lianhe tongzhi” [All China Women's Federation and Thirteen Other Work Units Joint Notice on Commemorating ‘March 8th’ Women's Day], *Renmin Ribao*, February 10, 1956.

³⁹ While the Five Goods movement began in urban areas in 1956, it soon spread to rural villages over the course of 1957 and utilized a variety of different organizations to promote the Five Goods message in the countryside, including branches of the Women's Federation and labor unions. See “Fulian he gonghui peihe: zai diyijie quanguo renmin daibiao da hui disici huiyi shang de faxin, geng dadi fahui guangda funü zai jianshe shehuizhuyi zhong de zuyong: Zhang Yun de faxin” [Cooperation Between the Women's Federation and Worker's Unions: At the Fourth

the national importance of domestic work, the state presented negative images of problematic families and criticized domestic affairs in real or invented homes and neighborhoods within the pages of the *People's Daily*. By following Five Goods guidelines, women could overcome this chaotic and disharmonious “negative” model, transform their domicile into a positive space, and become “useful” to Chinese society by increasing spousal work efficiency.

In order to illustrate the role of the Five Goods movement as part of a larger project to justify the state’s role in family life and domestic space, I have selected five “themes”⁴⁰ of the Five Goods movement (mutual aid, thrift, education, “arranging family life,” and hygiene) that reflect how the Chinese state negotiated their role in defining “good” and “bad” socialist families in the name of increasing national production.

Theme 1) Mutual Aid Teams: Neighbors and Local Committees in Domestic Space

The first theme promoted by the Five Goods movement was that of “mutual assistance between household and neighborhood.” Mutual assistance often played out through the issue of “family affairs” (家事 *jiashi*). Pregnancy, giving birth, and taking care of children while sick or pregnant constituted the domestic issues of “family affairs,” which were targeted by Five Goods campaign organization because these feminine “issues” could cause workers (spouses) to miss

Conference of the First Meeting of the People’s Congress, Greater Develop and Expand Women’s Role in Constructing Socialism: Zhang Yun’s Speech], *Renmin Ribao*, July 15, 1957: 6. For more information on Women’s Federation organization in urban areas, see Wang Zheng, “State Feminism?,” 521-22.

⁴⁰ The Five Goods Movement consists of Five concrete “goods,” namely to “promote mutual assistance between neighborhoods and households, to properly arrange domestic life, to educate children, to encourage and support the production, work, and study of (male) spouses, and for housewives to earnestly study themselves.” These goods changed slightly over time. For example, an altered version of the Five Goods movement aimed at rural women in mid-1957 added “promote respect between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law” and “practice good hygiene” to the list of Five Goods. Because of the shifting tenets of the Five Goods movement, and the overlapping nature of several of these “goods,” this paper focuses on five themes that reflect the intentions of the Five Goods movement in a more streamlined manner than the list of goods itself.

work and decrease efficiency in the workplace as a whole.⁴¹ These “family affairs” were overtly gendered, as every case found in the *People’s Daily* dealing with Five Goods and “family affairs” involves a mother, wife, or mother-in-law as the sick, pregnant, or otherwise ailing individual that demands assistance in the eye of the state. More importantly, the state perspective of domestic space as a source of discord and dissonance that needed rectification was illustrative of deeper currents of socialist thought which sought to smoothly integrate the household into greater state structures and eliminate “inefficiencies” posited on women’s bodies (pregnancy, childbirth, and personal illness that would draw a male spouse away from his workplace). Luckily, the state provided solutions to this feminine dissonance through promotion of the Five Goods and the formation of neighborhood “mutual aid” groups.⁴²

Mutual aid groups organized by housewives through the Five Goods movement were mobilized to enter each other’s domestic spaces and exercise state-approved forms of care over one another’s families. In effect, the state was attempting to replace familial systems of care (relatives) with a neighborhood community of caregivers. An article from June of 1957 was titled “A Close Neighbor is Better than a Relative from Afar: Bear in Mind the Work of Family Dependents in the ‘Northern Honeycomb.’”⁴³ In this example, Tian Dayou gives birth to a son but soon experiences post-birth complications. In the weeks after birth, her husband, Tian Zhaofu, was worried about the health and safety of his wife and newborn child, but was also

⁴¹ Na yi, “Shehui xin fengshang jiating xin qixiang: ‘Wuhao’ jijifenzida dapi chuxian” [New Socialist Fashion, New Family Atmosphere: ‘Five Goods’ Activists Emerge in Great Numbers], *Renmin Ribao*, December 5, 1956.

⁴² Neither of these terms are akin to the agricultural “mutual aid teams” established during the initial phases of agricultural collectivization (1954-56), which referred to small teams of agricultural laborers who pooled their collective power to farm multiple plots of land. Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, eds. *Chinese Village, Socialist State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 122-3.

⁴³ Zhang Yun, “Yuanqin buru jinlin: ji bei fengwo de zhigong jiashu gongzuo” [A Close Neighbor is Better than a Relative from Afar: Bear in Mind the Work of Family Dependents in the ‘Northern Honeycomb’], *Renmin Ribao*, June 5, 1957.

scheduled to go on a short trip to do construction work with his work unit. He left his wife and son in the care of the local mutual aid group, consisting of *jiashu* “family dependents” in the local area. The mutual aid group took care of organizing post-birth medical treatment for Tian Dayou by cooking for her and the newborn and managing chores around the household. When Tian Zhaofu returned home, he was emotionally moved, saying “Not only did the mutual aid group help my family out during a difficult time, but they also made sure that I didn’t delay production, thus supporting national construction.”⁴⁴ The family dependents that made up the mutual aid group responded to this praise with, “Sure enough, a close neighbor is better than a relative from afar.”

