


Missionary Girls' Schools Yearbooks in Republican China: Navigating Youth, Gender and
Nation, 1917 - 1948

By
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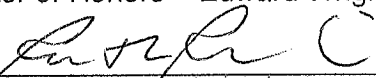
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Abstract

This thesis examines the yearbooks of two missionary girls' secondary schools in Shanghai, the McTyeire School and St. Mary's Hall, from 1917 to 1948. In response to the increasing Chinese nationalism, the female students from the two schools, who were mostly daughters from well-to-do elite Chinese families, started to publish annual yearbooks to record their thoughts and activities. This research investigates the advertisements, essays, fictional writings, and pictures in the yearbooks from both schools to analyze gendered self-expression among the female students during this period. Although the female students faced societal pressure to conform to women's proper roles, they navigated divergent pressures emanating from nationalism, tradition, and idealized, allegedly modern, womanhood, and asserted their own ideals of independence and self-awareness in the space of the yearbooks.

Introduction

On the morning of May 7th 1919, twenty thousand Chinese students in Shanghai went on strike and marched across the city in support of the student protest in Beijing that happened three days earlier. Shortly before then, news came from abroad that the Versailles Peace Conference had denied China's demand to restore the sovereignty over Shandong Province from Germany, and instead reassigned this territory to Japan. The shocking news from Paris proved an affront to the rising nationalism in China. On May 4th 1919, about 5000 students in Beijing gathered in the center of the city, demanding the government to “defend the sovereignty” and “punish the quisling.”¹ The incident on May 4th exemplified the ongoing struggles for the emerging modern China, and opened up an era of changes later known as the May Fourth Movement.



Figure 1 May 1919, President of the Student Association, Qingtang Yu, led students of St Mary's Hall to support May Fourth Movement

movement. Among these students, a group of young girls stood out. Dressed in school uniform with nicely styled hair, they were holding banners of their “Student Association” for the protest

Although the government soon suppressed the protests in Beijing, the nationalist sentiment fueling the movement spread throughout the country, motivating students in Shanghai to take action as well. Within a month after May 4th, students in Shanghai were busy protesting against the government, hosting memorial services for imprisoned activists and fundraising for the

¹ Kemei Chen, *Education History of Modern Shanghai* (Shanghai: Shanghai Century Press Group, 2003): 301.

while talking in fluent English with their female American faculty.² These girls were students from two renowned missionary girls' schools in Shanghai, St. Mary's Hall and the McTyeire School.³

The presence of these female students in the protests of the May Fourth Movement entailed as much historical significance as the movement. As young women of early twentieth century, not only were they able to get education in school but they could also demonstrate their political views in public. As Chinese students, they went to the most prestigious bilingual schools where the majority of teachers and administrators were American missionaries. As missionary-educated potential Christians, they were protesting in favor of Chinese sovereignty and advocating saving the nation. They were “female students” and ostensibly model “new women” who were no longer limited to domesticity. They were young citizens who aspired to share the responsibility of creating a modern China. As the faces of the emerging Chinese modernity, they were also immersed in western institutions. The May Fourth Movement protest became their first crucial moment to respond to their different identities and manifest their version of modernity. This thesis focuses on these girls' projection of an evolving modern self through school yearbooks that were first created in 1917 during the May Fourth Movement and continued until 1948, three years before the end of the schools.

To understand the significance of these missionary girls' schools students, it is necessary to look at the context of the May Fourth Movement. In short, the May Fourth Era was a time when western ideals rushed in and clashed with Chinese Confucianism. It was also a nationalistic movement that China felt the threat of imperialist subjugation during the previous half a century, and that Chinese elites felt obligated to “strengthen and modernize China” following western

² Yongchu Xu and Jinyu Chen, *St. Mary's Hall 圣玛丽女校* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2014): 115.

³ Jinyu Chen, *McTyeire School(1892-1952) 中西女中* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2016.): 127; Yongchu Xu and Jinyu Chen, *St. Mary's Hall 圣玛丽女校* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2014): 116-118.

pioneers in areas such as women's emancipation.⁴ The aforementioned protesting female students demonstrated Chinese nationalism that reached its first peak in the May Fourth Era and continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The cause of May Fourth nationalism can be dated way back to the last century. In the late 19th century, China was still in its last dynasty, the Qing dynasty, living in the illusion that it was the most superior state that had no need to connect to other countries.⁵ The "China-centered" arrogance soon brought about consequences that threatened the sovereignty of the Empire. Since the First Opium War, the Qing government was pressured to sign a series of treaties, from Treaty of Nanking in 1842 to the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, and many amendments. The treaties not only required that the Qing government to pay huge amount of reparations to the beneficiary countries like France, Britain and Japan etc., but also demanded Qing to open up multiple port cities, such as Shanghai, for business and for missionary activities.

