

**CHANGING FACE:  
THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE WOMEN'S DRESS AND APPEARANCE**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
2.1 Women in Dynastic China and Republican China.....	5
2.2 Gender Ideology of Communist China .....	9
2.3 The Propaganda of Gender Ideology in Mao’s China .....	17
2.3.1 Mass Communication.....	17
2.3.2 Interpersonal Communication .....	26
2.4 Women in Contemporary China .....	31
CHAPTER 3 : THEORY .....	38
3.1 Media Dependency Theory .....	38
3.2 Conspicuous Consumption, Leisure, Fashion and Identity.....	41
3.3 Media Effects on Body Image .....	45
CHAPTER 4 : METHODS .....	48
4.1 Sample.....	49
4.2 Interview .....	51
4.3 Data Input.....	51
CHAPTER 5 : RESULTS AND FINDINGS.....	53
5.1 Chinese Contemporary Women’s Dress and Appearance .....	53
5.2 Media Influences.....	57
5.3 Peers Influences and Other Influences .....	63
5.4 The Influences of Western Women’s Images .....	68
CHAPTER 6 : DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....	73
6.1 Chinese Women’s Media Usage .....	73
6.2 The Westernization of Chinese Women .....	75
6.3 The Development of Chinese Media in the Future .....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	82
APPENDIX A : THE LIST OF RESPONDENTS .....	89
APPENDIX B : INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	91
VITA.....	93

## **ABSTRACT**

Women's dress and appearance can reflect a lot about a civilized society. It is influenced by many factors as well. The dress and appearance of contemporary Chinese women have not been studied much by mass communication researchers.

This paper, however, explored the factors that influence the development and evolution of contemporary Chinese women's dress and appearance. It traced back from Dynastic China to Republican China and then to Mao's red China to examine the historical and political influences imposed on the dress and appearance of Chinese women. Then, it used in-depth interviews to find out factors that influence women's dress and appearance in contemporary China. Especially, this paper analyzed the result of all these factors that typically were transmitted or reinforced by mass media.

The paper found that media played a very important role in contemporary Chinese women's dress and appearance. Chinese women depend on media very much in choosing their dress style and clothes. In addition to this, peers' opinion and social environment also influence Chinese women's choice in dress.

Since the results showed that media dependency could also be applied to China's contemporary society, the paper concluded that media in China will have much more role on the society especially on women's dress and appearance in the future. It also concluded that Chinese women would not be totally westernized but would maintain some Chinese characteristics in dress and appearance in the future.

## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

In civilized societies, what women wear is about something else altogether than the women themselves. Clothing, dress and appearance can be seen as a specific ethical substance. The larger rules governing choices about clothing and appearance not only can reflect the identity of gender, but also can reflect a given economic, culture, political and social system.

The dress and image of women often serve as an indicator or metaphor of a society. There is an observable connection between the appearance and behavior of women and national politics. For example, Finnane has mentioned in his article that women, in whatever clothes, had been a relatively subdued presence among the symbols of the nation in China (1996). To inquire into the mediation of national politics in women's fashions is also to inquire into the place of woman in the myths of the nation.

About 1/10th of the population of the world today are Chinese women. Their decisions about almost anything, from whether to have one or more children to what kind of shoes to buy, will affect the rest of humanity. Such choices, however, are, in Chinese society, often imposed by social, political and economical forces and typically transmitted or reinforced by mass media.

There have been many research articles discussing political, social and economic changes in China. Fashion for women in China - a common characteristic reflecting the development of a society - have also been discussed by many scholars. However, they have usually been just part of political and economical discussions. Chinese women's dress, appearance and fashion from 1949 to the present are still seldom discussed either wholly or specifically.

The dress, appearance and fashion of Chinese women have experienced several dramatic changes from dynastic time to the present time. In dynastic China, women were largely under the direct control of their husbands and fathers. Their dress and appearance - the presentation of self - was determined by social class and custom. In the 1950s, “Mao Green” clothing amazed most foreign visitors to China: no matter their sex or age, all Chinese people dressed in the same color. In the 1970s, what visitor saw was blue and gray—the “blue ants.” At that time, a woman could not be distinguished by either the way she dressed or what she used on her face. In the 1980s-1990s, however, women have many more freedoms and options on what to wear or what to do for a living. Many young Chinese women can enjoy pleasures known only to a few in the past. They can dress smartly in copies of Hong Kong fashions, and have their hair cut stylishly without fear of criticism. Moreover, “women’s” media and commercial advertising directed at women have gone far to establish new social norms through which Chinese women are becoming more and more modern or Western.

How did this paradigm change occur? What can be reflected by this change? According to O’Cass, fashion not only forms an important part of everyday consumption decisions, but is implicitly a central component of almost all daily events, influencing what we eat, how we dress, how we talk and even the very nature of our thinking processes (O’Cass, 2000). Then what is it to be a woman today in the People’s Republic of China? What is acceptable or encouraged appearance and behavior in contemporary China? How have the dress and appearance of Chinese women evolved to the current phase? Is it because of social pressure, mass media, political dictates, or personal choices? How will this situation develop in the future? Will Chinese women become

totally westernized or will they still keep some of their own cultural characteristics? It is of great interest, therefore, to trace the evolution of how we arrived at a modern definition of “women” - in both look and action - in contemporary and future China.

Based on the above questions, we came up with the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a paradigm shift on Chinese women’s dress and appearance in P.R.China from Mao’s time to the current China.

The current Chinese Modern Chinese women depend a lot on media, especially on women’s and fashion magazines in their dress, appearance and behavior.

**Hypothesis 2:** Peers’ opinion, dress and appearance and other environmental factors are another important influence on Chinese women’s dress and appearance.

When discussing the dress, appearance and fashions of women in China, it is best to focus on urban women. As stated by Veblen, conspicuous consumption claims a relatively larger portion of the income of the urban than of the rural population (Veblen, 1992, p.72). He believed that usually consumption became a larger element in the standard of living in the city than in the country. “It is also noticeable that the serviceability of consumption as a means of repute, as well as the insistence on it as an element of decency, is at its best in those portions of the community where the human contact of the individual is widest and mobility of the population is greatest” (Veblen, 1992, p.72).

This paper seeks to examine the role that mass media played to define proper dress, appearance and behavior of the female from Mao’s time to the cotemporary time.

By describing and explaining the shift of the paradigm of the dress and appearance of Chinese women from 1949 to the current time, I try to analyze and predict its further development in the future.

## **CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review section focuses on the studies that have been conducted on the dress and appearance of Chinese women from dynastic China to Mao's China. Firstly, it will overview the history of Chinese women's dress and appearance in dynastic China and Republic China briefly. Secondly, it will review the development of the dress and appearance of Chinese women in Mao's China by examining the role media played in that process. Finally, it will talk about the situation of Chinese women's dress, appearance and behavior in contemporary China.

### **2.1 Women in Dynastic China and Republican China**

In dynastic China, for thousands of years, the image and role of female body was determined by social class and custom. Women were considered inferior to men. They were largely under the direct control of their fathers, brothers and husband.

The Chinese women, of whatever condition in life, are, for the most part, deprived of the benefit of reading, or acquiring their retirement, their awe also of those whom they consider as their superiors, disqualify them, in great measure, from becoming the friends or habitual companions of the leisure of their husbands. Even a relish for their personal charms is subject gradually to diminish; and less horror is felt against unnatural practices, which, however they are, as well as all perverse and impure desires, justly reprobated by the Chinese moralists, are seldom, if ever, punished by the law, at least when committed by the mandarins. (White, 2003, pp.60-61)

Women in dynastic China were influenced greatly by Confucian philosophies. Family traditions espoused and promoted ideas that sons were more favored than daughters. Women were expected to obey husbands and stay within the realm of the home. In upper-class families, women wear make up on their faces such as white and red paint and very exquisite clothes:

Unmarried women wear their hair hanging down in long tresses, and the putting up of the hair is one of the ceremonies preparatory to marriage. It is twisted up towards the back of the head, ornamented with flowers or jewels, and fastened with two bodkins in crosswise. They sometimes wear an ornament representing the *fenghuang*, or Chinese phoenix, composed of gold and jewels, the wings hovering, and the beak of the bird hanging over the forehead, on an elastic spring. After a certain time of life the women wear a silk wrapper round the head in lieu of any other dress. The eyebrows of the young women are fashioned until they represent a fine curved line, which is compared to the new moon when only a day or two old, or to the young leaflet of the willow. The ordinary dress is a large-sleeved robe of silk, or of cotton among the poorer sort, over, a longer garment, sometimes of a pink color; under which are loose trousers, which are fastened round the ankle, just above the small foot and tight shoe. Pink and green are the most two common colors worn by women. (White, 2003, p.74)

Binding the feet of women in the Mandarin class was a well-established practice by the beginning of the Sung Dynasty. It made women have their feet bound when they were only four or five years old. It was believed that this would add a sex appeal to women. In addition to this, women could only stay within the private realm of home.

The idea conveyed by these foot bounding is exemption from labor, and, as the small feet make cripples of the women, it is fair to conclude that the idea of gentility which they convey arises from a similar association. That appearance of helplessness which is induced by the mutilation, notwithstanding its very usual concomitant of sickliness; and the tottering gait of the poor women, as they hobble along upon the heel of the foot, they compare to the waving of a willow agitated by the breeze. (White, 2003, p.75)

The 1911 revolution brought many political, economic, social and cultural changes in China. The revolution resulted in the end of the Qing dynasty, which resulted in many Social reforms as well as change in dress codes. At the time when men cut their hair and abandoned their long gowns, women unbound their feet and shortened their skirts.

Before the establishment of the Republic of China, clothing and hairstyles were key targets for reformist intellectuals to publicize their political commitment. “During the 1920s and 1930s, China’s reformist intellectuals in the burgeoning modernizing cities engaged in a protracted discussion about the condition of the nation’s women ”(Edwards, 2000). The modern woman first emerged in China during the May Fourth Movement as a creature of the intellectual reformers’ radical challenge to Confucian China and its “traditional woman” among the pages of magazines such as *New Youth* (Harris, 1995). In this framework, the modern woman was conceived as politically aware, patriotic, independent, and educated. It was commonplace to see women walking on natural feet in leather wearing *qipao*, going to school, wearing short-cropped hair, and speaking foreign languages (Edwards, 2000).

Western-style clothing or the narrow *qipao* were the favored style of dress for the modern woman in the 1920s. The *qipao* represents Chinese women's paradoxical nature of modernism and oldness quite well. Ambiguously "Chinese" in character, harking back to the clothing of the Manchurian aristocracy of the banner clans (an implicit prestige factor), *qipao* was a nationalistic statement in a period (Edwards, 2000). Finnane (1996) has a careful depiction of *qipao*. The typical *qipao* at that time was long, cut close to the figure, and featured long slits up the sides. Some people think that the feminization of the *qipao* was taken to some extremes.

The *qipao* invoked modernity, because its imitation of the men's single-piece *changpao*, worn by traditional scholars, claimed for women an equal status with men. Gradually, as the *qipao* became tighter fitting in the 1930s (body-hugging and slit to the thigh), it symbolized the new sexual availability of China's women and the desirability of the new-style woman. (Finnane, 1996)

*Qipao* was the most popular female dress when the Guomintang ruled over China. Its rise was almost simultaneous with that of the Guomintang and after the Nationalist Revolution. It was the dress of urban women in the modernizing cities, primarily a middle-class garment but showing the tendency to popularization characteristic of status dress in industrial society (Finnane, 1996).

At the same time, there was one thing about women in the Republic of China which was not compatible with the trend toward modernism.

Although women in Republican china had all the trappings of modernity in terms of clothing, many of them ultimately were still dependent on men and had no awareness of the broader social issues affecting the nation . . . Women were still

enthusiastic about being called *nainai* (Granny), *taitai* (Mam), and *xiaojie* (Miss), which were all imperial-era appellations. For women, the traditional titles had not only been maintained, but they also had been given modern credibility. (Xu Qingyu, 1933)

## **2.2 Gender Ideology of Communist China**

Ideology, according to American modernization theorist David Apter, is a “generic term applying to general ideas that are potent in specific situations of conduct” (Apter, 1965, p.314). Ideology enlists commitments, motivates action, and creates a collective conscience to the extent that actors accept and internalize it in their personality through a process of socialization (Chai, 2003). In fact, ideology legitimizes the political system and transforms power into authority (Geertz, 1964, p.47). The traditional gender ideology in China is “patriarchal in nature, which has defined the ‘natural’ place of women as in the family, where women are to provide a stable and supportive environment for the family and particularly for the male head of household” (Wong& Cuklanz, 2002).

The Communist Party of China (CPC) developed a new ideology related to women as early as 1921, the year when CPC was established. The new ideology primarily has been the idea that women should be as equal as men and has always been an important part in CPC and its government.