In another representative article titled “The Big Benefits of Mutual Help among *jiashu*,” a representative named Gao Fengqin discussed the benefit of mutual aid groups in a factory setting.⁴⁵ She says that although most days at the factory passed without issue, occasionally someone had to give birth or fell ill, and this required someone else to take time off work and stay at home to take care of those in need. She gives the example of Yu Changying, who gives birth to a child and needs care at home. The problem is, her husband’s work as a metal caster is too essential to factory production for him to take time off, and this leads to fights and quarrels at home.⁴⁶ Giving birth and getting sick leads to “three difficulties: problems for the worker, problems for the *jiashu*, and problems for the factory.”⁴⁷ The solution was for *jiashu* to organize mutual aid teams, and “whichever house has chores, everyone will help out, so we don’t have to

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ “*Jiashu huzhu haochu da: Gao Fengqin daibiao tan gongguang zhigong jiashu huzhu huji qingkuang*” [The Big Benefits of Mutual Help among Family Dependents: Representative Gao Fengqin Discusses the Conditions on Mutual Aid and Mutual Benefit among Family Dependents of Factory Workers], *Renmin Ribao*, February 17, 1958.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

call workers to take time off and delay production.”⁴⁸ This measure received everyone’s support, and in turn promoted a harmonious neighborhood environment.

A report from the “National Meeting of Staff Member’s Family Dependents” summarizes the theme of mutual aid and family affairs by saying: “Being a family dependent often comes with many difficulties, such as giving birth, getting sick, and taking care of children. But in every possible case when mutual aid groups have been established and done well these problems have been resolved.”⁴⁹ Female neighbors of the mutual aid groups in this article help pregnant women to do housework, boil water, cook, watch children, organize treatment from the doctor, and more.⁵⁰ This state-enervated organization of domestic work and space through mutual aid teams helped to “reduce the worries of workers towards their domestic situations, reduce lateness to work, reduce absenteeism at work, and put workers’ minds at ease to better encourage production.”⁵¹ Not only did a discourse over feminine “family affairs” frame the state’s ability to participate in domestic organization, but the increase in workplace efficiency touted in all of these examples “proved” that such policies were fundamentally correct, enabling a powerful justification of state presence in the domicile.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Qinjian jianguo qinjian chijia jianshe shehui zhuyi er fendou” [Hard work at National Construction and Thriftily Running the Household to Struggle and Build Socialism], *Renmin Ribao*, September 10, 1957.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “Qinjian jianguo, qinjian chijia: Wei shehuizhuyi jianshe gongxian geng da de liliang—Yang Zhihua zai quanguo zhigong jiashu daibiao huiyi shang de baogaozhaiyao” [Thriftily Constructing the Nation, Thriftily Keeping the House: For A Greater Contribution to Socialist Construction – Yang Zhihua’s Summary of the National Congress of Worker’s Family Dependents], *Renmin Ribao*, June 5, 1957.

Theme 2) Thrift: Conserve Resources to Build Socialism

The second theme of the “Five Goods movement” was thrift, and the promotion of budgeting, rational home management, and economical use of domestic resources like food and clothing. An article titled “Liu Ruizhen is a Good Mother” begins by stating that despite having to take care of a family of nine, Liu Ruizhen was able to avoid debt and even save two yuan per month through careful calculation and strict budgeting of her family expenses.⁵² The article goes on to emphasize Liu Ruizhen’s practice of mending clothes over and over again, and her earnest education of children in matters of managing the household and conducting housework. These dual practices allow Liu Ruizhen and her family to achieve the dual status of “Five Goods activist” and “Five Goods family,” respectively. After earning rewards, the family posted both of their reward certificates on their doorways, earning a tangible label of respect from the state as good socialists and advertising this status to the neighborhood.⁵³

Standing in opposition to the Five Goods housewife in the *People’s Daily* was the bourgeoisie, wasteful housewife whose erroneous spending and lack of planning left her unable to care for her family, and in turn damaged national productivity. According to one article, the duty of a Five Goods mother and wife was to economize grain consumption in the household, implementing “every possible means to preserve grain” and assuring that the family “cherished every grain” as if it were a “treasure among treasures.”⁵⁴ The bad mother and wife, on the other hand, “didn’t implement the ‘Five Goods,’ didn’t carefully plan and budget, and didn’t plan

⁵² Zhang Wei, “Liu Ruizhen shi ge hao mama” [Liu Ruizhen is a Good Mother], *Renmin Ribao*, March 5, 1957: 4.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Qinjian jianguo qinjian chijia jianshe shehui zhuyi er fendou” [Hard work at National Construction and Thriftily Running the Household to Struggle and Build Socialism], *Renmin Ribao*, September 10, 1957.

family life well.”⁵⁵ This family had plenty of money, but spent it frivolously, and was “rich for three days and poor for half a month,” causing them to quarrel constantly.⁵⁶ Minister of the Women’s Division of the National Federation of Trade Unions Yang Zhihua likewise pointed out that some *jiashu* were “creating a bad environment” through “what they eat or what they wear,” and were “emphasizing pomp and extravagance” as well as “complaining about how much their husbands earn or how loud their husband is in the household,” which was “sure to (negatively) affect their husband’s production.”⁵⁷ Yang’s solution to this problem was for these problematic *jiashu* to emulate the *jiashu* of advanced workers, who fully embodied the “hard working and plain” (艰苦朴素 *jiankupusu*) lifestyle of the workers.⁵⁸ These irresponsible, bourgeoisie consumption habits presented an avenue through which the state could promote a discourse over proper and improper care over one’s family, and label good and bad socialist families with the Five Goods denomination.