After a series of fiascos at the turn of twentieth century, the Chinese elites realized the strength of western countries. As more and more foreigners, including missionaries, rushed in after the opening of port cities, new ideals from the West such as science, democracy, human rights and feminism became available to the elites. They believed that it was these ideologies that made the West strong and thus were eager to adopt the models from the West in an attempt to make China equally modern.

At the same time, however, the Chinese also felt an increasing sense of crisis that they would lose their country to Western powers, with the presence of foreigners and foreign interests in Chinese soil. The fear of national subjugation brought about a sign in nationalism that became

⁴ Ka-che Yip, *Religion, Nationalism, and Chinese Students: the Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927*, (Bellingham, Washington: Western Washington Uni, 1980): 2.

⁵ Aimin Ji, *Construction of Nation-State: Research on Chinese Nationalism Trend in the First Half of Twentieth Century* (Beijing, China: Social Science Academics Press, 2013): 50.

more and more powerful in China. After years of revolution, when elites heard the news from the Versailles conference, they were deeply frustrated about the Republic's weak government, which motivated them even more to strive for "national salvation."⁶

In the efforts to modernize China, education became an important venue to catch up. Since the Self-Strengthening Movement in 1860, officials have made efforts to build new public schools to teach science subjects like physics and chemistry, or send children abroad to learn the technology. After Sun Yat-Sen led a series of uprisings that brought about the 1911 Revolution and established Republic of China and the Nationalist Government in 1912, the emerging Chinese elites initiated more schools. Of course, the earliest Chinese public schools only admitted boys, as it was still Chinese traditional value that ideal women were not suppose to have education but to stay at home and fulfill domestic duties. As an old Chinese saying goes, "with no talent came female virtue."⁷ Women were not all uneducated, but education was very limited to daughters of well-to-do families. Even though there were no public schools for girls before the twentieth century, wealthier families usually hired tutors to teach their daughters in their homes. The wealthy girls would learn how to read or write so that they could assist their future husbands. The purpose of their education was to become a better wife and marry well. The majority of girls from poorer families that could not afford private tutors did even have those opportunities.

However, at the turn of 20th century, women's education also came to the attention to the male elites and intellectuals. On one hand, Chinese elites attributed the cause of China's weakness to the low status of Chinese women. In her book, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, Historian Gail Hershatter explains what the elites thought of as the Woman Question

⁶ Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 2.

⁷ 女子无才便是德。

during the May Fourth Era. The elites argued that in comparison to western women, Chinese women only stayed at home and were uneducated. Chinese women only consumed but never produced, and thus half of Chinese population was not contributing in its economy. Educating Chinese women was the solution to the problem. However, Gail Hershatter remarks that although the number of girls' schools built by Chinese elites and intellectuals skyrocketed in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the public girls' schools mainly aimed to educate good mothers for the nation's male citizens.⁸

When Chinese elites attempted to build schools for girls, they referred to the model of girls' schools, such as St. Mary's Hall and McTyeire School, that missionaries had established after the opening of port cities, even though they were previously skeptical about missionary girls schools. Missionaries who founded St. Mary's Hall and McTyeire School all came in during the opening up of port cities and settled down in international concessions after 1840s. The Episcopal Church of the United States opened its first missionary girls' school, Emma Jones School, in Shanghai in 1851. At first, the school was not well accepted. Even if the school offered free meals and accommodations as an incentive for enrollment, families would only send their daughters if they were too poor to feed them. The first class of Emma Jones School only had 8 students who paid no tuitions at all and had to close down due to low enrollment.⁹

In 1861, the Episcopal Church opened a second Bridgman Memorial School. The two schools later merged into St. Mary's Hall in 1881. A while later, the Methodist Church and Bishop McTyeire supported missionaries Andrew Allen and Laura Haygood to open the McTyeire School in Shanghai in 1892. By this time, missionary girls schools were no longer regarded skeptical but instead were seen as pioneers for educating the New Woman. Therefore,

⁸ Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007): 84 - 85.