The founders of the Chinese Communist Party in the early 1920s were committed to the revolutionary questioning of many aspects of their own culture, including male-female relations, the patriarchal family structure, and the social and legal status of women. From the very inception of the Chinese Communist Party in 1920, its adherents produced a voluminous literature that posed a fundamental

challenge to the dominant culture and advocated a massive social transformation of values and human relationships. (Gilmartin, 1993)

The early CPC members placed very much emphasis on the issue of women's emancipation. In 1919, well before the appearance of the *qipao*, Mao Zedong gave notice of his line on gender differentiation in dress:

If a woman's head and a man's head are actually the same, and there is no real difference between a woman's waist and man's, why must women have their hair piled up in those ostentatious and awkward buns? Why must they wear those messy skirts cinched tightly at the waist? I think women are regarded as criminals to start with, and tall buns and long skirts are the instruments of torture applied to them by men. There is also their facial makeup, which is the brand of a criminal; the jewelry on their hands, which constitutes shackles; and their pierced ears and bound feet, which represent corporal punishment. Schools and families are their prisons. They dare not voice their pain, nor step out from behind closed doors. If we ask, how can they escape this suffering, my answer is, only by raising a women's revolutionary army. (Schram, 1992)

Not only Mao, but his wives also declared their statement on women's emancipation by their own dress style:

Photographs of Mao's second and third wives in the 1930s, dressed alike in crudely tailored pants and jacket, show the rival vestimentary regime that was developing in the nascent Communist society of that time. The dress of these revolutionary women maintained the androgynous character of the early *qipao* but lacked the *qipao*'s cultural resonances. It was to be a centerpiece in its own

cultural context, eventually setting the tone for women's dress in China at large.  
(Finnane, 1996)

From the day that the CPC formed on, it had been developing and refining a specific gender ideology which developed to its climax during Mao's time in 1960s.

The gender ideology of the early CPC was not adopted ready-made from European socialist and communist parties, nor was it created xenophile. Rather, it was synthesized from a number of resources, the most important of which were May Fourth feminism and the Marxist critique of the family that was based primarily on the writings of Friedrich Engels. These two currents mingled in the Chinese Communist movement as part of a single historical trend and served to enshrine the ideal of women's emancipation within the movement itself.

(Gilmartin, 1993)

The early Chinese Communists believed that the traditional gender ethics and the traditional family education were the sources of Chinese women's oppression.

Engels' materialist analysis of the family as the prime locus of female oppression resonated well with the antifamily orientation of many Chinese Communists. They found in this materialist interpretation a theoretical framework for their May Fourth critique of the patriarchal family as a despotic institution which perpetuated the odious practices of footbinding, concubinage, arranged marriages, women's illiteracy, seclusion, and female submission to male authority. Thus Engels' theory not only justified the continuing condemnation of the family in Chinese Communist writings but also facilitated the retention of other May Fourth

feminist issues, in the Communist gender discourse, at least until 1927.

(Gilmartin, 1993)

A brief view of a few representative titles by Communist exemplifies this phenomenon: “Sadness about the Evils of the Marriage System,” “The Event of Ms. Xi Shangzhen’s Suicide in the Office of the Commercial Press,” “Women’s Consciousness,” “The Relationship between Love and Virginity,” “An Admonition to Modern-Style Men Who Denigrate Social Contact between the Sexes,” “Social Contact between Men and Women and Feudal Ethics,” “The Tragedy of the Old Style of Marriage,” “The Issue of a Love Triangle,” “A Discussion of the Co-Educational School Issue,” “The Problem of Preventing Women Students from Getting a Divorce,” and “How to Solve the Dilemma of Social Contact between Men and Women” (Xiaofeng, 1921; Chen Wangdao, 1922; Bing, 1921; Pei Wei, 1921; ShaoLizi, 1921a, 1921b; Shen Zemin, 1925; Shen Xuanlu, 1921; Xiao Chunu, 1924).<sup>1</sup>

For the early Chinese Communist Party, a majority of the members was male. The gender ideology of CPC was also established and promoted mainly by males.

This Communist discourse on gender issues demonstrated that the emancipation of women was a matter of relatively high priority for the fledgling CPC.

Significantly, however, this discourse was almost entirely male produced, and it reflected a male perspective on gender issues. In fact, from the beginning of their revolutionary party, male Communists were accustomed to seeing themselves as the principal formulators of Party ideological positions, including those taken on women issues. (Gilmartin, 1993)

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<sup>1</sup> These writers were all early active Chinese Communists.

In 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded and became a watershed in history for Chinese women. For the first time in Chinese history, women were proclaimed to have the right of equality as man officially and legally. The famous saying is that women can "hold up half of the sky," stated by Mao Zedong.

When Mao Zedong became the head of state in the newly established People's Republic of China, he claimed that Chinese should have their own customs. Actually, Mao Zedong identified power and reflection of dress to project nationalism and ideology.

Dressing for the Party entailed living the image of the future socialist nation. The CPC represented this socialist nation, in part, as redress: for various forms of oppression and contamination, including feudalism, imperialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and revisionism. This characterization stressed the new class character of socialist China that differentiated it from the class inequalities of other social orders. (Chen, 2001)

On October the first 1949, Mao wore a modified form of the Sun Yat-sen suit at the grand ceremony in Beijing marking the founding of the People's Republic of China, "The civilian wear he chose in place of the Western lounge suit was the Sun Yat-sen jacket with trousers, subsequently to be known in the West as the Mao suit "(Li Zhisui, 1994).

In Mao's China, the gender and fashion ideology did play a much more important role than any time else in China.

Despite the ways in which Maoist fashion is remembered, a lack of conformity to this idealized homogeneity figured prominently as an integral component of the historical period in question. Diversity in clothing represented more than an

instance of political and social liberalization in the mid-1950s or an expression of subversive individuality against newly emerging norms. Both uniformity and carefully explicated difference informed CPC sanctioned clothing options. As a nodal point in the interplay between citizenship, the politics of national building, and gender formation, clothing participated in the creation of socialist citizens to populate the new nation. Premised on the dual goals of eliding and reinforcing difference, the project of creating a national citizenry thus challenges and reinforces the ideal of a uniformly clad populace (Chen, 2001).

Bin Zhao, a recent scholar of consumerism and communism in China, reiterates the dominant assessment of the effect of the new class character on fashion in Mao's China:

Fashion, regarded as bourgeois in origin and surplus to authentic human needs, was for many years more or less abolished, which turned China into a country of people dressed in gray, black, white, army green, and navy blue—the color scheme of Chinese puritan communism. (Zhao, 1997)

Bin Zhao reproduces conventional associations and oppositions: the muted colors of a self-sacrificing socialist society versus the colorful bourgeois self-indulgent individual. He draws with broad strokes a homogenized picture of the Chinese populace.

As Bin Zhao remarks, however, socialism shared with capitalism roots in the Enlightenment and a commitment to material progress. Although in a different guise than capitalist modernization, socialism embraces modernization and developmental theories as a component of the transformation of nation and individual. As a result, Bin Zhao concludes, notions of progress infused sartorial discourse and enlivened the drabness

associated with Chinese puritan communism. Class and clothing were intimately linked, but they were also tied to understandings of historical progress (Zhao, 1997).

Productivity, economic growth or class struggle all operated on the assumption that if policies benefited China's development then they were bound to benefit women. That is, policies to do with women were frequently perceived to be derivatives of broader socio-economic and political strategies. (Croll, 1983)

The victory of fighting against the Guomindang as well as in overturning the economic base of the bourgeoisie through class struggle and revolution constituted a key component of the CPC discussions of fashion choices. The elements of the sartorial discourse, in Finnane's words, "were necessary to the creation of an ideological space for the reception of a new clothing ethic" (Finnane, 1996).

Notably, apparel designated as *passee* because bourgeois or feudal fell from favor not because of seasonal fashion time but according to campaign time. Items such as the Mao suit, *qipao*, or brightly colored tops acquired meaning through class categories that were being reinforced and rethought in relation to past and present clothing as well as specific campaign needs. Even though the cycles differed from those marking time in the international fashion industry, in keeping with the time sense of fashion cycles, one always sought to shed the accouterments of the past in favor of those of the present and, better yet, the future. Determining how to style the new fabrics and dress the nation's people therefore were concomitant with class struggle, nation building, and a historical teleology leading to the socialist future. (Chen, 2001)

In the end of the 1960s, Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution, thinking that counter-revolutionary forces threatened the Party and nation from within. During that time, the theme of his policies was integrated militarism into civilian life. Militarism symbolized braveness, revolutionary spirit and advanced political awareness. The whole national population followed the calling to redress themselves in military.

Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen and the famous female figure in the CPC, showed the transition in dress codes under way. Still wearing a *qipao* in the early 1950s, she had abandoned it for pants and jacket by the end of the decade. She wore a *qipao* again only for special occasions of state, such as her visit to Sri Lanka in 1964<sup>2</sup>.

In those years, clothes were not issues of dress, but issues of politics and ideology. It had been the most remarkable time which linked politics and dress so closely. Banality, mediocrity and parity were the ways to keep political status. Nien Cheng recalled that after the initial outbreak of Red Guard activity in Shanghai, she made her first venture outside very cautiously, wearing her servant's floppy trousers with exercise shoes and a countrywoman's hat. She was spared from experiencing what she saw befall another: a young working girl wearing pants with a narrow cut and fashionable shoes was seized by Red Guards and both her shoes and trousers were forcibly removed before the eyes of the crowd (Cheng, 1987).

The dress and fashion ideals promulgated by the CPC from 1949 to 1979 revealed a dynamic discourse during which revolution and class struggle worked as the main driving force and impetus.

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<sup>2</sup> See Song Qingling jinian ji, 1981:57.

## **2.3 The Propaganda of Gender Ideology in Mao's China**

The Communism Party of China (CPC) is good at propaganda<sup>3</sup>. Actually it was because of the strength of propaganda and mobilizing that the CPC defeated Guo Mingdang in 1949 and established the P.R.China. This strength was developed to the extreme in the 1960s.

Gender ideology has been developed since as early as 1921, the year when the CPC was established. How was this ideology expressed and established among the whole nation? When did it get its summit? The literatures tell us that it was established both through mass communication and interpersonal communication.

### **2.3.1 Mass Communication**

In 1949 the participation of women in social production had been identified as the precondition of women's emancipation and the crucial factor in winning equality for women.

The mobilization of women to participate in production is the most important link in the chain that protects women's own vital interests...it is necessary to begin with production for both economic property and economic independence promote the political status of women, their cultural level and improve their livelihood, thereby leading the way to emancipation. (Croll, 1983)

At the Third Congress of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation (September 1957), "to diligently and thriftily manage home" was proclaimed to be as much a woman's duty as "to diligently and thriftily build the nation" (Croll, 1983).

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<sup>3</sup> The word "propaganda" is a literal translation of the Chinese phrase "xuanchuan". It means making known and mobilizing and carries no negative meanings in China

The ideology of equality was one of the attempts that the CPC had made to establish its new gender ideology. As the following statement of the Women's Federation in 1962 made clear:

In Chinese Communist literature, men and women are primarily seen in their likeness as workers rather than in their sexual and emotional unlikeness as human beings. Women, as much as men, are praised for their socialist zeal and heroic capacity for work and condemned for being socialist sluggards indifferent to production... With the nation-wide conversion of the co-operative into large-scale people's communes in 1958 and 1959, millions of regimented women were of course relieved of the odious task of preparing meals for their families. They were not only liberated from the kitchen, but thanks to the military mode of their new existence and provident service of the nurseries and kindergartens, they were to a great extent emancipated from their traditional servitude to husband and children as well. Storywriters reporting on the commune experiment now wrote with expected enthusiasm of their new freedom and much enhanced socialist utility... These stories would assert the superior zeal and dedication of the new women unquestioned supporters of the Communist cause, the women characters in the approved short stories have all endeavored to earn praise, to avoid reproach, to wrest a bare minimum of personal satisfaction from an impossible regimen of hard toil and emotional starvation. (Hsia, 1963)

During that time, posters, films and literature mass communicated the government's ideas about gender.

They are not conceived only as a didactic form or means of education but also as a reflection of socialist reality. While stories, plays and film depict the moral codes and social behaviors as they should be conducted, their audiences may also be treated to a more realistic picture of how they are conducted. They illustrate and reflect current social problems to do with the individual, the State and the expectations which surround and define economic and political and especially social relationships in China today. At the present time art forms embrace this double level of perception, the ideal and the real, the formal and informal. They are based on the experience of a wide range of sub-groups within Chinese society in a breadth of themes unknown in the years between the Cultural Revolution and the late 1970s. In literature, women feature in the majority of stories and plays, a study of which reveals the dominant social images of women and the expectations women have and are expected to have of themselves and of others. (Hsia, 1963)

Posters were the most important form of the Chinese government's propaganda in Mao's time. There were many billboards or posters in the city square or lining the city street, representing the spirit of emancipation from various areas of the society. People who grew up at time are very familiar with the typical "model woman", usually a machinist or a tractor driver looking down at them from billboards or walls. Women in propaganda posters were usually committed to her work, with a smiling face and rosy cheek. There were many famous phrases or slogans such as "women are a great revolutionary force," "the key to women's emancipation is entry into social production," at Mao's China. All of these reflected the main theme of that time and were all symbolic of the CPC's theories of emancipation and revolution.

Through the propaganda materials produced for national emulation campaigns that promoted models of the new society, the CPC provided normative standards of dress and appearance that explicitly linked clothing to location in the citizenry (Chen, 2001).

In such a background, there appeared for the first time many female workers in a certain area as well as female work models. Chen had a detailed description of them:

Tian Guiying, China's first female train conductor, clearly modeled the clothing of the industrial patriot. She wore a soft cloth cap, a casually belted Mao jacket (decorated with chrysanthemums in one instance), and baggy trousers. In each instance, the clothing of China's new women replicated that of the male industrial workers pictured in the vicinity. The rise to national fame of Liang Jun and Tian



Figure1: “Sexless” and “Shapeless” female comrades. *China Reconstructs*, March-April 1952. P. 23.