The Five Goods initiatives of thrift concentrated on the preservation of money, textiles, and food while expounding upon these small savings’ ability to significantly contribute to a more prosperous socialist society. In Wuhan, the Women’s Federation sponsored a “Five Goods experience exchange and commendation meeting at the street, district, and city levels,” which included a “thrifty home exhibition” that offered information to housewives on how to “preserve

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Yang Zhihua, “Zai zengchan jieyue yundong zhong zhigong jiashu yao xingdong qilai” [Family Dependents of Workers Take Action in the Movement to Increase Production and Preserve Resources], *Renmin Ribao*, March 7, 1957.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

grain, cloth, coal, and electric power” in everyday life.⁵⁹ This public display of Five Goods values in the form of an exhibition again added a visual dimension to the movement and shows local government’s material commitment to promoting the principles of the Five Goods movement. The performance of “thrift” and preserving household (and thus national) resources was clearly another critical factor in the state’s definition of “good” socialist housewives.

Theme 3: Education: Moral and Practical Instruction to Promote Domestic Harmony

The third theme centered on the value of educating children on positive socialist values through both moral reform and instruction on how to conduct household chores. In this sense, Five Goods housewives were commonly portrayed as both promoters of socialist thinking and as teachers of practices that encouraged domestic harmony. This theme blurred the line between any domestic vs. public duties of *jiashu* family dependents, as articles emphasized both women’s ability to educate children on proper maintenance of domestic space as well as the ability of “Five Goods activists” to serve as literacy teachers of children and adults outside the household.⁶⁰

In familiar contrasting fashion, articles in the *People’s Daily* emphasized problematic mothers who could not properly educate their children before presenting a Five Goods model who fostered socialist values in her family and neighborhood. In one example from “Jingdong Road” in Shanghai, Liu Zhaoming’s children are particularly naughty (顽皮 *wanpi*).⁶¹ The

⁵⁹ “Zhengfu ziran de dazhan wenhua geming de zhuangju: weisheng yundong zhenfen quanguo, renmin daibiao xibao zhanguo juexin ba zhan dou xiang zongshen fazhan” [The Great War to Conquer Nature and the Great Feats of the Cultural Revolution: The Health Campaign Inspires the Whole Country, People’s Representatives Hear the Good News of War’s Successes and are Determined to Push and Develop the Battle Further], *Renmin Ribao*, February 8, 1958.

⁶⁰ Cui Zhizai, “Jiating nei wai” [Inside and Outside the Household], *Renmin Ribao*, June 15, 1957.

⁶¹ Na yi, “Shehui xin fengshang jiating xin qixiang.”

children's homework is of poor quality, they have had to repeat grades, and Liu Zhaoming response to this behavior is to hit and curse at them (打骂 *dama*).⁶² The more she hits the children, the worse the problem gets, until she reads about the Five Goods movement in "Women of China" magazine. She reforms her teaching methods based on the instruction of the Five Goods movement, and the children's homework steadily improves, to the point where the oldest child is selected as chairman of the local "Young Pioneers" club.⁶³ Liu Zhaoming was then elected a Five Goods activist based on her improved child rearing and education skills. The reform of both mother and child through the Five Goods movement ends with the state deliverance of a positive political label to both (Chairman of the Young Pioneers and Five Goods activist, respectively).

In alignment with earlier themes of women as both the source of and solution to domestic discord, the article titled "Liu Ruizhen is a Good Mother" reflects on the education of children with Five Goods values in order to mitigate the issue of childbirth as it affects family efficiency and harmony. In the article, Liu Ruizhen educates her children by the standards of the Five Goods movement so that they can independently contribute to domestic work and household chores when necessary. When Liu Ruizhen becomes pregnant with her seventh child, she also becomes a source discord within the household through her inconvenient pregnancy. However, due to her ability to positively educate her children as a Five Goods housewife, her eldest son and daughter are well trained enough to "take the matters of the household into their own hands," offering to "light the stove, collect firewood, and clean the house... cook food, clean diapers, and

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

take care of the other children.”⁶⁴ Also significant is the praise that the *People’s Daily* offers Liu Ruizhen for her decision to not hire outside domestic help while she gives birth and recovers. According to PRC state policies of 1957, hiring a nanny (保姆 *baomu*) was a wasteful practice that squandered the work capacity of a potential laborer over housework that could easily be done by the *jiashu* herself (or her children), if she planned her life according to state guidelines.⁶⁵ Thanks to the values of education upheld by the state’s Five Goods campaign, discord in the household caused by childbirth does not affect the productivity of the husband nor require the hiring of domestic help in the form of a nanny, and the family is able to manage and mitigate the inefficiencies caused by the natural processes of childbirth without harming production.