⁹ Xu, *St Mary's Hall (1881 - 1952)*, 23.

when a Chinese intellectual, Jing Yuanshan, established the first Chinese Girls' School in Shanghai in 1899, he intensively consulted the advice of the co-founder of McTyeire School Allen and hired Allen's daughter as a teacher in his school.¹⁰ Missionary girls' schools became a point of interest convergence for the missionaries and Chinese elites. This connection made possible the previously mentioned female students' participation in the May Fourth protest.



Figure 2 Map of Shanghai. Areas marked with S were locations of St. Mary's Hall. Areas with M are locations of McTyeire School. *The Changing Face of Women's Education in China: A Critical History of St. Mary's Hall, McTyeire School and Shanghai No.3 Girls' Middle School*. Zürich: LIT, 2017.appendix v.

Since May Fourth, gender has become the center of the state-making process in modern China. Educated women were constantly faced with the demands of Chinese nationalism,

¹⁰ Xiaohong Xia, *Wanqing Funü yu Jindai Zhongguo [Late Qing Females and Early Modern China]*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open Page Publishing Co., Ltd., 2011): 41.

although the demands were often shifting and sometimes conflicting. These conflicts play a part in shaping the experiences of missionary girls' school students, which are the subjects of this thesis. Previous studies have investigated the shifting gender expectations in China. In his book, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-century China*, Paul Bailey maps out the changing gender discourses in the twentieth century.¹¹ He contends that although the discourses of the "Woman Question" opened up liberal discussion of gender equality, women's education in public schools reflected the elites' conservative expectations for Chinese women. Zheng Wang emphasizes the "new subjectivity" that was created for the "New Woman" during the May Fourth.¹² Essentially, the new liberal discourses propelled women to project themselves as independent, even though the social reality put restrictions on them. Bailey also observes that after the Northern Expedition in 1927, the New Life Movement, starting 1934, reinforced the conservative expectations for female domesticity.¹³ Federica Ferlanti explains the changing women's roles in the New Life Movement from the 1930s to 1940s. While the rhetoric for "virtuous wives and good mothers" continued, the New Life Movement mobilized women to participate in society during the Second Sino-Japanese War.¹⁴ Besides the shifting gender expectations, studies have also shown challenges in nationalism. Ka-Che Yip details the anti-Christian student movement caused by increasing anti-western imperialism in Chinese nationalism during the May Fourth.¹⁵ Aimin Ji explains the Chinese nationalism continued as anti-imperialism but shifted its focus towards Japan before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.¹⁶

¹¹ Paul Bailey, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-century China* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): 49-53.

¹² Zheng Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 50.

¹³ Bailey, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-century China*, 79.

¹⁴ Federica Ferlanti, "The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934-1938." *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 5 (2010): 961-1000. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40926538>.

¹⁵ Ka-che Yip, *Religion, nationalism, and Chinese Students*, 1-5.

¹⁶ Ji, *Construction of Nation-State*, 88-100.

Together, the changing norms of gender ideals and nationalism demands gave the girls who studied in the missionary girls' schools mixed messages. Only female students in these schools could tell whose purpose had successfully shaped their identities. It is worthwhile to ask that, since the interests of educating girls conform in certain aspects but were essentially at odds with each other, which version of ideal woman would the female students take on? How did the female students understand womanhood? What would they imagine themselves to be like? This thesis aims to answer these questions by investigating the yearbooks of St. Mary's Hall and McTyeire School from 1917 to 1948.

Previous studies tend to overlook to the distinct voices of the female students that came of age in missionary girls schools. Research on Chinese modern education history focuses mostly on the development of schools that only admitted boys.¹⁷ Studies that look at women's education often discuss the missionary girls school development in the first half of twentieth century in the same category as other private and public Chinese-found girls' schools. This approach overlooks the fact that missionary schools were able to use curriculum that was independent from government standards until late 1930s. Research on missionary education tends to focus on the development of institutions, rather than the students. Furthermore, the official history of the two schools introduces the development of two entities but only glorifies the achievements of their alumni.¹⁸ A recent history of both schools by Xiaoyan Liu provided an alternative record of the missionary school female students, but does not investigate the content of yearbooks.¹⁹ This thesis aims to fill in the gap by investigating the unique voices expressed in the yearbooks.