Guiying stressed the equality of men and women, as the CPC linked women’s emancipation to work and, in its most “advanced” form, industrial development. This can then be read as the erasure of gender difference and the equalization of class, as women such as Liang Jun and Tian Guiying embodied through dress and actions the dictum that “whatever men can do, women can do too. ( Chen, 2001).

Another famous female model at that time is Hao Jianxiu, who later became the one of the most important female figures in CPC’s central government in the 1980s:

Hao Jianxiu, a young woman spinner, attained national status as a model worker by developing new scientific methods for use in the nation’s spinning industry. As a result, she acquired a new uniform when formal recognition was bestowed upon

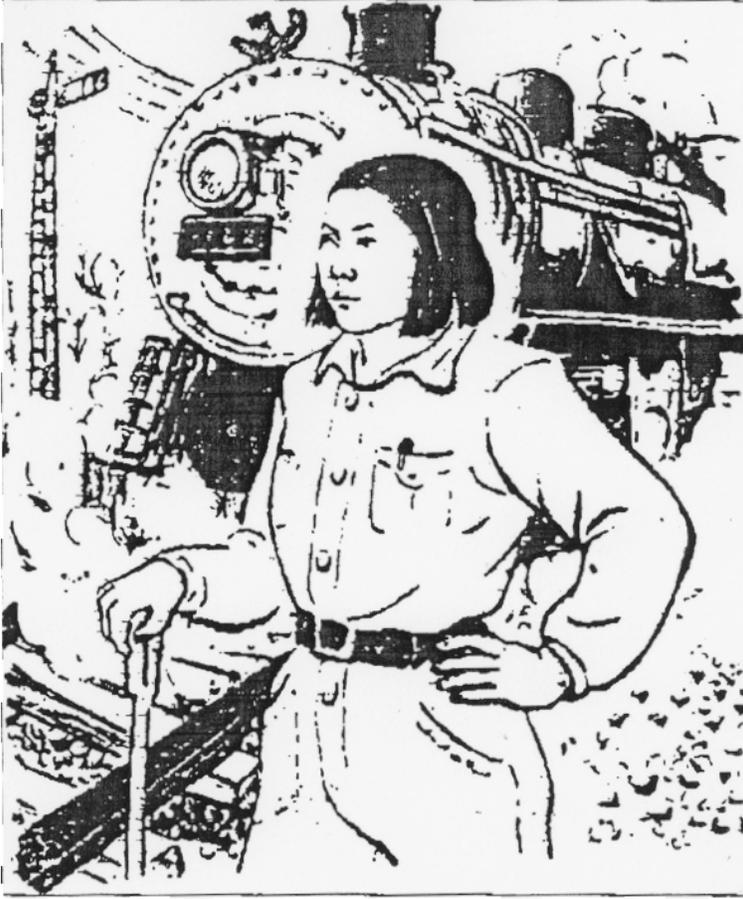


Figure 2: Tian Guiying, China's first female locomotive driver. *Xin Zhongguo Funu* (*New China's Women*). February 1956. p.1.

her for her exemplary work. In a pictorial representation of the story of Hao Jianxiu, she changed from her work clothes (a geometrically patterned cotton blouse under a white smock) into a belted Mao suit for attendance at a national model workers' convention. The storyline reached its climax at the moment Hao Jianxiu exchanged her smock, trousers, and blouse for a Mao suit; the text praised her role as a model of new China and her success in overturning attitudes of condescension to workers and women. Transformation of self and co-workers entailed promotion of Hao Jianxiu from feminine clothing and the particularized space of light industry to the purportedly universal realm of uniformity. Her new

clothes dramatically symbolized entrance into the Party and her elevated status as model worker whom all should strive to emulate. (Chen, 2001)

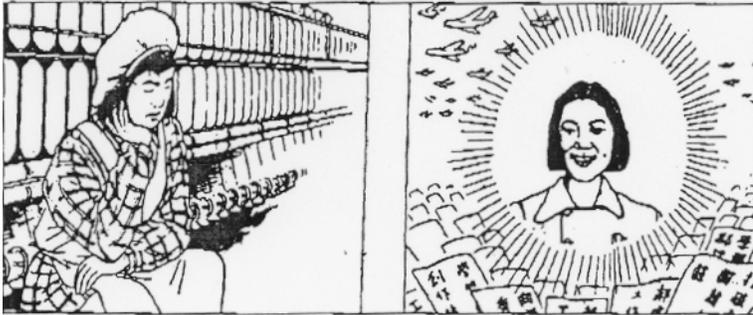


Figure 3: “ Study Hao Jianxiu.” Illustrations accompanying her story, published in *Xin Zhongguo Funu* (*New China’s Women*). 1 December 1951.

Hao Jianxiu later became the head of the factory in which she worked, the president of the municipal and the provincial Women Federation, the vice director of the State Development Planning Commission, and the vice president of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. From this we can see that selection of model workers assumed a prominent position in CPC campaigns for progress.

During the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976), traditional dress was categorized as one of the Four Olds: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. The red armband worn by Mao and the Red Guards, as well as a red book of Mao’s quotations, represented a critically important accessory. This accessory played as a political fashion accessible to all people regardless of occupation or Party membership at that time.

The back cover of the April 1961 edition of *Dazhong Dianying* (*Popular Movie*) nicely illustrated the role of accessories in altering the socio- political meaning of stereotypical peasant clothing. A young woman with bobbed hair, relaxed (but not smiling) mouth, and eyes focused in the distance stood proudly amidst a cotton

field with right arm extended as if in greeting. She wore navy blue trousers with a gray-blue top complemented by green piping along the small upright collar and toggled closures. The standard female peasant clothing acquired an entirely different look in this photograph, however. The woman also cinched her top at the waist with a thick brown leather belt, while a brown leather holster crossed over her chest on the left in more dramatic fashion than the green piping on the right. Finally, on her left arm she wore a red armband. Accessories transformed the typical peasant garb and rendered it closer to the ideal of the militaristic uniform. (Chen, 2001)

Opera or film was another kind of mass communication. The “Eight Model Operas” were developed under the direct command of Jiang Qing, Mao’s famous wife. Jiang Qing was the vice president of the Cultural Revolution Committee. However, her identity of the first lady made her the actually head of the Cultural Revolution<sup>4</sup>. She always dressed in “Mao green”, which symbolized force, violence and revolution during the Cultural Revolution. Once was an actress, Jiang Qing believed herself very talented in arts. Under her demand and direction, there appeared famous eight model operas one year after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, which became the only eight operas that had been watched by millions of Chinese during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. It included five modern Peking operas, two ballets, and one symphony: *Red Lanterns Shining*, *White Hair Woman*, *the Red Female Army*, *Harbors*, *Shajiabang*, *Took over Weihuishan by Wisdom*, *Attack Baihutuan out of Sudden*, and *Praise of Longjiang*. Among them, six had the leading character or co-leading character of females. They were

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<sup>4</sup> It is the CPC usually establish an ad hoc organization to direct campaigns to accentuate the importance of the campaign. A famous figure is usually appointed to the head of the organization to bring some prestige.

*Red Lanterns, White Hair Woman, the Red Female Army, Harbors, Shajiabang, and Praise of Longjiang.* The themes were the same: how Chinese women fight against the old system and enemy and how brave and fierce they were. For example, *the Red Female Army* told a story about how females oppressed by the old landlord got awaked and took up guns to fight against their enemy and got the victory. It went without saying that these female soldiers wore military green, which were also “Mao green”.



Figure 5: “Triumphs of Mao Tse-tung’s Thought in Literature and Art”, *China Reconstructs*, 1967 September, Page 9.

Since the dress of women often serves as an indicator of the society in which it has been developed and established, the propaganda materials in China at Mao’s time actually reflected the political climate and trend.

Propaganda materials - as a socialist form of advertising - showcased not only communist clothing but also a comprehensive image consonant with the politics and aesthetics of the period. The materials literally fashioned the multiple subjects of the Chinese national narrative. The CPC understood clothing and those who wore it in

relation to the national revolutionary project. The materialization of the human experience as reflected in the clothed body reinforced the proposition that body and material dress could not be separated. Rather, clothing and sartorial discourse were forces in the unstable process of making order in the new society (Chen, 2001).

In this respect, a focus on fashion benefits from Ban Wang's superb analysis of the aesthetic-political framework in communist China. Ban Wang argues that in communist China "politics does not borrow the garb of aesthetics to dress itself up but is itself fleshed out as a form of art and symbolic activity" (Wang, 1997). Chen continues discussing this argument and extended that the "fleshing out" of politics as the symbolic activity of nation building thus also requires analysis of the clothed body in the aesthetics of politics. "To become a subject of history, a maker of the socialist future, entailed learning how to dress appropriately for one's interpellation into the revolutionary picture" (Chen, 2001).

### **2.3.2 Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication was also very important in the CPC's propaganda. Much of China's countryside remained isolated from mass media. There was no television in China. Newspapers were seldom accessible to the majority of peasants. In many cases, rural Party cadres used public funds to subscribe to newspapers and journals but kept them as private property, no attempt being made to transmit the content of the press to villagers. In the meantime, mail delivery in much of the countryside remained a haphazard undertaking. The government also had continuous difficulty in maintaining the wired radio network. So whenever there was urgent need to inform the peasants of important national policies, a new

drive had to be launched to repair and restore wired radios in the villages, for example, movement to install wired radios in 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1973

(Liu, 1975)

China's political system is supplemented by the state administrative bureaucracy that has penetrated to the provinces, cities, counties, villages in the countryside and residential districts in cities. In addition to this, there are also a chain of mass organizations such as various kinds of associations, unions and youth leagues (Liu, 1981). All these organizations work together to carry out any decisions made by the Communist Party of China by meetings, notices and reviews.

The use of meeting is to stress on fact-to-face persuasion. Convening different forms of meetings is always important to the CPC's propaganda. As one propaganda handbook states it:

Mass meeting is a powerful and effective form of carrying out political work for our Party, such as rallies of worker and youth, demonstrations and parades....meetings of this type can mobilize masses comprehensively; they readily induce masses from all walks of life into the movement. (Liu, 1981)

There was a big field or ground with in practically every city or town for mass meetings.

An auditorium and a loud speaker were indispensable for every mass meeting.

The following was a famous example of a mass meeting related to women's dress. Wang Guangmei, the sixth and last wife of President Liu Shaoqi, wore a *qipao* when she accompanied her husband on a state visit to Indonesia in 1963. Three years later, she was forced to dress up in front of the Red Guard interrogators at Qinghua University (see the following picture).

Interrogator: We want you to put on the dress that you wore in Indonesia.

Wang Guangmei: That was summer . . . Chairman Mao has said that we must pay attention to climate and change clothing according to it.

Interrogator [amid laughter]: What Chairman Mao has said refers to the political climate.

According to your standpoint. Even though you are wearing a fur coat, you will also freeze to death. (Hinton, 1980)



Figure 6: Wang Guangmei was interrogated at Qinghua University in April, 1967

Propaganda team was one of CPC's unique and effective ways of interpersonal communication. During Mao's China, the ways that the propaganda teams worked were through art performances, mostly singing, dancing and role playing.

This unique art performance was originated from Jiang Qing and her famous "Eight Model Operas". It aimed to reflect Chairman Mao's thought in the form of art. The members of the propaganda teams of art in Cultural Revolution were the activists or volunteers that had been recruited to carry out the actual work of the campaign. The activists suspended their regular work in order to devote their time and energy to the

work. They went different towns, schools and villages to perform. What they wear was typical “Mao green”.

The communication results of the propaganda teams were huge. It aroused very active participation among the public and achieved what the CPC called “unity of mind”.

The dress and image of Chinese women in Mao’s time actually experienced several different phases. In the immediate post-Liberation times, model women’s clothing included cotton-printed tops with toggled closures on the right, white cotton shirts with center buttons and waist darts, and the stereotypical Mao jacket (Chen, 2001). From the 1950s to the 1960s, Women’s clothing was functional and limited in style. The most common colors were dark blue, gray or khaki. There was a range of jacket and shirt styles, primarily distinguished by the detailing of the collar and pocket. During the Cultural Revolution, many people wore military clothing to demonstrate their revolutionary allegiance. Many civilians wore patched garments out of necessity or political fervor. Western suits, ties and dresses were abandoned because of their so-called bourgeois feature.

Revolutionary ideology had been the main theme since the establishment of People’s Republic of China in 1949. Revolution usually means violence, physical labor and hard work, all being contradictory to any feminine characteristics. The original characters of women like beauty, tenderness and weakness were considered old-styled, feudal and bourgeois and blameful. Colorful clothes as well as make-up like lipstick, powder were laughed at and abandoned. Gender differentiation in dress almost could not be observed during that time. Women’s hair was bobbed as men. Their jackets were padded with a winter coat (*mian’ao*) but basically similar to the Mao Suit, the typical

clothes worn by men. Women's trousers were fastened at the side. Chinese women not only looked like men, wearing green, the symbolized color of revolution at that time, but also behaved and worked as men. Many of them competed to stand in the platform, speaking loudly and waving their fists. They were also an indispensable part of the Red Guards who were a powerful and destructive political force during the Cultural Revolution. Like male Red Guards, female Red Guards wore national-defence green army-style uniforms, red armbands and carried a book of Mao's quotations. The inspiration for the uniform came from Mao Zedong, who wore it in 1966 at the first rally of Red Guards in Tiananmen Square. They led a group of Red Guards to break into those bourgeois and counter-revolutionary people's houses and destroyed everything they thought was old and not revolutionary. Many hardworking young women were regarded as excellent models and rewarded with a silk banner and an honorable designation and desirably as "*tie gu niang*" (iron girls). Their heroism and masculinity were praised and desired by the people of the whole country.