An article from August of 1956 on housewife Li Chunpei emphasizes similar themes. When Li Chunpei’s husband would arrive home from work, he saw nobody was taking care of the house, and there was nobody to greet him upon his arrival. He wanted to hire domestic help to remedy this situation, but the family didn’t have enough money. Li Chunpei told her husband not to worry, and to concentrate on his work, since the affairs of the household were her responsibility.⁶⁶ Her solution was to follow the Five Goods model and teach the children to help with housework, and soon she had the oldest child “cooking food and caring for the mother-in-law,” the second child “doing shopping and working on odds and ends,” and the third child “cleaning the table and making the beds.”⁶⁷ This satisfied the husband and he was again happy

⁶⁴ Zhang Wei, “Liu Ruizhen shi ge hao mama.”

⁶⁵ For evidence of nannies (*baomu*) and their exclusion from urban space, see Jiang Jianti, Zhang Shunyi, Quan Guangcai, Pan Yujie, “Zhizhi nongcun renkou mangmu liu ru chengshi” [Curb the Blindly Flowing Rural Population from Entering the City], *Renmin Ribao* January 4, 1958.

⁶⁶ The article states, “*jiali de shi you wo, ni buyong danxin, haishi anxin gongzuo*” 家里的事有我, 你不用担心, 还是安心工作”. Cao Baoming, “‘Wuhao’ Jiating,” [‘Five Goods’ Family], *Renmin Ribao*, August 8, 1956.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

with his domestic situation. In the eye of the state, the mother and wife's ability to care for the family lay in maintaining a harmonious and efficient household, which could be achieved through positive education of children who then could also contribute to building a strong socialist community.

Theme 4: "Arranging Family Life": Support the Spouse, Support Socialist Construction

The fourth theme of "arranging family life" and taking care of spouses so that they could better perform at work is perhaps the most striking in that it so seamlessly fits with the image of a traditional, domestically-oriented mother and wife. Different articles emphasized housewives' ability to cook, clean, and otherwise efficiently manage domestic space in order to free their male spouses from both physical obligations in the household and the mental worry of having to return home from work to a household in disorder. Liu Ruizhen, model Five Goods activist mentioned earlier, sought to take care of her husband by preparing extra dishes of eggs for him in addition to the vegetables and tofu she prepared for herself and her children.⁶⁸ This small act of cooking additional, more nutritious food to care for the husband was a part of the demeanor that earned her the rank of Five Goods activist. We have also seen other "Five Goods activists" who arranged domestic life so well that it positively influenced their husband's performances at work, such as Lu Liqing, whose husband was able to work more efficiently due to her ability to dispel petty disputes from the household.⁶⁹

Also important to maintaining spousal efficiency and properly "arranging family life" was the promotion of harmony between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The mother-in-

⁶⁸ Zhang Wei, "Liu Ruizhen shi ge hao mama."

⁶⁹ Na yi, "Shehui xin fengshang jiating xin qixiang."

law and daughter-in-law relationship represented a nucleus of the Five Goods movement, both as positive actors within the family to be emulated as well as sources of domestic dispute to be criticized. In fact, the slightly modified rural version of the Five Goods movement promoted in 1957 even included a new tenet: “respect the mother-in-law, love the daughter-in-law.”⁷⁰ The following example approaches the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law as a source of domestic discord and praises the Five Goods campaign’s ability to quickly and efficiently solve such issues.

According to the Xinhua News Agency, in 1948 Tong Guizhen married her husband Zhao Lianchi, who worked at the Fuxin Xinqiu coal mine.⁷¹ Tong Guizhen did not get along with her new mother-in-law, who was disabled, viewed her daughter-in-law as a mere “substitute” to complete her own household chores, bossed her around all day, and even accused her of carelessly misplacing and/or stealing porcelain plates.⁷² In the article, Tong Guizhen’s cooking ability falters as a result of this stressful relationship with her mother-in-law, and the food she cooks for her family becomes worse and worse.⁷³ The two women’s infighting leads to the decision to begin cooking their meals separately, an inefficiency in the eyes of the socialist state if there ever was one. The poor relationship between Tong Guizhen and her mother-in-law directly leads to problems for husband Zhao Lianchi at work. As Zhao is forced to eat badly cooked food and worry about his family’s domestic situation, his quality of work falls greatly. One day at work, Zhao carelessly touches an electrical line, and he is forced to take off four

⁷⁰ Hong Wei, “‘Wuhao’ huodong,” in *Hubei fuyun wushi nian shangce*, 233.