¹⁷ Chen, *Education History*.

¹⁸ See Xu and Jinyu Chen, *St. Mary's Hall and Chen, McTyeire School(1892-1952)*.

¹⁹ Xiaoyan Liu, *The Changing Face of Women's Education in China: A Critical History of St. Mary's Hall, McTyeire School and Shanghai No.3 Girls' Middle School*, (Zürich: LIT, 2017).

The yearbooks from the two schools were creations under the influence of the nationalism during the May Fourth Movement. They were student-run annual publications that aimed to record the memories and experiences of students, as well as to “show students’ work to the world.”²⁰ Yearbooks from St Mary’s Hall were named *Phoenix*, meaning that the girls from St Mary’s hall would be as strong and graceful as the legendary bird. Yearbooks of McTyeire School were called *McTyeirean*, naming after the Bishop McTyeire who supported the establishment of the school. The yearbooks started with advertisements from local companies to promote their services or products. They collected a variety of materials that students created, including essays, short novels, translations, poems, letters from alumni, records of student clubs, photos of graduating seniors and graduating class history.

Though often regarded as trivial, yearbooks have a significant value in studying the thoughts of a group of people, in particular the youth who do not produce more official publications like newspapers. Yearbooks not only “reflect and record the culture” of one school, but also “play an explicit role in shaping the student’s experiences and culture.”²¹ As “a means of communication,” yearbooks from the two missionary girls’ schools can reveal how ideal female gender roles shaped students’ self-identification as well as how they constructed a culture for certain female ideals for themselves.²²

This thesis tries to describe the evolution of a constructed gendered imagination among the female students by looking into various facets of these yearbooks. Through the advertisements, I gauge the messages about ideal womanhood that were available to female students. When these students wrote short fictional stories, they often use female figures as their

²⁰ Yang, Ruiqing 杨瑞卿, “Foreword 发刊词,” *Phoenix*, 1919, 1-2.

²¹ Amy Lueck, “Classbook Sense”: Genre and Girls’ School Yearbooks in the Early-Twentieth-Century American High School,” *College English*, Vol 79, 381 – 406.

²² Melissa Caudill, “Yearbooks as a Genre: A Case Study,” *All Theses*, 2007, Paper 281.

main character. Thus through an analysis of their writing, I unveil their understandings of Chinese women's situation. The advertisement and works of literature constitute a complicated message of what Chinese women were like and were supposed to be like. This message was an important part of their world of thinking. I also look at the club activities that students recorded in the yearbooks. The clubs gave them a "stage" upon which to act as if they are actually saving the nation and to make a public display of their version of modernized femininity and Chinese nationalism.

To better demonstrate the simultaneous evolution of both gender discourses and Chinese nationalism, this thesis follows a chronological order. Chapter 1 focuses on the first decade of yearbook publications from 1917 to 1926. This time period gives birth to student publications such as *Phoenix* of St Mary's Hall and *McTyeirean* of the McTyeire School. The May Fourth opened up a discussion on gender equality and inspired the students to seek self-sufficiency and created the school culture that continued to motivate future generations of students. At the same time, Chinese nationalism viewed Christianity as a threat, but the girls made use of their missionary education to help them measure up to the ideals of a New Woman set forth by May Fourth.

Chapter 2 explores the influence of the changing gender ideals in the second decade from 1927 to 1936 after the Northern Expedition and before the Second Sino-Japanese War. The anti-Japanese movement took center in Chinese nationalism. At the same time, the Nanjing Nationalist Government tightened up its control over the country. The rhetoric around female education switched from self-sufficiency to domesticity. However, the female students still managed to maintain their pursuit of independence.

Chapter 3 analyzes the final decade of yearbook publications from 1937 to 1948. The outbreak of Second Sino Japanese War in 1937 largely interrupted the education in missionary girls' schools as well as the discussion on gender. However, as the tragic consequences became more visible in the areas where the schools were, the female students were motivated to help the public. Once again, they projected themselves as equal citizens as their male counterpart and tried to contribute in the national salvation tasks.

These chapters collectively make the argument that the female students were not passive recipients of the ideal womanhood that was set out for them in different time periods. Instead, the elite girls tried to navigate different demands and asserted their own ideals of independence and self-awareness. Though under societal pressure to conform to women's role, the girls used the yearbooks as a space to present themselves to be their own version of ideal modern self.