Although the dress of women in Mao's time was simple, androgynous, and unfeminine, it still represented a mainstream of fashion at that time which encouraged new forms of social behavior:

The meaning of color, however, held various simultaneously circulating class-based associations that legitimated, delegitimated, and ordered subject positions through gender and class norms. At some times, color marked national progress, while at others it indicated bourgeois and revisionist thinking on the part of an individual. All of these interacted with specific understandings of the progressive potential of class struggle. (Chen, 2001)

Chen also believed that those who wore the uniform simultaneously demonstrated their membership in the proletariat and their status as vanguard elements of the revolutionary proletarian struggle. She claimed in her article that it is at this level that interest in diverse colorful fashion appeared, quite literally, to fade as one style acquired particularly acute social meaning. In conjunction with the plethora of propaganda materials presenting an “honorable and glorious” entrance into the Party as a reward for serving the people, the ideal to be approximated in dress and deed was clearly articulated for the masses, even though the great majority had only a faint hope of attaining this status (Chen, 2001).

Clothing in Mao’s lifetime represented a difference between the Chinese people and the rest of the world. For politically correct Chinese people, clothing at that time differentiated the socialist elect from the rest; for outsiders, it was the single most obvious feature about contemporary Chinese culture (Finnane, 1996). No matter how strange and anomalous it might be, the dress and image of Chinese women in Mao’s time reflected and represented the development as well as the choice of history during that specific time in that specific country.

## **2.4 Women in Contemporary China**

Along with Deng Xiaoping’s “open-door” and reform policy, Chinese economic reform has produced a profound and ongoing achievement since Deng came into power in 1976. Embracing the aphorisms “Poverty is not Socialism” and “To get rich is glorious,” Deng dismantled central state control over most production and pricing decisions, encouraged enterprise by allowing companies to keep profits they earned, and opened China to foreign investment for the first time since 1949 (Wood & Mooney 1997,

p32). In no other single area have the reforms had such significant impact upon the Chinese people than in their effect upon real income and consumption. During 1978-1983, real per capita consumption increased nearly 50 percent in urban areas. The urban gains exceeded the average rate of the PRC's first thirty years (Schlack 1989, p. 155). For the first time under the People's Republic of China, people began to realize that they could have the right to own their own property that poverty is a shame and wealth is a glory, that every one of them could have the right of becoming wealthy.

New economic phenomena appeared under that situation, as stated by Veblen: In the sequence of cultural evolution the emergence of a leisure class coincides with the beginning of ownership... Wherever the institution of private property is found, even in a slightly developed form, the economic process bears the character of a struggle between men for the possession of goods. It has been customary in economic theory... As soon as possession of property becomes the basis of popular esteem, it also becomes a requisite to that complacency which we call self-respect. In any community where goods are held in severalty it is necessary, in order to ensure his own peace of mind, that an individual should possess as large a portion of goods as others with whom he is accustomed to class himself; and it is extremely gratifying to possess something more than others. (Veblen, 1992, pp.33-38)

With the growth of economy and income, the Chinese have spent more money on consumer products including clothes than ever before. In 1994 the total sales of apparel amounted to 260.2 billion RMB. In 1996, the total sales of clothing jumped to 287.2 billion RMB. Among all of the sales, the private apparel factories and companies took up

the biggest amount. Most of them are located in coastal areas such as Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Haikou, Ningbo, Shanghai, Dalian, Qingdao, Xiamen, etc. This is because the coastal area is China's traditional location for its apparel industry. Furthermore, the open door policy was first applied in the coastal areas and the main Economic Development Zones.

In the report presented jointly by China Textile University and Harvard Center of Textile and Apparel Research, there is a detailed description of the development of ownership in Chinese apparel industry:

Before the 1950s, most of the China's garment factories were privately owned. Then, during the Campaign of Joint State-Private (from 1952 - 1956), those factories were converted into collective and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) ... As a result of the economic reforms and open policies initiated in 1978, the ownership structure of China's apparel industry has evolved into a co-existence of private, collective, rural township (RT), SOE and joint-venture enterprises (JVEs) ... RTs (pure RTs or JVEs formed from RTs) are the largest apparel producers in China on almost every dimension – the number of enterprises, the volume of product produced, and exports. The output volume of RTs comprised 76.44% and 91.21% of the national apparel output in 1992 and 1993, respectively. In 1996, RT output was estimated to be 80% of total apparel output. SOEs comprised the second largest number of apparel establishments ... The number of JVEs in the apparel industry grew rapidly in the early 1990s. There were 12,194 apparel JVEs in existence in 1995. In 1995, JVEs exported US\$7.68 billion apparel products, up 16.5% from 1994 of US\$6.59 billion. In 1995, JVE exports comprised 31.98% of China's total apparel exports, 4.7 points higher than the

previous year ...In 1992, China first allowed foreign retailers to compete in China. The pioneers were primarily name brands that provided licenses or franchises for specialty stores in China. These included Giordano (Hong Kong, 1992), Nike (U.S., 1992), Stefanell (France, June 1992), Esprit (U.S., December 28<sup>th</sup> 1992), Adidas (U.S., Jan. 23rd 1993), Mexx (Holland, 1993), Jeanswest (Hong Kong, May 1993), Liz Claiborne (U.S., April 8th 1994), and Benetton (Italy, October 1994). Also, some overseas retailers established department stores in China, including Printemps (France), Sincere (Hong Kong), Shuihing (Hong Kong) and Isetan (Japan). (1999)

Chinese cosmetic industry has been experienced rapid development as well:

At the end of 1996, there are 2679 cosmetics manufacturers who have license of producing cosmetics. There are 240,000 employees in the industry. In 1997, there are 25,000 brands of cosmetics products. In 1999 the total sales turnover is RMB 30 billion, increasing by 9.1% compared with the previous year's RMB 27.5 billion. The sales turnover in 1999 is 30 times as much as that in 1985. In 1999, the profit before tax is RMB 12.6 billion, within which the amount of profit is RMB 4.4 billion, increasing by 15.7% compared with that in 1998.

However, the ownership and the rate of marketing occupation of cosmetic industry are different from the apparel industry:

Most of the profit-makers in the market are foreign investment companies and state-owned large-size companies. Market is shared by several competitors. In 1998, 20% of manufacturers are foreign investment companies. These 703 companies hold 40% of whole market share. And P & G hold the largest market

share of 23% ... Due to the influence of international economy, the exportation of Chinese cosmetics product had decreased greatly in 1998. In 1999, the exported volume is 26,980 tons decreasing by 16% compared with the previous year and the exported value is USD 117 million in 1999. The importation has increased rapidly. In 1998 the total amount of importation is USD 33.525 million increasing by 34.2% compared with the previous year. In 1999 the total amount of importation is USD 40.5375 million with a total volume of 7509.5 tons. The import and export prices of cosmetics have increased in the past two years.

The Chinese advertising industry has been developing rapidly at the meantime. Figures from the market research company CTR show the Chinese advertising expenditure in 2004 hit more than 23 billion US dollars. The Top 5 sectors were cosmetics and toiletries, foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, the retail and services sector and real estate. The Cosmetics & Toiletries category spent a total of \$ 4.82 billion on advertising, an increase of 34 per cent compared with the same period in 2003. Among the top 10 brands of the cosmetics, 5 brands belonged to P&G. The highest-spending brand was Oil of Olay which spent about 566 million US dollars on advertising, a 160 per cent increase from 2003.

The economic reforms in China have been a particular benefaction to women. It has improved the employment capabilities as well as Chinese's women's condition in the labor force. Chinese urban women have acquired a big economic clout. The average annual income in China's urban centers soared 315% between 1990 and 2000 to 6,317 yuan (\$764), according to the China Statistical Yearbook. While Chinese officials don't break down income growth between sexes, women's slice of the pie has clearly grown.

The portion of the female work force in managerial positions rose to 6.1% in 2000 from 2.9% in 1990, while the portion of women employed in professional or technical jobs rose to 22.8% from 17.4%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (Prystay, 2002, p.11). Chinese women have now begun to earn power in the family unit. They are usually the major grocery decision buyers and have major financial responsibilities within the household. Just as other free market societies, women have the most potent consumption power, and their roles as financial controllers make them the prime target audience for fast moving consumer foods marketers.

With the overall economic development and the increase in economic status in society as well as the family, Chinese women now are seeing a rise in materialism and ego. And long starved of glitz and glamour, Chinese women began to have beauty and self-image. Women are more fashion-focused and there is also more fashion available to them. The selection of items has also increased dramatically. Shampoo was once an item which the Chinese did not choose. Now, one may choose from several different brands. Also, the quality has increased while the price has dropped. These things appear to be old hat to Western society, but in China, they are brand-new and revolutionary.

From the later part of the 1980s, there have been many changes in Chinese women's fashion. There began to appear various styles of clothes. Jeans have also begun to become popular. And these changes in fashion have been booming since the first part of 1990s. Urban Chinese woman have begun to wear various kinds of beautiful apparels, decent suits, short skirts, elegant styles of feminine bonnets etc. Most young urban Chinese females have a full closet of clothes, yet they feel the need to shop every week just to stay up to date on the latest trends, thinking they will be beautiful if dressed in the

latest fashion. They go shopping almost every weekend, accompanied by their peers with whom they make comments on their clothing and the fashion. As stated by Veblen, “the utility of consumption as an evidence of wealth is to be classed as a derivative growth” (Veblen, 1992, p.61).

Urban Chinese women are expressing themselves in a way their mothers could not dream of. A few years ago, women in China who wore makeup were considered daring. Now, sales of cosmetics are booming, and beauty companies from the U.S., France and Japan are trying to apply a foundation for future sales growth. Young Chinese women in a trendy knit top and jeans, with a mobile cell phone clipped to their belt, dripping with gold necklaces and bracelets, their mouths painted scarlet, crowd around a department-store cosmetics counter. And they wear fashionable spectacles, which are very small, square-shaped, and some times colorful though many of them have perfect vision. Luxury items are racking up record gains. Gold watches and jewelry are top sellers.

Chinese women have begun to consume and emulate. Conspicuous consumption of fashionable dressing is now a means of reputability to the women, as stated by Veblen:

Since the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific; and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit. (Veblen, 1992, p.64)

## **CHAPTER 3 : THEORY**

While Mao was declaring the establishment of the new born China and leading China as well as millions of Chinese women to experience the unprecedented revolution, a new research field - mass communication - was diverging from traditional research in sociology and psychology in Western countries. Now Chinese women of the twenty-first century and their dress styles take on extraordinary splendor, about the same as Western countries. A couple of theories developed in Western countries, such as media dependency theory, conspicuous consumption theory as well as findings on media effects on body image, probably can be used to explain or analyze women's dress behavior in Eastern China.

### **3.1 Media Dependency Theory**

Media dependency theory was originally proposed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976. Media dependency suggests that in today's society individuals have to rely on media information resources in order to attain their various goals. The more a person depends on having his or her needs gratified by media use, the more important will be the role that media play in that person's life and, therefore, the more influence those media will have on that person (Baran & Davis 2000, p.307). In addition to this, there is a high dependency on media for information in times of social upheaval or change (Baran & Davis 2000, p.308).

According to this theory, the relationships between individual goals and media content are central to understanding if and when media will affect individual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Therefore, the perception of media as a helpful source of goal

satisfaction was found to moderate the relationship between media use and media effects on personal judgments (Morton & Duck, 2001).

The basic propositions of media dependency theory can be brought together and summarized as follows: the potential for mass media messages to achieve a broad range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects will be increased when media systems serve many unique and central information functions. The media can help to develop certain attitudes and beliefs and create many different feelings such as fear, anxiety, and happiness. It can also promote behavior changes that result in an audience member doing something that they would not ordinarily do (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

Media dependency theory is based on uses and gratifications theory and ties into agenda setting theory. Uses and gratifications theory arose in the 1940s and underwent a revival in the 1970s and 1980s. It springs from a functionalist paradigm in the social sciences. Uses and gratification theory suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. This approach attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for individuals, groups, and society in general, presenting the use of media in terms of the gratification of social or psychological needs of the individual (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Providing an audience-centered perspective on the relation between audiences and the media, uses and gratification views the audience more active.

Different from uses and gratification theory, media dependency theory characterizes individual media use as goal directed. Audiences are thought to be motivated both by informational goals (for understanding and orientation) and goals of stress relief or play (Ball-Rokeach, 1985, 1998; Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984).

The assumption is that when individuals perceive media to be helpful for goal satisfaction, they should selectively expose themselves to media content and attend more to media messages, increasing the likelihood that media messages are processed and have effects on personal beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Ball-Rokeach et al., 1984). Thus, it is through this relationship between individual goals and media content that dependencies arise. Consistent with this theoretical framework, empirical tests have shown that perceptions of media utility, an indirect, psychological measure of dependency (Ball-Rokeach, 1998), are predictive of media exposure (Grant, Guthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991).

Dependency theory also pays some attention to the role of social contextual variables within the dependency framework. It tries to explain the role of media social change. It emphasizes the value of comparative communication investigations across social, political, economic, and cultural systems and subsystems (Rubin & Windahl, 1986). “Effects occur, not because all-powerful media or omnipotent sources will that occurrence, but because the media operate in a given way in a given social system to meet given audience’s wants and needs” (Baran & Davis 2000, p.308). This contextualized philosophy also features traditional concerns with the content of media messages and their effects on audiences. Therefore, research generated by this model tends to be more descriptive than explanatory or predictive (Baran & Davis, 2000, pp.308-309). Given its changing social and economic structure as well as the inherent dependency of the media and audiences on the larger social system, China constitutes an ideal site to test this model (Sun, Chang, Yu, 2001). Could it be used to explain Chinese women’s dress behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs in this constantly changing time? Could it

be used to guide media practitioners in China about what to produce and how to operate? These are interesting questions worth researching.