⁷¹ Dian Ming, “Poxi chongxin he haole” [Rearrange and Re-harmonize Relations Between Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law], *Renmin Ribao*, January 9, 1957.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

months of work to recover from the accident, directly impacting national production efficiency.⁷⁴ After a time, local cadres organize mass meetings between *jiashu*, who discuss domestic issues and the Five Goods movement. Tong Guizhen is named a small group leader within these Five Goods discussion groups, and comes to ponder her own domestic situation and the ways in which she can improve life for herself and her family within the household. A few months later, she compliments her mother-in-law's cooking as she makes her own individual pot of rice porridge, and they decide to begin cooking together instead of separately. After they begin cooking together, domestic harmony naturally falls into place and Tong Guizhen is first named an "advanced housewife" and then a Five Goods activist in the city of Fuxin. This allows husband Zhao Lianchi to dispel the burden of domestic issues that have been weighing on his mind and become a better worker at the coal mine.⁷⁵ While a discourse over feminine duties of cooking, "care," and maintaining family harmony took clear center of this Five Goods articulation of how to become a good socialist family, it is also worthy of note that the Five Goods movement repeatedly praised and criticized mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, and conveniently ignored any male role in facilitating domestic harmony. This demeanor and tone in the *People's Daily* placed the entire basket of domestic inefficiencies at the feet of the women of the household.

Five Goods work in different contexts also emphasized proper methods of cooking as a part of "arranging family life well." In the name of promoting better work habits for spouses, a directive from Liaoning prefecture elaborated on the proper way to "carry out Five Goods work" with an example from the city of Fushun. The report says that "In the interest of making sure

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

workers eat hot rice, which will fill them up (充分 *chongfen*) and protect their health, the city should “introduce the ‘good rice in ten minutes’ method.” The method was to, “first, heat up the pot, and after the pot is hot add one thermos bottle of water and mix it up.”⁷⁶ That was all. Instead of further elaborating on this rice cooking method, the directive continues to say that in Xifu neighborhood, an investigation of the “number two *jiashu* committee of railroad workers” found that many workers had stomach issues (胃病 *weibing*), owing to the fact that “the railway staff works for 12 hours in a row and are too busy to eat, at the same time, the *jiashu* of these workers make rice that is too watery and poorly cooked (干稀调剂不好 *ganxi tiaoji buhao*).”⁷⁷ The directive then states that local *jiashu* had undertaken Five Goods work to rectify this issue, and began to “deliver food” directly to their spouses at the train station, “exchange cooking experiences,” and “organize a ‘clean thing exhibition’ (净物展览会 *jingwu zhanlanhui*) to see whose home had the kitchen cleaver with the least rust, the best polished cooking pot, the cleanest kitchen rags, etc...”⁷⁸ The directive heralded that “(this method) encouraged the masses to go a step further, and was positively effective.”⁷⁹

In this case, worker’s low productivity and “stomach illness” is blamed on the conduct of *jiashu*, which in turn sparks discussions over clean kitchens and exhortations over proper cooking methods. These discussions then provided the catalyst that allowed state-directed groups of *jiashu* and neighborhood committees to enter and inspect domestic space for clean

⁷⁶ “Liaoning sheng zong nugong guanyu zhigong jiashu gongzuo baogao” [Liaoning Province Federation of Women’s Workers Report on the Work of Family Dependents], in Liaoning People’s Editing Committee, ed. *Zhongguo gonghui yundong shi liaoquanshu: Liaoning juan shang* [Historical Volume on the Chinese Labor Union Movement: Liaoning Edition] (Liaoning: Liaoning People’s Press, 1999), 522.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

environments as well as to comment and criticize on the best methods for cooking rice. It is also worth pointing out the irony in complaints over watery rice. While a good housewife was meant to “cherish every grain of rice as a treasure among treasures” during a time of intense material shortage, she was also to make sure that when that precious little rice was cooked it did not come out “watery” or “sparse” (稀 *xi*). The state demanded that housewives occupy an impossible role, turning less than ample rations of rice into abundant amounts lest they damage national production efficiency.

In line with examples of “watery rice,” housewives were expected to occupy nearly impossible roles in the name of “arranging family life” in many other ways. One example comes from the experience of Five Goods activist Cui Zhizai, whose life story as a teacher, school principal, and housewife was published in the *People’s Daily* in June of 1957. The article, titled *Jiating nei wai*,” meaning “Inside and Outside the Household,” reflected traditional conceptions of *nei* (内 “inner”) and *wai* (外 “outer”) and described Cui Zhizai’s life as an amateur, then professional, literacy teacher outside the household and her life as a diligent and caring housewife inside the household.⁸⁰ Within the article, these two seemingly separate duties blend seamlessly together with the help of an uber-productive personality.

The article contains a section titled “This is how I arrange my time for domestic chores, work, and study.”⁸¹ She says that the first three hours in the morning are “bright,” but the last three hours at night are a “panic.” In the morning she sweeps the house, cleans the table, sees to

⁸⁰ In relation to the Five Goods Model, Dorothy Ko has pointed out that the Qing monarchy saw the family, as represented by “inner” domestic space, as “the very site where public morality (could) be exemplified.” Despite the connotation of *nei* as a gendered female space, women’s lives and responsibilities in Late Imperial China through the socialist period often extended beyond any *nei/wai* dichotomy, and the rendering of *nei* as female space and *wai* as male space is an approximate one. Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth Century China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 13.