Girls from St. Mary's Hall and the McTyeire School, which are the subjects of this thesis, later became some of the most prominent and successful female figures in Chinese history. Some became leading experts of various fields and one of the firsts for women at the time. From McTyeire School Class of 1910, Shunzhen Yan was the first female banker in China. Xiuling Cheng from the McTyeire School Class of 1920 was the first female lawyer and the first female Chinese Ambassador in the United Nations.²³ Qingtang Yu, the President of St. Mary's Hall Student Association in 1919, became the head of the National Education Bureau in People's Republic of China. Zheng Xue, St. Mary's Hall Class of 1926, was the principal of the McTyeire School in 1936. Ailing Zhang, who graduated from St. Mary's Hall in 1937, was the most celebrated female writer in China in the twentieth Century. Other graduates played important roles in politics. Song Qing-Ling, a graduate from the McTyeire School, was appointed the honorary Chair of the Women's Association of PRC. Her husband Sun Yat-Sen was the leader of

²³ Chen, *McTyeire School (1892-1952)*: 164.

the 1911 Revolution that overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established the Republic of China. Her younger sister Song Mei-Ling, who was the leader of the Women's Guidance Council in the 1930s, married another political leader Chiang Kai-Shek, who led the Nanking Nationalist Government in 1927.²⁴ The experiences in St. Mary's Hall and the McTyeire School no doubt had a significant impact on these prominent alumni and their classmates, but few studies have dedicated the attention to their youth when their self-conceptions began to develop and their prospects for life started to take shape. This thesis will give the attention to the youth of these soon-to-be important females.

This thesis, however, can provide limited insight on Chinese women's experiences in the twentieth century. Because the yearbooks started in 1917 and ended in 1948, the argument only extends within the time frame. Events before and after these years are excluded from the study. The thesis also exclusively focuses on the perspectives of the most elite women who could afford to attend missionary schools and even study overseas in the twentieth century. Their social class gave them options to navigate and negotiate between the existing ideals to pursue an alternative modernity. Their experiences were not representative of all Chinese women in the twentieth century. However, the in depth investigation of these women still reveals the important dynamics of young girls in the twentieth century.

Like many other studies of gender, this project touches upon a variety of subjects. It is a study of a particular construction of feminism, education and nationalism in the context of the first half of twentieth century China. With the use of yearbooks, it also borders the realm of literary analysis. Ultimately, this project provides a close look at the long-term effect of education on women's self-fashioning and explores the aspects of social influences during this process.

²⁴ Xu and Jinyu Chen, *St. Mary's Hall*: 15, 166.

Chapter One: New Women, New Student, 1917 – 1926

In 1917, an alumna of the Shanghai McTyeire School, Von Pau Sze, joined the yearbook board as the English department editor in chief for the inaugural issue of the school's bilingual annual publication, the *McTyeirean*. In the Foreword, she set out an ambitious vision for the new school tradition: "The *McTyeirean* asks for a place in the growing family of school magazines in China ... that are influencing the thought and action of our country ... it has hopes and purposes... to fit ourselves for making contributions that can be best fulfilled by making an effort toward self-expression." Von Pau Sze and the rest of the student body championed the start of the yearbook tradition. On one hand, the yearbooks served to showcase their "life and thought" and "maintain the alumni connection." On the other hand, the process of publication also signified that they were "able to serve" and "break through the ordinary professions of teaching and home-making" for traditional Chinese women.¹

Two years later, the St. Mary's Hall followed the trend of school magazines and started its own yearbook, the *Phoenix*. Like students from the McTyeire School, editors of the *Phoenix* also envisioned the yearbook to represent the students' efforts to challenge traditional Chinese gender norms and their determination to be ideal new women. In addition, the editors also expressed a sense of school pride. One of the editors, Huicong Ni, wrote in the preface that, although there have been many great women in all walks of life in the past, "historians rarely wrote about women's history unless to emphasize female virtues."² Another editor, Ruiqing Yang, co-founder of the *Phoenix*, expressed similar critiques on the historical silence of Chinese women. For an institution that "gave girls the opportunity to go to school and educated women to

¹ Vong, Pau Sze, "Foreword," *McTyeirean*, 1917.