### **3.2 Conspicuous Consumption, Leisure, Fashion and Identity**

Posited one hundred years ago, Thorstein Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption still can be used to explain contemporary sociology issues.

Veblen (1992) first discusses 'pecuniary emulation' whereby those who do not belong to the leisured class emulate the acquisition of such material goods in the belief that they make the individual intrinsically richer in human identity. In his view the leisure rich are committed to the constant purchase and display of material goods to assert both their positions of power and their leisured lifestyles (Wearing & Wearing, 2000).

The basis on which good repute in any highly organized industrial community ultimately rests is pecuniary strength; and the means of showing pecuniary strength, and so of gaining or retaining a good name, are leisure and a conspicuous consumption of goods. (Veblen, 1992, p.70 )

Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption is based on the evolution of a leisure class whose members are not required to work but consume a surplus produced by those who do work. He uses 'conspicuous consumption' (1992) to refer to the purchase of goods for display as a means of asserting prestige and status. According to Veblen, conspicuous consumption increasingly influences people's choices of leisure commodities, not for their value but for their signification in terms of identity and status.

The possession of wealth confers honor; it is an invidious distinction. Nothing equally cogent can be said for the consumption of goods, or for any other

conceivable incentive to acquisition, and especially not for any incentive to the accumulation of wealth. (Veblen, 1992, p.35)

Veblen identifies two main ways in which an individual can display wealth: through extensive leisure activities and through lavish expenditure on consumption and services.

From the foregoing survey of the growth of conspicuous leisure and consumption, it appears that the utility of both alike for the purposes of reputability lies in the element of waste that is common to both. In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods. Both are methods of demonstrating the possession of wealth and the two are conventionally accepted as equivalents.

(Veblen, 1992, p.71)

Veblen argues that this search for status through consumption is never ending because what at one time may confer status may later be acquired by all and confer no status. Therefore, people must always try to acquire new consumer goods in order to distinguish themselves from others. For example, “dress must not only be conspicuously expensive and inconvenient, it must at the same time be up to date” (Veblen, 1992, p.122).

Veblen believes that the rule of the conspicuous waste of goods especially finds expression and is more universally practiced in dress than in any other consumption:

It is true of dress in even a higher degree than of most other items of consumption, that people will undergo a very considerable degree of privation in the comforts or the necessaries of life in order to afford what is considered a decent amount of wasteful consumption. . . And the commercial value of the goods used for

clothing in any modern community is made up to a much larger extent of the fashionableness, the reputability of the goods than of the mechanical service which they render in clothing the person of the wearer. The need of dress is eminently a “higher” or spiritual need... In the common run of cases the conscious motive of the wearer or purchaser of conspicuously wasteful apparel is the need of conforming to established usage, and of living up to the accredited standard of taste and reputability. (Veblen, 1992, p.119)

There are some other theorists such as Goffman, Kelly (1983; 1997) and Rojek (1998) who have also made strong links between leisure and personal identity. According to Goffman (1969), the props of leisure such as dress and equipment, are as aligned with how one presents one’s self to others in the authentication of identity, as are the uniforms and accoutrements of the workplace. For Kelly, leisure is a ‘social space in which there is openness for important new interactions and self definitions’ (Kelly, 1983, ix). Social self and personal self are related to the cultural symbols of the time in a dynamic interaction where there are possibilities for future identities as well as some consistency from the past (Kelly 1997, p. 413). Rojek (1998) argues that leisure is the representational field of symbols, rather than the purely material or experiential.

In the same vein, Simmel makes links between leisure, fashion and identity. He (1950) argues that being fashionable is a means by which the individual can exaggerate him or herself and thereby make an identity that is audible above the cacophony of life. Simmel (1978) analyzes the metropolitan life with its increase in the bombardment of the senses and the necessity to both protect one’s inner self and to find ways of expressing one’s individuality in the midst of mass consumption. In the pursuit of fashion and style

and its glamorous image, Simmel perceives the tension between differentiation and imitation, that is, the necessity to belong to one's social group while also expressing one's individuality (Wearing & Wearing, 2000). Therefore, the desire for a body that meets with peer approval and societal status is becoming of increasing importance (Parker et al., 1995).

Wearing and Wearing also argue that fashion such as clothes and styles are the key elements in the making of an individual sense of self:

The purchase of the 'coolest' style of make-up or the 'right brand' of sneakers represents an association with a peer group. To be ostracized from the peer group, to feel different, inferior, and unattractive or ultimately rejected can have critical effects on identity formation. This suggests that leisure choices ... are not always intrinsically motivated but determined by the influence of others, peers and the marketers of fashion. Fashion is often used to signal membership of a group through clothes, style, and personal belongings. It is an important component of one's identity and influences the way one is perceived and accepted (Wearing & Wearing, 2000).

What is in their mind when Chinese people begin to have their own wealth and property? What do they think when Chinese women buy various fashionable clothes and jewelry? It is probably very interesting and appropriate if we try to use this conspicuous consumption theory to explain the emulation and competition in Chinese women's clothes in the recent decade.

### 3.3 Media Effects on Body Image

Under the context that dress consumption is related to identity and status come the roles of media. Much research in mass communication area focusses on the media effects on body image especially in Western countries. Many of them focus on the effects of frequent exposure to messages and images that perpetuate a “thin-ideal” female stereotype and a dissatisfaction with one’s own body image (Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986; Stice, Schupack-Neuberg, Shaw, & Stein, 1994).

Women’s beauty and fashion magazines may be among the most influential media formats in perpetuating and reinforcing the sociocultural preference for thinness and in creating a sense of dissatisfaction with one’s body (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). Researchers who study eating-disordered cognitions and behaviors have suggested that the mass media, women’s magazines in particular, may play a role in triggering these practices (see, for example, Stice, Schupack-Neuberg, Shaw, & Stein, 1994; Hamilton & Waller, 1993; Shaw, 1995; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Duncan, 1994; Eskes, Duncan, & Miller, 1998). Specifically, it is believed that reading beauty and fashion magazines leads many young women to internalize and embrace the sociocultural “thin ideal” and, in turn, motivates them to attain it, sometimes through pathogenic practices.

A consequence of the use of the media for self-socialization is believed to be the cultivation of unrealistic standards of beauty and the development of eating disorders (Abramson & Valene, 1991; Collins, 1988; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Guillen & Barr, 1994; Hamilton & Waller, 1993; Levine & Smolak, 1996; Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Pinhas, Toner, Ali, Garfinkel, & Stuckless, 1999; Shaw, 1995; Stice et al., 1994).

This body of research also suggests that when women become dissatisfied with their inability to match the ideals presented in magazine photographs, stories, and advertisements, they begin to develop eating-disordered cognitions (Stice et al., 1994; Shaw, 1995; Irving, 1990). Harrison and Cantor (1997), for example, report statistically significant relationships between reading fashion magazines and “body dissatisfaction” as well as between reading health and fitness magazines and a “drive for thinness.” Shaw (1995) finds that adolescents who see images of thin fashion models are more likely to report higher levels of body dissatisfaction immediately after exposure than those who see non-fashion images. In addition to heightened body dissatisfaction, exposure to content and images depicting thinness may also lead to short-term reductions in self-esteem (Martin & Gentry, 1997; Irving, 1990), distortions in body-size estimation (Waller, Hamilton, & Shaw, 1992), and more depressed mood (Pinhas et al., 1999).

Several studies have analyzed a number of magazines targeted at adolescent females and have suggested that their content supports the perception that female happiness and success are tied to physical appearance, with ultra-thinness being the preferred state of health and beauty as well as the most important form of self-improvement (Silverstein, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986; Evans, Rutberg, Sather, & Turner, 1991; Guillen & Barr, 1994). A Korean study also finds that making upward comparisons with thin models while reading women’s and fashion magazines is a strong predictor of body image dissatisfaction and eating disturbance among Korean college female students. It is found that exposure to thin models in media magazine increased female students’ tendency to make upward comparisons. Taken together, these results supported the notion that thin images in magazine have effects on body image dissatisfaction (Miejeong,

2003). A goal of this focus, McCracken (1993) argues, is to contribute to a “consumption-based culture” in which the answer to all one’s problems can be found by changing one’s physical appearance by purchasing the products that appear in women’s magazines. By creating and then exacerbating insecurities about one’s body and one’s self in order to sell products, beauty and fashion magazines teach readers to look critically at their bodies and be ashamed of the parts that do not fit the established model (McCracken, 1993).

These theories, though mostly developed and applied in the West, are useful to explain Chinese people’s behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. For example, could reading women’s and fashion magazines cause body dissatisfaction among Chinese young women? Do they go on a diet or exercise to maintain their body shape as well? What kinds of factors finally determine Chinese women’s dress, fashion and appearance?

## CHAPTER 4 : METHODS

This is an inductive research rather than a theory testing research. Since little research on contemporary Chinese women's dress behavior has been conducted, it is not very applicable to conduct a massive or extensive quantitative research such as a survey. Therefore, the study tries to use an exploratory qualitative method to discuss and analyze the application of western mass communication in Eastern China.

I have used the in-depth interview method to conduct my research. Dress and behavior of women is a historical, social as well as private issue. It is a result of the intersection of social factors as well as personal choices. To help analyze the factors that influence the way of women's dress and behavior, elaborate data concerning respondents' opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences, and feelings are to be obtained. An in-depth interview is the most flexible means of obtaining information because the face-to-face situation lends itself easily to questioning in greater depth and detail. In addition to this, not much research on contemporary Chinese women's dress and behavior has been conducted previously. In-depth interviews can provide detailed background about the reasons why respondents give specific answers.

An in-depth interview also allows interviewers to form follow-up questions based on each respondent's answers. Chinese women are not as open as Western women. For example, many Chinese women would not admit that they sometimes admire or copy other's dress and behavior because that makes them appear as if they have no personality of their own. Because of the Eastern philosophy and ethic, they would not admit that sometimes their dress is to please, attract men or compete with other women. The in-depth interviewer can develop a rapport with the respondents and may be able to elicit

replies to sensitive questions that would have different answers or remain unanswered in a mail or telephone survey.

Finally, an in-depth interview allows a researcher to view behavior in a natural setting without the artificiality that sometimes surrounds experimental or survey research. Also, some information can be observed by the interviewer during the interview. For example, during this research, the interviewer can observe the respondents' dress and appearance while doing the interview.

#### **4.1 Sample**

Participants were selected by means of purposive and snowball sampling methods in Beijing. First, I contacted some of my friends who are mainly from the journalism area, telling them that I would like interview them for the research of Chinese women's dress and appearance. Then I asked them to recommend some other women to be my interviewees from different areas to diversify the sample. Through the women recommended by my journalist friends, I got some other recommendations of participants. The reason I did that is because women journalists are ones who have a good education as well as being observant of Chinese culture and society. Moreover, they are able to get to know many women from other areas due to the wide contact with other areas of their profession.

In choosing the participants, I tried to have them from different careers, ages and personalities. I finally got twenty women who satisfied my purpose of interview and actually interviewed 18 of them due to the fact that two of them were out of town. They range from ages 28 to 40, coming from different careers such as business, education, IT etc and having different titles in the places that they work such as CEO, general manager,

manager, sales representative, teacher, researcher etc. Among them, three are from websites, two are journalists, two are from the export trade area, two are from universities, two are from consultant or training companies, two are from an art exchange company, one is from an advertising company, one is from a publishing company, one is from an IT company, one is from a PR company, and one is a painter.

There was some diversity in socioeconomic status of the participants, but the majority of them are primarily middle-class and upper-middle-class women. Many are successful in their careers which mean they are executives or general managers. Five of them are a vice president or CEO or general manager. Five of them are middle executives such as managers. Some of them are not very successful yet, but are very ambitions and aggressive.

All of them are well-educated and have at least bachelor's degrees. Five of them have master degrees. Their ages range from 28-40, and their income range from 5,000 RMB to 20,000 RMB a month. Ages and income are two sensitive topics and might cause some discomfort among participants, thus influencing the interview. Therefore, individual specific or detailed age and income were not necessarily obtained. But an estimate of age and income could be got through observation as well as indirect answers to certain questions. For example, some participants sometimes would say "I've been with this company for six years since I graduated from college" and then I got the answer of when she graduated from college. Some other participants would answer "I spent 10,000RMB on clothes and cosmetics every year, which is around one-tenth of my annual income." Then I would know how much her annual income is. All of them are very open even though some are more active and some are a little reserved and quiet.

## **4.2 Interview**

The in-depth interview was conducted during my visit to China in summer 2004. Interview schedules consisted of open-ended questions related to personal appearance and body-related thoughts and behaviors and appearance. For example: What is the ideal image of women in your mind? What kind factors would influence the way you dress yourself? What do you think of Western women? It was a structured interview. Standardized questions were asked in a predetermined order, the interviewer gathered data by writing down answers. For example: questions of Chinese women's dress style and habit and expenses were asked in a very natural, chat-talk way. This led to conversations about what influences their style in dress. Detailed transcriptions and editing were necessary too. Data were coded and imputed into computer after it had been collected.

Interviews were conducted independently and at separate sessions. Four of them were interviewed at their offices. Four of them were interviewed at coffee shops. Three of them were interviewed during a meal, and seven of them were interviewed at the lobby of a plaza or a restaurant. Interviews ranged in length from 45 to 90 minutes with most interviews lasting about 60 minutes.