⁸¹ Cui Zhizai, “Jiating nei wai” [Inside and Outside the Household], *Renmin Ribao*, June 15, 1957.

the cleanliness of the home, and then begins to cook. As she cooks, she reads the newspaper (perhaps the *People's Daily*) or checks her children's homework before arranging the food for her children and husband. She then makes the beds and washes the dishes. She sees her husband and children off to work and school, and then attends her work as a school vice-principal herself, checking over the day's school lessons with other teachers. She comes back home at ten o'clock, and prepares steamed buns for her family and other dishes for lunch. After arranging her family's lunch, she cleans up. If it is Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday, she attends a political study meeting at one thirty. She then takes her youngest children to attend her school's small study groups in the afternoon, where she learns about the most recent teaching conditions and listens to other teachers voice their opinions. If it is Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday she sews and mends clothes or cleans the house in the afternoon. On these days, she also brings her youngest children with her to work to interview teachers and staff at the school on managing their day-to-day issues. As she cooks dinner, she also completes a few odd jobs on the side, such as mending socks and shoes with needle and thread, patching up the children's damaged clothing, etc.⁸² The overarching theme is that tasks within and outside the household can both be handled completely and thoroughly if one manages their time well.

Cui Zhizai's daily efforts, according to this article, were nothing short of heroic, and represent the stress and difficulty inherent in the "double burden" of domestic work and work outside the household thrust on Chinese women during the period known as "high socialism" from 1949-1978. She found time to manage all of her household chores, cook food for the family, take care of her young children without the apparent aid of childcare services or a nanny, and act as a first-rate principal, mending socks while cooking food and taking her children along

⁸² Ibid.

to manage her affairs at the school when necessary. To the Chinese state, her juggling of all these domestic and public tasks was considered a pioneering example for socialist women, who could “do it all” without compromising the socialist model by hiring outside labor or relegating themselves exclusively to the home.

The reality of Cui Zhizai’s real or fabricated life, and the “ideal housewife” model she upheld, would surely have been exhausting. In fact, this nearly impossible model of motherhood and wifedom presents a fundamental key to the state’s articulation of family life according to the Five Goods model. By creating a nearly impossible model for *jiashu* and housewives, the state opened up nearly every household in China for comment and criticism on their ability to meet such a lofty ideal. *Jiashu* and neighborhood committees could enter women’s homes to inspect for rust on cleavers and whether or not their rice was “watery” in the name of this impossible Five Goods ideal, which was promoted in tandem with an emphasis on spousal, and thus national, production efficiency.

5) Hygiene: “Cleansing” the Home and Neighborhood

The fifth and final theme of the Five Goods movement that this study will analyze is the theme of neighborhood and household hygiene, and the relationship between quarreling, shrewish women and clean, modern, sanitized environments. While not an original tenet of the first “Five Goods” list, by September of 1956 leadership had modified the Five Goods and added the tenet “practice hygiene well” (卫生好 *weisheng hao*).⁸³

⁸³ “Zai zhongguo gongchandang dibaci quanguo daibiao dahui shang: Qinjianchijia gaohao zhigong shenghuo, Xiao Huina tongzhi de faxin” [At the Eighth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party: Thriftily Running the Household and Improving the Lives of Workers, Xiao Huina’s Report], *Renmin Ribao*, September 20, 1956.

One representative article in the *Peoples' Daily* began by describing a scene of chaos in a Shanghai neighborhood which was “famous for its quarrels”, where “husbands and wives fight, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law quarrel, and children argue... every day holds ten or more instances (of such fighting).”⁸⁴ In the same Shanghai neighborhood, women gossiped behind each other’s back, held feuds in which they would not speak with one another for years on end, and generally created a negative environment in the shared alleyway.⁸⁵ For example, two housewives in this neighborhood became enemies over unnamed issues of gossip, and did not speak for ten years. With the help of Five Goods campaign discussions over mutual aid, they were able to sort out their differences and mutually assist one another in housework and other neighborhood tasks. The two women, along with their local women’s committee, began cleaning common spaces like alleyways and small neighborhood vegetable patches, earning their alleyway a first-rate sanitation ranking.⁸⁶ In this case it is important to point out that the root cause of dirty, inefficient, and problematic alleyways were housewives and their petty disputes, and the solution to this issue lay in the proper application of the Five Goods campaign. In the state’s articulation of care over family, alleyway, and community, the Five Goods movement could physically and symbolically “cleanse” neighborhoods by mending relationships between housewives and producing a more hygienic, and thus efficient, neighborhood and nation.

Other articles reinforced the idea that Five Goods organization could both dispel petty disputes and “cleanse” neighborhoods of trash and filth. An article which described the implementation of the Five Goods movement in Wuhan stated, “Before the implementation of

⁸⁴ Na yi, “Shehui xin fengshang jiating xin qixiang.”

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

the Five Goods small groups (read: mutual aid teams), in the aspect of hygiene, most people simply cleaned their own doorstep, but some people were always lazy and would just toss filthy things onto their neighbors' doorsteps."⁸⁷ Tossing trash onto the neighbor's doorstep naturally led to disputes and disharmony within the neighborhood. But after the implementation of Five Goods values, the neighborhood established a "shift cleaning system" which "not only took care of family's hygiene, but also created a sanitary environment (in the neighborhood)."⁸⁸ Jie Li's study of family life in Shanghai also supports the existence of these housewife-led hygiene teams; in Shanghai during the late 1950's, housewives of neighborhood committees would go door to door during sanitation campaigns to ensure that trash was properly disposed of and that houses were tidy and well dusted.⁸⁹

Aside from the organization of neighborhood shift cleaning systems, Five Goods activists were also portrayed in the *People's Daily* as cleaner, more polite, and more civilized than their non-Five Goods countertypes. One case describes the difficulty that some Five Goods activists met when organizing mutual aid teams in an unnamed neighborhood. When women were asked to join the mutual aid teams in this neighborhood, many responded by taunting the activists and showing a flippant attitude towards their cause.⁹⁰ The activists in charge of organizing mutual aid continued to lead the way regardless of this local ambivalence, as the author describes that these Five Goods women "weren't dirty, weren't tired, weren't afraid of hardship, and weren't afraid of being cursed or condemned."⁹¹ In contrast to the shinningly clean and energetic activists of the

⁸⁷ "Zai zhongguo gongchandang dibaci quanguo daibiao dahui shang: Qinjianchijia gaohao zhigong shenghuo."