² Ni, Huicong 倪徽琮, "Preface 序," *Phoenix*, 1919, 3-4.

shoulder the responsibility for their country for forty years” but “nothing was yet recorded,” Ruiqing Yang believed that the yearbook “would be a record and a place to show students’ work to the world.”³

It was no coincidence that the two schools started their publications during the 1910s and the editors felt duty-bound to shoulder the responsibility to voice the girls’ views. In fact, the creation of student publications was a distinctive example of a new youth activism, motivated by the ideals from the May Fourth Movement.⁴ Growing up in the mist of western influence and fervent Chinese nationalism, the female students of missionary schools saw themselves at the center of the nationalist movement.

To begin with, as seen in the actual protest on May 4th in 1919, young students were among the most passionate about taking up the revolutionary tasks in the process of modernizing and strengthening the country. Furthermore, young students were most sensitive to new ideals and were willing to put these ideals in practice. Although the prospect of joining a revolution was different for young men and young women, the missionary-school girls believed they should shoulder some responsibilities in the nationalist movement because women’s emancipation was one of the major issues in the discourse of intellectuals and elites.

The intellectuals and elites put a lot of emphasis on women’s emancipation as part of the agenda to create a modern China. After looking up to the western countries, Chinese elites believed that the backward status of Chinese women was one of the major obstacles in the country’s way to modernity. As a result, they were eager to promote women’s education as a step toward modernity and endorsed the model of “New Woman (*xin nüxing*).”⁵ Many female students took such ideal to heart and aspired to be model modern women as well. As daughters

³ Yang, Ruiqing 杨瑞卿, “Foreword 发刊词,” *Phoenix*, 1919, 1-2.

⁴ Yip, *Religion, Nationalism, and Chinese Students*, 4.

⁵ Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, 50.

from elite families who had privileged access to education from prestigious missionary girls' schools, they also felt entitled and obliged to empower the rest of Chinese women. Therefore, the missionary school environment became the place they put their ideals into practices in forms of club activities as well as yearbook writings.

However, the implications of "New Woman" were slightly different for missionary educators and for Chinese elites from the mid 1910s to mid -1920s. For the American teachers in the McTyeire School and St. Mary's Hall, the New Woman meant women being educated to be self-sufficient in all walks of life, just as they were brought up back home. But the Chinese reformers followed a "modernizing conservatism" agenda for women's education, as termed by Paul Bailey.⁶ Although on the surface, the Chinese elites endorsed "gender equality" for women's education, the purpose of women's education was not to give women full access to the public sphere but to raise more qualified wives to support patriotic citizens and mothers to raise nationalist sons.

Therefore, the first decade of the missionary girls' schools yearbook publication represented an interesting time for the girls to explore and express their identities. Facing the contradictory expectations emanating from missionary schoolteachers and their Chinese elite families, the female students had the opportunity to choose the characteristics of modern girls, as manifested in the yearbooks. Placing gender issues more to the focus in the discussion of the significance of the May Fourth Movement, historian Wang Zheng argued that the decade from 1915 to 1925 created a "new subjectivity" for the "new woman." The "new subjectivity" entailed the norms including "an education that...make her a conscious modern citizen as well as secure her an occupation" and "an independent personhood, which meant financial self-reliance and

⁶ Paul John Bailey, *Gender and Education in China: Gender Discourses and Women's Schooling in the Early Twentieth Century*, (London: Routledge, 2007). eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed January 27, 2018): 113.

autonomy in decisions concerning marriage, career and so on.”⁷ When western ideals clashed with the traditional female domestic role, the new subjectivity originating in the May Fourth Movement enabled the female students of the two missionary girls’ school to navigate a distinct path between the nuanced ideals of western New Woman and Chinese *xin nüxing* and pursue their own version of the modern womanhood.

Be modern, be western

The appeal of western models was obvious in the yearbooks. Not only were the female students aspiring to embrace a western modernity, but advertisers also created an appealing image of modern western girls. In each issue of the yearbooks, the editors would solicit sponsorship from various businesses based on mutual interest. The yearbook committee got enough funding to publish the yearbooks, and the businesses would target their products at the aspiring modern girls in the ads.

In an advertisement from the 1919 *Phoenix*, the first volume of St. Mary’s yearbooks, a publishing company recommended a series of books from “interesting things girls like to do” to “what western girls and women have done.”⁸ The book choices also fit the May Fourth discourse on the ideals for New Woman, as exemplified in “A Short History of Women’s Rights: From the Days of Augustus to Present Time With Special Reference to England and America” and “The Making of Women: Oxford Essays in Feminism.” The book list included some very important figure for western youth culture as well, such as Baden-Powell who founded the Boy and Girl Scouts.