## **4.3 Data Input**

A key goal of this interpretive inquiry was to find out contemporary Chinese women's dress and appearance and the factors that help develop it. Thus, throughout the analysis, the researcher attempted to avoid imposing any priori opinions or understandings on the questions and instead allowed the participants' own understandings and opinions to emerge. Nonetheless, the unique personal characteristics that researchers

brought to the inquiry likely influenced the way that they interacted with participants and gave meaning and understanding to participants' narratives (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is important to acknowledge these characteristics. In addition to this, cultural characteristics should be taken into consideration as well. Interviews were conducted among Chinese women in the Chinese language. While the researcher inputted the interview data in English, she tried to translate as close to English as possible in terms the extent, tones etc.

The author herself is a Chinese female and a professional woman in her early 30s. She was a professional Chinese female before she came to study in the United States. Although she is not very fashionable, she does have many fashionable female friends and they often talk about dress and appearance. Also, she likes to watch television fashion shows, beauty shows and various women's magazines. She found it was an interesting thing how women perceive themselves and how they wish others to perceive them.

## CHAPTER 5 : RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this section, results of an analysis of Chinese contemporary women's dress and appearance interview data are presented. In addition, the influential factors about Chinese contemporary women's dress and appearance such as media, peers' dress and opinion are addressed as well. Finally, the influences of Western women's images on Chinese women's dress and appearance are discussed.

### 5.1 Chinese Contemporary Women's Dress and Appearance

In contemporary China, how do women dress and appear? What is the fashion of their dress? How much money do they spend on dress? How much time do they spend on dressing and making up in the morning? What do they think of themselves? Are they satisfied with themselves?

Among the respondents, 28% (n=5) are in their late 20s, 50% (n=9) are in their early 30s, and 22% (n=4) are in their early 40s. 22% of their incomes (n=4) are from \$18,160-\$24,213, 17% of their incomes (n=3) range from \$12,106-\$18,160, 17% of their incomes (n=3) ranges from \$9,685-\$12,106, and 44 % of their incomes (n=8) range from \$6053-\$9,685.

As to the time they spend on dress and appearance every morning, 33% of them (n=6) spend around 30 minutes, 33% of them (n=6) spend around 20 minutes. 22% of them (n=4) spend 40 minutes or 60 minutes, 11% of them (n=2) spend less than 20 minutes.

When it comes to the money spent on dress and appearance every year, 100% of them spend at least \$605 a year, 17% of them (n=3) spend \$4,843-\$6053 /year or more; 56% of them (n=10) spend \$1,210-\$3632.

Table 1: The time (in the morning before they go to work) and monetary expenses of Chinese women on dress and appearance.

Respondents	Age	Satisfaction level (%)	Time spent in the morning	Expense/year <sup>5</sup> \$	Income/year \$ <sup>6</sup>
1	40	80	5	726	12,106-18,160
2	40	95	10	605	9,685-121,065
3	31	90	40-60	726-1,210	7,264
4	30	90	20	1,210-1,452	9,685-121,065
5	29	80-90	20	1,210-2,421	121,065-18,160
6	30	90-95	30	726-969	7,264
7	40	90	30	4,843-6,053	18,160-24,213
8	29	80-90	15-20	1,816-2,421	7,264-9,685
9	30	85-90	30-40	1,816-2,421	9,685-12,106
10	29	95	50	6,053-12,106	18,160-24,213
11	32	80	20	605-1,210	7,264-9,685
12	30	80-90	20	2,421-3,631	18,160-24,213
13	27	90	40	1,210-2,421	7,264-9,685
14	30	90	30	605	7,264-9,685

<sup>5</sup> The expense was coded originally as in Chinese currency unit RMB. To make it easy to understand, the researcher transferred into U.S. \$ according to the currency exchange rate between China and U.S., which is 8.26 on June 8, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Bureaucracy of Statistic in Beijing, the average income of Beijing residents in 2003 was 1681\$ (13,883RMB).

(Table continued).

15	32	70	30	605	6,053-7,264
16	40	95-100	30	4,843-6,053	18,160-24,213
17	25	90	20	1,815-2,421	6,053-7,264
18	32	80	20-30	1,815-2,421	12,106-14,528

It is very interesting to note that most of the participants in this study are satisfied or very satisfied with their dress and appearance. 94% of them (n = 17) are 80 % or even more satisfied. Among them, three are 95 % satisfied, eight of them are 90 % satisfied; six of them are 80 % satisfied. Only one 6% (n=1) is not very satisfied (70 %) with her dress and appearance. In addition to this, almost every participant has her own thorough and unique thoughts on dress and appearance. 17% of them (n=3) emphasized that they wanted to show their unique personality in their dress and appearance<sup>7</sup>:

I want to appear graceful and gentle ... you know...I am a kind of quiet woman. I like light color and I wear skirts most of the time. And I have light make up, with small accessories such as silver necklaces and stud earrings. (R3, a manager in a website)

I have consulted with color experts. They categorize people's color as spring, summer, autumn and winter. By the way, the color specialists are very popular for women's appearance now days. One of my friends is a color specialist. She now has her own business. Since I am dark, she told me that my color was winter, which was supposed to

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<sup>7</sup> All conversations are in Chinese. I tried my best to translate the words, meaning and sense of the respondents. This often necessitated using English that capture the flavor of Chinese idiom and grammar.

be dark color. Therefore, most of my clothes are black and white. (R4, a vice president in an IT company)

I basically wear professional suits. But I will choose some other color small accessories such as brooches and scarves to make me active and different. For example, if I wear a black suit, I will put one blue flower brooch on the right front of a garment. (R7, the general manager of an advertising company)

I wear suits at work, but not very formal business suits. ...it's just a bit dull. I like leisure business suits. The workmanship must be very delicate. (R5, consultant in an Australia company)

When I was 20-something, I really tried to be very fashionable. But as I grow up, I begun to choose simple, plain and compact clothes. I want to be tasteful and classy. The image of an oriental intelligent woman is what I want to convey through my dress and appearance. For decorations such as necklace or rings, I do not like fake ones. I just wear pure gold or pure silver. (R14, an editor from the website of People Daily)

I design my own dress, which surely is different from everyone else. I have my own opinion and idea of what I should wear and appear. I prefer light color and I usually wear delicate make up, which can match with my self-designed graceful dress elegantly. (R9, a painter)

My dress style is different from others. I like to wear sports dress during work. I like to be active and vivacious. (R 6, a researcher in Beijing University)

I am much younger compared to people around me. And as a marketing representative, people would not trust you very much if you look very young and

not very experienced. Therefore, I try to appear older and more mature. I usually choose dark colored dress suits with delicate make up which would make people think I am a very experienced, professional woman. (R17, a marketing representative)

94% of the respondents (n=7) mentioned that they would like to appear confident, intelligent, effective and graceful at work, a kind of Western professional woman image. An image has been promoted primarily through televisions, magazines and newspapers since the 1990's. The only one left (R6) works at the economic research institution of Beijing University. When asked about the reason that she didn't emphasize professional style dress and appearance, she said that the environment of colleges is informal and casual. People can wear whatever they want and no one cares or pays attention as much as they do in the business environment.

## **5.2 Media Influences**

An important research objective of this paper is to find how contemporary Chinese women's dress and appearance develop and where they come from. All of the respondents agreed that various kinds of media such as television, women's and fashion magazines played an important role in their way of dressing and appearing. In the United States, magazine subscriptions are very popular among females. According to Arnett (1995), it is believed that the messages in these magazines are primarily used by readers in the identity development and gender socialization process. However, Chinese women usually buy rather than subscribe to magazines because the magazines are readily available on the street newsstand. All of the eighteen Chinese female respondents said that they read women's and fashion magazines regularly. Among them, 55 % (n=10) read

women's and fashion magazines frequently and these magazines had a very important influence on their dressing and appearance. 44% (n=8) read women's and fashion magazines often and these magazines have to a certain extent influenced their dress and appearance. In fact, all respondents mentioned women's and fashion magazines:

Reading women's and fashion magazines is one of my favorite habits. Many people admire that I'm good at dressing. Actually I learned that from reading magazines. I buy women's magazines such as *Ruili* and *ELLE* almost every month. (R3, manager in a website)

I enjoy reading women's magazines, especially after work. It's a way of learning as well as relaxing. Pictures are beautiful. Besides, there are some good articles that talk about beauty, cosmetics, sexy, inner beauty, confidence, relationship, and communications. (R18, a PR manager)

Articles and pictures in women and fashion magazines are very helpful in my purchase of clothes. You'll know how to pair and what is popular... (R14, an editor from the website of People Daily)

I even like to look at the pictures in advertising in women's and fashion magazines. I like the color and pictures. (R2, the assistant of the General Manager)

Although most of the respondents do like reading women's and fashion magazines, 28 % of them (n=5) did emphasize that they would not simply follow the magazine's suggestions. What they wanted from the magazine was just to get some information on what was going on about women issues such as clothes and lifestyles:

I'm not a fashionable person at all. That's those young girls' thing. Yet I still sometimes read women's and fashion magazines. If you work in a so-called new technological area, you have to be aware what is going on around you. (R1, the CEO of a website)

Reading women's magazines just gives me some ideas about my decision of what to buy. Most of the clothes don't fit me. (R6, a researcher in Economic Institution of Beijing University)

My work is really busy. I need to read fashion magazines to know what fashion is now. I don't want to be an antique. (R7, the general manager of an advertising company)

Now that most of them read women and fashion magazines, what are the most popular women and fashion magazines among the respondent?

There are different women and fashion magazines for women of different ages. For example, *Ruili* (瑞丽) (*Auspicious Beauty*) now has two different versions. One is called *Ruili—Beauty and Cosmetics* (瑞丽服饰美容) which is for women over thirty; another one is called *Ruili—Cute Vogue* (瑞丽可爱先锋) which is for women from twenty to twenty eight. But anyway, I think *Ruili* (瑞丽) (*Auspicious Beauty*) is the most popular one. Um ... *Fashion* (时尚) magazine is good too. (R3, manager in a website)

I like *Ruili* (瑞丽) (*Auspicious Beauty*) and *Fashion* (时尚). (R17, a marketing representative)

I agree that *Ruili* (瑞丽) (*Auspicious Beauty*) and *Fashion* (时尚) are the most popular women's and fashion magazines. (R18, a PR manager)

Among the eighteen respondents, 72 percent (n=13) mentioned that they often read *Fashion*, 61 percent (n=11) said that they often read *Ruili* (瑞丽)(*Auspicious Beauty*), 22 percent (n=4) mentioned *World Fashion* (世界时装), 17 percent (n=3) mentioned *Good Women* (好主妇), 5 percent (n=1) mentioned *Hope* (希望).

What are the differences between these two most popular magazines? And which influences women's dress and appearance more than the other? Some of the respondent mentioned the distinct differences between *Ruili* (瑞丽)(*Auspicious Beauty*) and *Fashion*(时尚), the most two popular women magazines:

*Ruili's* (瑞丽)(*Auspicious Beauty*) style is very oriental, their pictures are most from Japan or Korea, while *Fashion*(时尚) has more European and American pictures.

(R3, manager in a website)

My dress styles are similar to *Ruili*(瑞丽)(*Auspicious Beauty*), but for *Fashion*(时尚), most of my reading is for enjoying, not for getting an idea. (R4, a vice president in an IT company)

*Ruili's* (瑞丽)(*Auspicious Beauty*) pictures are mostly from Japan or South Korea, *Fashion's*(时尚) pictures are mostly from America and Europe. You can refer to *Ruili* (瑞丽)(*Auspicious Beauty*) for daily clothes and make up. But you can't refer to *fashion* (时尚) ... it is too far away from daily life. I read it just for entertainment. (R14, an editor from the website of People Daily).

*Ruili* (瑞丽)(*Auspicious Beauty*) has much influence on daily dress and appearance. *Fashion*(时尚) is from Western people. It does not fit us. (R18, a PR manager)

When asked about their usage of television, 28% (n=5) said they like to watch fashion shows very much. 28% (n=5) also mentioned that stars' dress, hosts' dress, women's picture and image in advertising on the television could help them with their dress and appearance.

I like watching fashion shows on television... especially in leisure time. The models are so beautiful. (R2, the assistant of the General Manager in a website)

I like watching cosmetics commercials in television . . . It is a way to see other beautiful women. Also I can get to know the latest make up products. (R3, manager in a website)

Television can teach you a lot as well. From the show, you can know the latest hair style, and clothes style. (R18, a PR manager)

The dress of celebrities on the screen such as movie stars, singers, or hosts dress can tell you a lot too. (R13, a teacher in a University)

Beside magazines and televisions, 11% (n=2) of the respondents also mentioned that they often read some newspapers with fashion editions to get some idea of dress and appearance.

The media's emphasis on appearance has been studied by many Western researchers. It is believed to lead many young women to internalize unrealistic and unattainable physical standards of beauty and to develop high levels of dissatisfaction with their own bodies (Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Levine & Smolak, 1996; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Silverstein, et al., 1986; Stice, et al., 1994). They also teach readers to fantasize about the creation of an ideal or perfect self (Hermes, 1995). "Readers of women's magazines," Ferguson (1983) writes, "are presented with examples of

superwomen, an endless procession of successful, beautiful, and inspirational role models to envy or emulate” ( p. 9). What do Chinese women feel when they are exposed to the ideal women images from magazine or television? Do they have the same body dissatisfaction?