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 64.

⁹⁰ "Jiashu huzhu haochu da."

⁹¹ Ibid.

mutual aid groups, those who opposed joining the groups were portrayed as wizened, dirty hags with a major lack of foresight. Local *jiashu* Ding Xizhen opposed the movement, refusing to participate in the mutual aid groups and lashing out at the activists, saying “Ha! You’re all doing nothing but competing for a pretty coffin!”⁹² When Ding Xizhen later becomes pregnant, the activists warmly come to her aid despite her taunting. In the name of mutual help, they clean her home, wash a “filthy blanket that hasn’t been cleaned for years,” help her children make shoes, prepare her food, receive the doctor to assist in giving birth, and wash her soiled pregnancy towels and pants afterwards.⁹³ After this episode, Ding Xizhen changes her ways and becomes a member of the mutual aid group, and in turn the whole neighborhood transforms from a community where “each and every family all individually clean the snow from their own threshold” to a community where “one home has chores, and everyone helps out.”⁹⁴ Mutual aid over matters of hygiene not only “cleaned” the neighborhood but “cleansed” the thinking and perspectives of those who failed to fall in line with the values of the Five Goods movement.

Continuities: The Revival of the Five Goods Movement

The thirty years following the height of the Five Goods movement in 1956-8 saw intense social and political change. Under collectivization in 1958, exhortations over women’s housework shifted towards an emphasis on women’s ability to enter into “productive” roles in factory labor or agriculture outside the home.⁹⁵ The following years of 1966-1976 witnessed the upheaval of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, where frequent, and often violent,

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Song Shaopeng, “State Discourse on Housewives.”

changes in local politics fundamentally changed the domestic orientation of the Five Goods movement. *People's Daily* articles published after the summer of 1966 reframed the role of Five Goods *jiashu* “family dependents” in society through their ability to “revolutionize” the family (做革命化 *zuo geming hua*) over anything else.⁹⁶ The Women’s Federation also stopped political work in most cities after 1966 with the start of the Cultural Revolution. The Five Goods movement was “halted” according to a history of Beijing women’s political work, and “paralyzed” according to a history of the Five Goods movement in Hubei province.⁹⁷

Despite great political and social change from 1958-1979 and the suspension of Five Goods work, these uncertain times did not mark the end of the Five Goods movement. On March 8th Women’s Day in 1979, the Five Goods housewife and family model was thoroughly revived as the city of Beijing announced a Five Goods “family competition” and organized Five Goods family “experience exchange” meetings (经验交流会 *jingyan jiaoliu hui*).⁹⁸ The tenets of the revived Five Goods campaign had been altered somewhat, and were now “to develop good political thought, to encourage good production work, to promote public sanitation, to plan and control births, and to educate the next generation well.”⁹⁹ On March 8th Women’s Day in 1981,

⁹⁶ “Zuo geminghua de jiashu: Yongyuan ting Mao Zhuxi de hua, yongyuan zuogeminghua de jiashu shiyou gongyebu, wuhao jiashu biaoqing saner yiyi yingxiong zuanjing dui zhigong jiashu moumaoxiu zai shoudu geming qunzhong dahui shang de baogao zhaiyao” [Jiashu Carry Out Revolution: Forever listen to the words of Chairman Mao, The Jiashu of Petroleum Industry Forever Carry Out Revolution, Five Goods Model Jiashu of the March 21st One Hundred and Eleven Heroes Drilling Crew at the Revolutionary Capital of the Masses ‘Moumaoxiu’ Summary Report], *Renmin Ribao*, October 15, 1966.

⁹⁷ Beijingshi difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui bian [Beijing Local Annals Compilation Committee], *Beijing zhi: Renmin tuanti juan funü zuzhi zhi* [Annals of Beijing: People’s Organization File, Women’s Organization Records] (Beijing: Beijing Press, 2007), 366. See also Hong Wei, “‘Wuhao’ huodong,” *Hubei fuyun wushi nian shangce*, 235.

⁹⁸ Beijingshi difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui bian, *Beijing zhi: Renmin tuanti juan funü zuzhi zhi*, 366. No information is offered as to the criteria by which the “family competition” was scored.

⁹⁹ “Beijing yongxian yiqian ge funü wuhao jiti geren” [A Thousand Five Goods Women and Collectives Emerge in Beijing], *Renmin Ribao*, March 8, 1981.

