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On Multi-dimensional Considerations of Media in Integrity Promotion - Postprint

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Abstract

On March 16, CCTV.com published a news article titled “2019 Two Sessions Conclude: These Changes Will Affect Your Life,” which mentioned that regarding integrity construction, “the crackdown on dishonesty and punishment of dishonest judgment debtors will see the ‘cage’ tightened further this year.” As media institutions shouldering the responsibility of “guiding, educating, influencing, and inspiring” the public, they can employ multi-dimensional thinking and make substantive contributions to integrity publicity.

Full Text

Media’ s Multi-Dimensional Role in Promoting Integrity: A Theoretical Exploration

Abstract: On March 16, CCTV.com published a news article titled “2019 Two Sessions Conclude: These Changes Will Affect Your Life,” which noted that in terms of integrity construction, “the ‘cage’ for cracking down on dishonesty and punishing judgment defaulters will be tightened further this year.”As institutions tasked with “guiding, educating, influencing, and inspiring” the public, media organizations can and should employ multi-dimensional thinking to fulfill their responsibilities in integrity promotion.

Keywords: integrity; multi-dimensional; media responsibility

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Media organizations must adopt multi-dimensional approaches in promoting integrity, balancing macro-level principles with micro-level narratives, celebrating exemplars while exposing violations, and strengthening both institutional gate-keeping and professional self-discipline.

1. Bridging Macro Principles and Micro Narratives

Since the 18th Party Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized integrity on numerous occasions, stating that “trustworthiness is the foundation of interpersonal and international relations” and that “the trustworthy should benefit while the untrustworthy face restrictions.” Integrity constitutes a core value of socialist citizenship, representing a comprehensive reflection of one’s ideological awareness, moral standards, and civilized behavior. It has become a fundamental benchmark for interactions between individuals, organizations, and individuals and organizations alike.

Media commentary—whether in the form of short reviews, editor’s notes, or brief analyses—should ground these macro-level principles in concrete realities. By connecting high-level guidance with specific individuals and events, journalists can elucidate the timeless truth that “integrity wins the world” with greater depth, clarity, and nuance. Similarly, news reports, features, and stories should employ relatable, down-to-earth examples that make integrity tangible and accessible. These narratives should both celebrate trustworthy behavior and condemn dishonest acts, thereby fostering a social climate that upholds integrity and positive values.

2. Promoting Exemplars Across Individual, Organizational, and Governmental Levels

The power of exemplary models is profound; a good example serves as a textbook for society. On August 24, 2018, Phoenix News Jiangsu reported on Wei Baolei, a pig farm operator in Lianyungang. When African swine fever struck in August 2018, all 4,626 pigs on his farm were culled according to regulations. Although government compensation was provided, his total losses exceeded 5 million yuan. Despite this, Wei stated: “I cannot sacrifice my conscience and industry reputation for money.” In another case, the *Jianghai Evening News* reported on January 29 that Shao Xueren, an octogenarian from Yuaicun Village in Nantong’s Gangzha District, and his wife spent 18 years repaying over 100,000 yuan in debts left by their deceased son. Shao’s wife, Shen Xiuying, a veteran Party member, explained: “As a Party member, I must set an example of integrity.”

At the organizational level, Hengli Fabric Industry Co., Ltd. in Nantong’s renowned home textile market specializes in premium fabrics and operates on the principle of never profiting from dishonest practices. When client Wang Zhigang suddenly received a 100,000 yuan refund from the company, he was puzzled. The company had discovered, after upgrading to a state-of-the-art

fabric density scanner, that previous measurements had been inaccurate and that sold fabrics had contained less yarn than specified. Hengli subsequently refunded all affected customers, with Wang being one of many.

Government exemplars are equally crucial. A leader from Chuanjiang Town, Tongzhou District, Nantong, noted that the town's success in resolving demolition disputes stemmed largely from transparent policies and trustworthy governance, which ultimately won over even the most resistant residents. Such “no-nonsense” promotion of government integrity services strengthens Party-people relations and builds credibility.

3. Exposing Violations While Highlighting Punitive Measures

On August 16, 2018, Jiangsu News reported that Huai'an had disqualified four People's Congress deputies who had the means to repay but refused to comply with legally effective court judgments. The decision sent a powerful message that “People's Congress membership is not a ‘safe haven’ and deputies cannot be ‘representatives of dishonesty.’” Similarly, the Jiangsu Provincial High Court recently broke new ground by ruling that courts could enforce insurance policies held by “deadbeat debtors.” Previously, insurance policies were immune from enforcement, creating a “safe haven” for dishonest individuals who purchased extensive coverage while defaulting on debts. This measure, reported in July 2018, gave creditors new hope and debtors a strong deterrent.

Media coverage of such punitive measures is essential for combating dishonesty and promoting positive energy. While current reporting is valuable, its breadth, depth, and frequency could be further enhanced to maximize impact.

4. Strengthening Gatekeeping Through Internal and External Collaboration

Media's unique characteristics and mission demand heightened vigilance and foresight. Journalists must strengthen gatekeeping to prevent malicious actors from exploiting media platforms for self-promotion. Some individuals seek media exposure merely to enhance their reputation, and media organizations must guard against becoming “mouthpieces” or “protective talismans” for such figures. At the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideology in August 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping called on propaganda workers to enhance their “four strengths” : footwork, vision, mental effort, and writing ability. Gatekeeping particularly requires vision and mental effort—the ability to discern, perceive, and judge, as well as to think critically and reflect deeply.

Media professionals should also collaborate with external agencies. A Tongzhou journalist recounted how a proposed feature on an entrepreneur was halted after consultation with judicial authorities revealed the individual was on a credit blacklist and had been repeatedly detained. This collaborative vetting prevented an inappropriate “exemplar” story and prompted the recommending organization to improve its nomination procedures. Such cooperation with public security,

judicial, tax, communications, and market supervision departments is essential for enhancing the accuracy, impact, and credibility of integrity promotion.

5. Practicing What We Preach: Professional Integrity as Foundation

Journalists are often called the “uncrowned kings,” reflecting public trust and respect. In today’ s severe credit crisis, media professionals must honor this trust by rejecting paid news, resisting temptation, and embodying integrity. A veteran journalist shared a cautionary tale: twenty years ago, a young colleague borrowed 10,000 yuan for family emergencies, promising repayment but eventually disappearing after resigning. The veteran reflected that such dishonesty reveals flawed character unsuited for journalism.

Media practitioners require both professional competence and moral character. Only when these qualities merge can journalists demonstrate personal integrity and social responsibility, thereby promoting a culture of trustworthiness. As one philosopher observed, “Integrity must not become a scarce commodity in our era.” During this year’ s Two Sessions, 30 Jiangsu deputies jointly submitted a proposal urging accelerated credit legislation to punish dishonest behavior. Recognizing the weight of their responsibility, media professionals must enhance their sense of duty, think creatively, and contribute meaningfully to integrity promotion and the realization of the Chinese Dream.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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