I used to be very unsatisfied with my body. But I am satisfied now (after going on a diet). I admire somewhat the women images on different kinds of media, but not that much. (R1, the CEO of a website)

I am not dissatisfied with my body. I appreciate the beautiful women images on the media. But I am not really jealous of them. (R2, the assistant of the General Manager in a website)

Ehh... I am not really satisfied or dissatisfied with my body. But I admire them a little (to women on the media). (R6, a researcher in Economic Institution of Beijing University)

I am too thin... I am not satisfied with my body. I admire those beautiful girls on the media very much. The more I watch, the more I admire them. And the more I am dissatisfied with my body. (R15, an editor in a publishing company)

Yeah...I am not satisfied with my body and I admire them (the beautiful women images on the media). The more I watch, the more I am not satisfied with myself. (R18, a PR manager)

There is an old saying in China that women make themselves pretty for those who love them (mainly men). The respondents were asked what they think of this proverb and whom they want to make themselves pretty. The answers to this question are very interesting:

It is outdated now. Women have a wide stage to present themselves. They are not men's dolls any more. I make myself pretty not just for men, but also for my true self and for the whole society. (R1, the CEO of a website)

Sure I want to make myself pretty for those who love me. But mostly I want to do it for my self. I think it is a respect to my self and to others (R6, a researcher in Economic Institution of Beijing University)

Nowadays people want to be pretty not just to please men. This is well known. But I would say... somehow... if I know some men especially some excellent men in a certain situation, I probably want make myself more beautiful. (R18, a PR manager)

I don't think so. Did you notice that women sometimes try more to make themselves pretty in some occasions where the attendances are all women? (R3, manager in a website)

R3's answer brought us to another point in terms of women's dress and appearance: the influences of peers and the environment.

### **5.3 Peers Influences and Other Influences**

Besides the media's influences, the respondents also provided other sources through which contemporary Chinese women's dress and appearance originate.

Veblen states that one must be guided by the code of proprieties in dress in order to avoid the mortification that comes of unfavorable notice and comment, though that motive in itself counts for a great deal (Veblen, 1992, p.119). His statement was demonstrated by the respondents' answer. Many respondents said peers such as colleagues or friends were also one of the sources to their dress and appearance. 33% of

them (n= 6) admitted that peers' opinion, dress style and influences played an important role in their choice of dress and appearance. 50% of them (n=9) believed that peers' influence played certain roles in their choices.

The dress of people around me is a reference to me too. Colleagues and friends' influences are very direct and big. (R1, the CEO of a website)

I often talk with colleagues and friends, who like to read magazines or watch television fashion shows as well. I would say "cool" to them if I like their dress. Sometimes we evaluate each other's dress and appearance together. That is very important to me. (R3, manager in a website)

My friends and colleagues around me have many influences on my dress and appearance as well. I have a good friend who is a specialist on color. I followed her suggestion that my color is orange and green. I like to share and discuss about dress and appearance with those colleagues who are good at dressing during work break. We often get ideas from each other. (R2, the assistant of the General Manager in a website)

I don't like to be too striking. But I don't want to be inferior to others neither. So Sometimes I just choose the most worn dress style but in a better quality. (R5, consultant in an Australia company)

I went into an art high school and now I am also a part-time graduate student in the Central Conservatory of Music. Most of my classmates like to make themselves pretty by dressing or making up. We often talk about this a lot, such as who bought a dress recently, and make our own evaluations on that. You will be

very proud and feel good about yourself if others admire and appreciate your dress and appearance. (R13, a teacher in a University)

Sometimes I observe other women around me or even on the street... to know what is acceptable in dress. (R15, an editor in a publishing company)

In describing their dress and appearance style, 44% of them (n = 8) believed that it depended on different kinds of situations and environments. For example, they would dress in a professional way but dress less informal and more casual when resting at home:

I can only wear business leisure in office. I have some business suit, but never wear that in office. I am an editor in the edition of law. My work is about dealing with laws, regulations of the government. I need to appear more professional with a demeanor of authority during work, especially when I am discussing or giving instructions to my subordinates. I wouldn't wear fancy clothes like bright colors and skirts to emphasize my gender as a female during work. But as a female boss, I have always been trying to be more considerate and often think about others. I emphasize my female gender in this aspect. (R11, a journalist)

Actually in contemporary urban China, dress, appearance are closely related to occupation. Many occupations such as front desk secretary, public relations have certain requirements in height, weight, eyesight and even appearance to women. It is known that many Chinese women spend a lot on clothes, cosmetics and even plastic surgeries to apply for a job. Many women wear heavy makeup when visiting a job fair or attending a face-to-face interview even they don't wear makeup at all during daily life.

Tradition and environmental influences are very important in Chinese women's dress and appearance as well:

Sometimes I want to be a little bit more revealing. But I dare not. Our tradition does not encourage that. It is more open now, young girls probably can. But we are in early 30s. People will judge you on your dress and appearance. (R14, an editor from the website of People Daily)

I like a particular brand of dress and cosmetics. I also have my own dress designer. My biggest concern for dress is that I should wear appropriate attire in different situations. I can not stand people who wear casual dress when they are at a very formal and superb situation. Of course I wear make up, but not very much. (R10, the general manager of a training company)

When I was young, I remembered that my mom always dressed pretty and clear. As I grow up, the environment is always playing an important role in affecting my dress and appearance. I have two identities: sometimes a teacher in a university, sometimes a student. I would definitely dress different in these two situations. While I am a student, I am alive and kicking, with sometimes halter-necked vest and fancy skirts... sometimes shorts or drop-waisted jeans... kind of effortlessly chic. While I am a teacher, I will dress a little bit formal. I would not dress very exposed because China has a saying: “a teacher is the model of students,” I don’t want to appear giddy-brained in front of my students. (R13, a university teacher as well as a graduate student in the Central Conservatory of Music)

I am now the assistant of the General Manager in a newspaper website, but I used to be a correspondent in this newspaper. I dressed differently when I was a correspondent then when I was the assistant of the General Manager. I used to dress more casual. Now I am very formal and professional in my dress and

appearance. However, I choose light and bright color though many professional women like dark colors. I believe that bright colors can make you joyful during work. Orange and green are my colors. (R2, the assistant of the General Manager)

In particular, respondents expressed that they wanted to “dress beautifully”, “feel confident about their appearance” and “look attractive and fashionable” in contexts that were perceived as involving a high visibility of the physical self and/or a high potential for appearance evaluation by others (for example, attending a party, wedding, or class reunion).

I would dress up in a special event such as attending a club, or class reunion.

People in that situation usually judge others’ dressing and appearance a lot. I want to show that I am the most beautiful one. [I am] very slim, I would wear an intricately seamed dress that could highlight my slender curves. (R3, manager in a website)

There are many special events in our social lives such as a party (something imitating Western countries) where many people all dress up. Many people even began to wear special evening dress or Chinese traditional *qipao*. I surely don’t want to appear inferior to them. I have custom-made dresses for these special events. (R5, a consultant in an Australia company)

You can get influences and references almost every where, not just media. If other people wear a dress worth 1,000RMB in an occasion, you wouldn’t wear a 100 RMB one from a store market. By the way, I like those special events. The beautiful make up and dresses make me feel good about myself. And I enjoy the high evaluations from others, too. (R18, a PR manager)

The participants' responses told us that there are different kinds of standard of beauty and attractiveness among Chinese women. First, there is a beauty in relation to the standard of media when they talk about enjoying looking at women's pictures on the magazines. Second, many of them talk about that they also want to show their attractiveness among peers. For example, they want to "look attractive and fashionable" in environments such as party or class reunion. Third, attractive to the opposite sex is also one of their concerns. Chinese old saying "women make up for men who like them" can still be reflected among modern Chinese women's mind. Finally, beauty and attractiveness is also related to occupation to many Chinese women. Many of the respondents expressed their concerns of dressing and appearance during work. The results also show that the standards of pretty and attractiveness from media and peers are more important than the standards of the opposite sex – men.

Are Chinese women really so indifferent to being attractive to men? Do they really feel that way? Or they just do not want to tell the truth? What would be the reasons that they do not pay much attention to men's standard of beauty? What would be the reasons if they do not tell the truth? The researcher in this study just reported what she was told by the respondents. However, the above questions are also worth further research.

#### **5.4 The Influences of Western Women's Images**

When asked how they think about Western women's dress and appearance, many of the respondents think they are beautiful. 94% of them (n=17) expressed their admiration of Western women. Among the 17 people, 15 of them thought that Western

women were very confident and independent, less inhibited, which was seldom seen from a Chinese woman.

They are so beautiful, attractive, free and independent. I admire them. (R10, the general manager of a training company)

R11 made a vivid description to compare magazine pictures of Chinese women and Western women:

Western women hold their heads high, looking straight into the camera, with a lot of confidence. Chinese women always hang their heads down, daring not look at you directly. (R11, a journalist)

They look very sexy, which used to be a negative in Chinese culture. However, being sexy has now begun to be a positive compliment to women in big cities, including women like us. Western women are very good at expressing themselves through dress and appearance. (R5, consultant in an Australia company)

I like watching Western movies such as *Gone with the wind*, *Titanic*, *Peal Harbor*. The impressions I got from them are very good. The women characters of these movies are brave and independent. (R18, a PR manager)

For Western women, I like them and admire them very much because they are less bundled. We Chinese women have so many things to take care of and balance. (R17, a marketing representative)

94% of the respondents (n=17) agreed Western women had a positive influence on them. But most of them thought that this influence was primarily mental and spiritual. The only one who didn't speak explicitly about if she liked Western women was the CEO of a website who had almost 20 years' experience as a journalist (R1):

I used to think that the Western women were always very positive and open-minded because of the impressions on magazines, TV shows and Western movies. As China is becoming more and more open, I get to know many Western women in real life because of my profession of a journalist. I just found that every one was different. Some of them were really genuine, but some of them were not as positive and open-minded as portrayed by the media. I feel the media play an important role in beautifying and shaping the Western women image. (R1, the CEO of a website)

However, 28% of them (n=5) did mention that there were some influences from Western women in Chinese women's dress and appearance. R8 pointed out that dyed hair and curled hair were the influences from Western women. R14 believed that the fact that Chinese women's dress was more revealing could also be contributed to the influence of Western women's dress. R18 said that the enhanced eyelashes are more and more popular in China also because of the influence of Western women's appearance.

Two of the most important thing Chinese women admire Western women are their big round eyes and long eyelashes. (R18, a PR manager)

Chinese women's dresses are affected by Hong Kong, Hong Kong women's dresses are affected by Japan and Japanese women's dresses are affected by Europe and America. (R10, the general manager of a training company)

Chinese women's dresses are very much affected by Japan or Korea. (R17, a marketing representative)

At the same time, all the participants did not believe that Western-style dress fit Chinese women. R4, R5 and R18 are Chinese so-called "haigui"( turtle), which means

that they used to study overseas and then came back to work in China. Their observations are quite interesting:

Western women have different figures, Chinese women are not as plump as Western women. (R4, a vice president in an IT company, once studied at British)

Western women always wear little clothes. Chinese women are not as strong as Western women, they cannot wear such little dress except in the summer, and even it is indoor. In addition to this, our skins are quite different. Chinese women's skins are more exquisite, Western women's skins are rougher. I and many of my friends would be allergic to Western face powder or other cosmetics.

(R5, consultant in an Australia company, once studied at Australia)

We have a different culture. For example, when I was in the United States, I found that Western women wear heavy make up in everyday life, even staying at home. But Chinese women would not do that. They wear delicate make up even at work. Most American college girls wear make up at school, Chinese college girls seldom wear make up during class time. They only do that when they attend a party or some other special occasions. (R18, a PR manager, once studied at the United States)

Other respondents also made some comments on the differences between Chinese women and Western women:

I like Western women very much. Actually I admire them. They look so active and attractive. But I think that's because of their very advanced entertainment culture and fashion industry. China's whole situation is different from Western countries. Its entertainment and fashion industry is far more behind them too.

Even though I like their style, I would not copy them completely. (R6, a researcher in the Economic Institution of Beijing University)

The outside appearances between Western women and Chinese women are different from each other, I don't think there are much influence on Chinese women's outside appearance from Western women. But there is a lot influence from Western women on Chinese women's self seeking and pursuit. Myself is one of them. (R2, the assistant of the General Manager in a website)

R3 also talked about the influence of Chinese dress in Western country:

Chinese national dress is admired even by Western countries. Remember that in the 73rd Annual Academy Awards, Zhang Ziyi, the most popular Chinese movie star in the Western world wore a white beaded halter back, deep V-front Chinese *qipao* gown? The artistry of the East will never lose its beauty and attractiveness. (R3, manager in a website)

Finally, R5's thinking was to a certain extent a conclusion:

Now there is a tendency of diversity among Chinese women's dress. Some women began to get more ideas from Western women through magazines, televisions and movies and try to imitate them. Some will still keep Eastern or Chinese characteristics. Many are somewhere in between. It is a combining result of Chinese social, economical and cultural development. (R5, consultant in an Australia company)

## **CHAPTER 6 : DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The goal of this study was to examine, via personal interviews, the factors that influence contemporary Chinese women's dress and appearance. Several different theories of media influence and interplay were relevant, most typically studied in the western context. The first was media dependency theory, and I will discuss its applicability in the first section of the chapter. Then I will survey the different variances associated or derived from the results. Finally, I will speculate on the future direction of the development of Chinese dress and appearance.

Since little research has been conducted on mass communication in China, especially on the effects of mass media, the results of this study offer several implications. They can promote our understanding of the effects and the role of media in Chinese large social system as well.