Beijing announced that “Five Goods collectives and Five Goods activists were springing up” all over the city, and that the Beijing Women’s Federation had cited and commended one thousand of these Five Good collectives and activists just three days earlier.¹⁰⁰ A publication on March 8th Women’s Day in 1982 assured readers that “since 1979 Beijing has promoted the following guidelines for the purpose of the ‘Five Goods’ movement: Begin and develop work-study, encourage good labor and production work... harmonize the family and household, promote mutual cooperation among neighbors, promote family planning and birth control, reform prevailing habits and customs, and practice courtesy and civility.”¹⁰¹ By 1986, Beijing had reported reaching over one million Five Goods families in the city, accounting for 40% of Beijing’s total households at the time.¹⁰²

As the Five Goods model was thoroughly revived in Beijing and spread to the national level through the early 1980’s, the new movement consciously tried to reproduce the feel of the movement from the 1950’s and echo earlier sentiments of family and neighborhood organization. An article in the *People’s Daily* reporting from a Shenyang neighborhood in the Tiexi District during 1981 opened by describing the moral corruption and pollution of the people during the years of the Cultural Revolution, reporting that “residents found the ten years of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four an utter catastrophe, where public morals were corrupted and socialist ethics trampled underfoot.”¹⁰³ The solution to these moral issues was for “residents to look back and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Beijing shi fulian biao Zhang yipu ‘wuhao’ jiti he geren” [Beijing Commends a set of ‘Five Goods’ collectives and individuals], *Renmin Ribao*, March 8, 1982.

¹⁰² Xiong Yongnian, “Beijing shi ‘wuhao’ jiating yida yibaoduo wan” [‘Five Goods’ Families in Beijing Reach over a Million], *Renmin Ribao*, October 4, 1986: 4.

¹⁰³ “Zunshou shehui gongde tichang jingshen wenming: Shenyang shi Tiexi qu pubian zhiding jumin gongyue” [Adhere to Societal Ethics and Promote Spiritual Civilization: Shenyang City’s Tiexi District Commonly Decides a Resident’s Pact], *Renmin Ribao*, January 31, 1981.

review the old tradition of resident's work in the 1950's... and organize a joint pledge of regulations (公约 gongyue) in their neighborhood...” (emphasis added).¹⁰⁴ The contents of this “joint pledge” or “resident’s pact” based on 1950’s tradition were “to safeguard the public order, to educate children well, to practice family planning, to promote hygiene and cleanliness, to promote family harmony, to promote mutual help in the neighborhood, to support the military, and practice thrift while reforming the habits and customs of the people...”¹⁰⁵

Not only did the content of this resident’s pact align closely with the tenets of the earlier 1956-8 Five Goods model, but the familiar strategy of painting “good” and “bad” neighborhoods before and after Five Goods transformations had reappeared in conspicuous fashion. The article first described a dirty and inharmonious neighborhood in need of reform; “In the past, shared hallways and courtyards were left unattended, while garbage and sewage proliferated everywhere... noisy disputes arose over sharing kitchen space, or sharing one electricity meter or gas meter in a household...”¹⁰⁶ In order to solve these issues and promote the goals of the resident’s pact, the article endorsed a similar method of organization promoted under the Five Goods movement of the 1950’s, to “elect a group of relatively experienced retired workers and members of residents committees... who will form small groups to conduct quarterly inspection and appraisals, and commend and supervise residents (on their ability to abide by the tenets of the resident’s pact).”¹⁰⁷ The familiar result is that after the small groups formed “a cleaning shift system to tidy up shared spaces,” the neighborhood was both physically and symbolically

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

cleansed and became a place where “good neighbors are united in solidarity over mutual aid.”¹⁰⁸ The article ends by proudly listing the amount of Five Goods families (18,000) and Five Goods “institutions, buildings, and groups” (607) in the Tiexi District of Shenyang City.¹⁰⁹ This article suggests that the Five Goods movement had been thoroughly revived in the 1980’s with considerable attention to all aspects of the earlier 1950’s version, from specific content of the “Five Goods,” to the authorial style of the *People’s Daily*, to strategies of mutual help and mutual surveillance, to the glorious success of the movement in “cleansing” quarrels, filth, and the “moral corruption” of the Cultural Revolution years from local neighborhoods.

Throughout changing political climates, including the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and “Opening and Reform,” the Five Goods label remained a well-entrenched part of Chinese society. In Jie Li’s historical investigation of a neighborhood alleyway in Shanghai, she finds that, “Even in the 2000s, Grandma Yang’s house retained a facade of respectability in the neighborhood. Fixed to their door was a red plaque that read ‘Five-Good Family,’ an honor bestowed upon harmonious households that also got along with their neighbors.”¹¹⁰ Awards and commendations from the 1950’s persisted across the years and through periods where the campaign was deemphasized, and labels weren’t simply cast aside between 1958-1979.

Continuity in the movement from 1956 and into the 1980’s signaled the state’s desire to stay active and present in defining “good” socialist households, families, and housewives. The Five Goods model and “anti-model” of the female shrew promoted through the *People’s Daily* provided a powerful normative standard over the family and women that was then leveraged to

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes*, 61.

justify comment, criticism, surveillance, and intervention in domestic space and family life from 1956-1958. The revival of the movement in 1979 and into the 1980's suggests that the Chinese state continued using earlier strategies and models to govern families and regulate domestic space towards the goal of maintaining a state-endorsed vision of family life.

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