### **6.1 Chinese Women's Media Usage**

Firstly, the results show that media, especially women's and fashion media such as magazines and television shows, play an important role in Chinese women's dress and appearance. Chinese women use media to know what fashion and style is going on around them as well as learn how to choose clothes. Media dependency theory can also be applied to China in the 1990s. Moreover, interviews result also show that, as in Western countries, there is a close relationship between women and fashion media such as magazines and televisions and their dissatisfaction of body image. In addition, media from Western societies such as Europe, the United States or Japan attract and influence more Chinese women than those with images of Chinese native women.

Media dependency theory characterizes individual media usage as goal directed. Audiences are thought to be motivated both by informational goals (for understanding and orientation) and goals of stress relief or play (Ball-Rokeach, 1985, 1998; Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984). The media usage of Chinese women in dress and appearance does show their dependency on media in information, entertainment, and parasocial relationships. However, Chinese women's media usage in dress and appearance can also reflect some application of uses and gratifications theory, which is the base of media dependency theory. It holds that users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. Among the respondents, some women's usage of media for getting to know what is going on around them shows that they choose different kinds of media to achieve their certain gratifications. This usage also provides some foundation for agenda setting of media, which holds that the media (mainly the news media) are not always successful at telling us what to think, but they are quite successful at telling us what to think about.

One of the limitations of the dependency theory is that it is difficult to empirically verify and measure. Despite its importance and theoretical potential, there has been little empirical examination of the dependency theory. Therefore, the meaning and power of dependency are unclear. Besides, in many cases people turn to viewing the media as a result of habit rather than a dependency. Therefore, even though we can come to the conclusion that there is a media dependency among Chinese women's dress and appearance, we don't exactly know how much or to what extent is the dependency.

## 6.2 The Westernization of Chinese Women

According to media dependency theory, there is a high dependency on media for information in an urban industrial society, which increases significantly in times of social upheaval or change. From the 1980s to now, China has been experiencing social upheaval and change since Deng Xiaoping's open and reform policy. But when Chinese women began to have the freedom to choose whatever they like, they did not even know what was supposed to be good or what was supposed to be fashion. Media became one of the main sources through which they could get an idea about what is fashion.

Political and social changes brought along the process of Westernization:

There (China) exists a new, all pervasive phenomenon, which is best described as the 'progressive Westernization of China.' The portrayal of Western lifestyle imagery is omnipresent, on public billboards, magazines, television and life-sized photographs. Western festivals like Christmas have become widespread and are being celebrated with increasing enthusiasm to the point where Christmas carols occasionally form an integral part of shopping mall music repertoire throughout the year. (Hegmann, 2005)

The Westernization brought along many social and economical changes to China:

The country is not free, but it is freer...The Westernization is moving at warp speed. Urban China today has bowling alleys, coffee bars, cyber cafes and hundreds of American fast-food outlets, with even New York delicatessens on the way. McDonald's has 200 restaurants in 17 cities, and is opening at least one new franchise a week, good news for the middle-class Chinese couples who now routinely overindulge their only child. Most foreign companies must have a

Chinese partner, which is complicated and expensive. But the change is staggering. In 1979, there were 100 foreign-owned enterprises in China; today there are 280,000 (Alter, 1998).

Although the media area is still considered as the ideology area and is controlled and supervised by the propaganda department of the CPC, there are much freedoms as well as marketing space for Chinese media than before. Media which focus on women's fashion, dress and appearance are even less relevant to politics and thus have less restriction and censor in their content. Under this condition, those media naturally turn their eyes much more on Western countries in terms of content, where an advanced fashion and media industry already have existed for a long time.

Will these various facets of Westernization in the long run lead to fundamental changes of time-honored Chinese traditional lifestyle? Will Chinese women's dress, fashion and appearance be totally westernized under such a social condition? What kind of dependency Chinese women will have toward media in the future?

Dependency theory lacks power in explaining long-term effects. The respondents' answers demonstrated that Chinese women are not totally influenced or changed by the Western women's images that are presented in the pictures or articles of Chinese media. Moreover, Chinese women are still going to carry their own cultural and national characteristics in the process of the Westernization. At the same time, a research article "*Refashioning womanhood in 1990s Taiwan*" that has written by Chang Jui-shan shows a similar tendency in Taiwan. Chang did an analysis of the Taiwanese edition of *Cosmopolitan* magazine to examine how globalism and localism were harmoniously intermeshed in constructing modern womanhood in 1990s Taiwan (Chang, 2004). He

suggests that Taiwanese edition of *Cosmopolitan* (*Kemengbodan*) serves to resolve a tension felt by modern women in Taiwan by weaving global and local values together into a tapestry of “modern womanhood” that can dwell within, and yet extend, the local culture. He concluded not only that contemporary women in Taiwan can be “constructed” as “modern” while remaining “Chinese” but also that such construction achieves a successful and harmonious combination:

Women’s and fashion magazines filter, mix, and match content in ways that satisfy their readership while also remaining within Chinese cultural parameters. The editors thus select certain Chinese and Western values, identified here, and fail in their efforts to filter out certain other Chinese and Western values, despite their preselection of market-appropriate topics regarding modern womanhood . . . In addition, though the overall feel of the magazine may give readers an impression of multiple values; one may nevertheless find an overall tone that emphasizes some values as fundamental. (Chang, 2004)

There are still a lot of similarities between the mainland of China and Taiwan despite of the political system and geography characteristics. Both of them have a strong Chinese ethical tradition. Both women in the mainland of China and Taiwan are experiencing rapid social change under globalization. The tendency of the direction of women’s dress from these two sides both show that Chinese women will not be totally changed into Western fashion and Western women’s image.

Media dependency emphasizes the value of comparative communication investigations across social, political, economic, and cultural systems and subsystems (Rubin & Windahl, 1986). “Effects occur, not because all-powerful media or omnipotent

sources will that occurrence, but because the media operate in a given way in a given social system to meet given audience wants and needs.”(Baran & Davis K, 2000, pp.307-308). Therefore, individual’s needs are not always strictly personal but may be shaped by the culture or by various social conditions. These outside factors also have influence on what and how media can be used and on the availability of other non-media alternatives. The more alternatives an individual has for gratifying needs, the less dependent he or she will become on any single medium.

Ball-Rokeach held that mass and interpersonal communications are fundamentally linked (Ball-Rokeach, 1998). Given particular structures of societal and media systems, individuals seek personal and mediated channels or messages to gratify their needs, motives, and desires. “Dependency may result when an individual ritualistically uses communication channels or instrumentally seeks out certain communication messages” (Rubin & Windahl, 1986). Dependency on a specific medium follows from the perceived lack of available functional alternatives and restricted motives for media use. Rubin and Windahl argued that societal members should become more dependent on available communication channels if access to functional alternatives is limited. The more functional alternatives there are for an individual, the lesser the dependency on and influence of a specific medium. Therefore, interpersonal networks also play an important role in shaping dependency relationships between individuals and media. Peer’s dressing and appearance style, the requirement of specific situation, the tradition and the culture of whole society can not be ignored either.

China is a country with its unique characteristics. It is an old country which has a history of 5,000 years as well as a rich national culture. One aspect of this long,

feudalistic history requires that women should not pay much attention to themselves, sacrificing all for family, and motherland. From 1949 to 1970, the ideologies and policies of the People's Republic of China made some big changes on the image as well as status of women. It is believed that women could be as strong as a man and could, as the famous saying went, "hold up half of the sky." The original characters of women like beauty, tenderness and thinness were not promoted at Mao's China: but women were still expected to not care about themselves.

During the past two decades, socioeconomic reforms and changes have provided many Chinese women with increased freedom to select jobs, dress, appearance and media. But from a larger social system view, China is still at the transitional time. Many influences of the long-accumulated national culture cannot be shifted overnight and still play an important part in people's life. These influences from their different kinds of group commitment such as family and relatives, neighborhood, classes, colleagues, friends serve as functional alternatives in many occasions that affect Chinese women's fashion, dress and appearance.

Magazines with women images from Japan and Korea have a higher influence than Europe and America also can serve as a complement to this. Selective exposure theory, which is also a subsidiary theory of limited effects, tells us that people have a tendency to expose themselves to or attend to media messages that they feel are in accord with their already-held attitudes and interests (Baran & Davis, 2000, p139). Compared to Europe and the United States, Japan and Korea are much close to Chinese women in distances, appearances and ethics.

Consciously or unconsciously, they (people) avoid communications of opposite hue. In the event of their being nevertheless exposed to unsympathetic material, they often seem not perceive it, or to recast and interpret it to fit their existing views, or to forget it more readily than they forget sympathetic material. (Klapper, 1960, p.19)

### **6.3 The Development of Chinese Media in the Future**

From a macroscopic, societal perspective, if more and more people become dependent on media, then the overall influence of media will rise and media's role in society will become more central. Thus, there should be a direct relationship between the amount of overall dependency and the degree of media influence or centrality at any given point in time (Baran & Davis, 2000, p.307). In this way, media surely will play a more and more important role in a whole society in China and cause many questions to be thought about and answered: What will be the media's responsibility when the media in China get much more freedom? How to realize the media's function reasonably in terms of education, information and entertainment? Dependency theory didn't address the issue of the perception of credibility which is a very important aspect if people began to be dependent on the media to form and develop their opinions, beliefs and behaviors. How to increase media's credibility in the future especially when Internet becomes the most important channel for people to get information? One of our respondents pointed out when asked about Western women's image that the media just show the good aspect of Western women and Western life. Chinese women thus have not further channel to get to know the whole aspect. How to make the media more objective and more balanced? What kind of agenda setting should Chinese media apply to create or increase the

public's awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media? All of these questions could be used to guide and help media supervisors and media practitioners in China about what to produce and how to operate. But as some researchers state, the application of this model to the Chinese setting by no means implies the conceptual equivalence of the two media systems, and it does not suggest the functional equivalence of the role the media may play in the respective societies. Rather, it is precisely the more complicated tripartite interrelation among the society, mass media, and audiences in China that offers an excellent opportunity for a systematic determination of the goodness of fit between the theory and reality (Sun, Chang, Yu, 2001).

In my own case, before I was going to leave Beijing for America, there was a popular TV show named *Jiqing Ranshao de Suiyue* (*The Old time of Passion*) playing on several TV stations at the same time. It recounted the era of the 1950s-1970s during which people were fascinated about revolution as well as the sincere emotions between people. It prompted a wave of nostalgia in many viewers. But I know that the answer of Chinese women would be: "NO." Females who have undergone the baptism of modernization are clearly aware that they can no longer return to their former state.

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## APPENDIX A : THE LIST OF RESPONDENTS

1. R1, the CEO of a website. She wears a black pullover and looks very intelligent and capable.
2. R2, the assistant of the General Manager in a website. She wears a bright-colored dress: yellow blouse and green skirt and looks very fresh.
3. R3, a manager in a website. She wears a very pretty light purple shirt and a white skirt with a very delicate make up. She is pretty and elegant.
4. R4, a vice president in an IT company. She once studied at British. She wears a black dress with white flowers and looks very pretty.
5. R5, consultant in an Australia company. She once studied at Australia. The way she dresses, acts and talks are all in good tastes.
6. R6, a researcher in Economic Institution of Beijing University. She wears a sports T-shirt and looks very active.
7. R7, the general manager of an advertising company. She wears a business suit. She appears very capable and experienced.
8. R8, a manager from an export company. She is gentle and quiet.
9. R9, a painter. She wears a long sleeved, self-designed blouse and is very elegant.
10. R10, the general manager of a training company. She is a little bit plump. A tailored professional suit makes her very energetic. She is very straightforward and candid.
11. R11, a senior journalist. She looks much younger than her actual age of 33.
12. R12, an owner of an art gallery. She wears a one-piece dress, very beautiful and graceful.

13. R13, a teacher in a University. She is also a part-time graduate student in the Central Conservatory of Music. She is very modern and fashionable.
14. R14, an editor from the website of the People Daily. She wears blue shirt and white skirt and looks very elegant and graceful.
15. R15, an editor in a publishing company. She is very slim. She wears a pink dress, but seems a little unconfident about herself.
16. R16, the General Manager of an art exchange company. She is a woman in her 40s. She looks very active.
17. R17, a marketing representative. She is a young girl in her 20s. But she looks older than her age.
18. R18, a PR manager of an American company in the Beijing Office. She is very smart and stylish.

## APPENDIX B : INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 . How do you feel about yourself? What is your desired self-image? Do you have some admired Chinese women in your mind? Who are they? Why?
- 2 . How do you present yourself in dress and appearance? What kinds of dress do you like the most? Do you use make-up everyday?
- 3 . How do you value your dress and appearance?
- 4 . Approximately how much money do you spend on your dress and appearance each year?
- 5 . Approximately how long do you dress and/or make up yourself everyday before going to work?
- 6 . What are those factors which influence your dress and appearance style? What kind of roles do mass media play such as televisions, women's and fashion magazines, and newspapers?
- 7 . What are you favorite women's and fashion magazines? Which one has bigger influence than others on your dress? Why?
- 8 . Are you more concerned about your body after reading a woman magazine? Is it that the more you read, the more you are not satisfied with your body image?
- 9 . Did you go on a diet or exercises to maintain your body?
- 10 .       There is a Chinese saying that "women dress for those who love them (men)", what do you think of it? Who do you dress for? Why?

11 .        What do you think of the images of the Western women on different media? Do they have any influence on your dress and appearance?

## **VITA**

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