⁷ Zheng, *Women in Chinese Enlightenment*, 16.

⁸ *Phoenix*, 1919.

Interesting Things Girls Like to Do	
(With Full Directions for Doing Them)	
Beard & Beard: RECREATIONS FOR GIRLS: Indoor & Outdoor	Net \$3.00
Baden-Powell: GIRL GUIDING: A Handbook for Guidelets, Guides, Senior Guides, and Guiders	1.50
Bowsfield: HOW BOYS AND GIRLS CAN EARN MONEY	2.00
Klickmann: THE LITTLE GIRL'S KNITTING & CROCHET BOOK	1.00
<hr/>	
What Western Girls and Women Have Done	
COURAGEOUS GIRLS: Retold from St. Nicholas	\$1.50
Hecker: A SHORT HISTORY OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS: From the Days of Augustus to the Present Time. With Special Reference to England and the United States	3.00
Royden, etc.: THE MAKING OF WOMEN: Oxford Essays in Feminism	2.36
<hr/>	
Stories and Books Worth While	
Sanderson: THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AT DRIFTWOOD HEIGHTS	\$1.50
Penrose: THE MOTOR GIRLS AT CAMP SURPRISE	1.50
Cheley: TOLD BY THE CAMP FIRE	1.50
Porter: POEMS OF ACTION: A Collection of Verse for Youth	1.50
King: THE LAWS OF FRIENDSHIP: Human and Divine	2.50
<hr/>	
Educational Department	
EDWARD EVANS & SONS, LTD.	
30 North Szechuen Road Shanghai	

Figure 3 Phoenix, 1919.

If being model May Fourth women meant learning from the West, girls from St Mary's Hall and the Shanghai McTyeire School had the best resources in front of them — their missionary teachers. The faculty that the students interacted with on a daily basis belonged to an aspiring generation of college-educated American female missionaries who benefited from the New Women ideals in America and identified with the mission to educate (and liberate) women worldwide. With the support from missionary institutions back in America and an eagerness among Chinese girls to learn from them, the missionary teachers were also ideally positioned

to spread the western ideals that they brought along with their education. Therefore, the student-faculty interaction gave the young girls an example of the western New Woman.

The New Woman in America was a new ideal that started around the early twentieth century, and which gave American women access to new social resources. At the turn of twentieth century, the standard for an ideal American woman shifted from a domestic figure that took care of the home to a more diverse definition that accepted American women's participation in public space. More women were able to get college degrees. Some college-educated women no longer saw marriage and domestic life as their only destiny. Instead, they valued their professions more. Some started moving into areas such as education or medicine, while others

took part in the early suffrage movement.⁹ American female missionaries were also examples of one type of New Woman.

Motivated by the Wilsonian internationalism, the American New Women missionaries dispatched overseas to China joined the efforts to educate Chinese women.¹⁰ According to Motoe Sasaki, the Wilsonian internationalism was an Americanization movement that “asserted the duty of Christianity” as “to convert the poor” and “to alleviate class divisions...in foreign lands,” such as China, by sharing American values. As missionaries that had close connection to YMCA in Shanghai, which was also a group that garnered major support from America, the teachers from the two missionary schools probably shared the similar ideals when they spread the Gospel in their daily teaching.

Frequent interaction with their American New Woman missionary teachers impacted the female students' life in several aspects. First, the teachers represented a general image of “European and American women (*oumei funii*)” that were so prevalent in the May Fourth discourse of western women's emancipation that students read about in the advertisements and wrote about in essays. Second, the teachers were also role models directly from the western world. They were the “independent and self-sufficient” modern women that the young girls aspired to imitate. Their presence became a huge motivator for the female students to pursue their own independence and self-sufficiency. Last but not least, as missionaries, the teachers also introduced ideals of Christianity. To some girls, converting to Christianity served as part of their identity of being modern.

Students from St. Mary's Hall and McTyeire School often wrote favorably about women in Europe and America. The phrase “European and American women” represented as an

⁹ Welch, Kimberly. "From “True Woman” to “New Woman”." Lecture. January 17, 2016.

¹⁰ Sasaki, *Redemption and Revolution*, 86-110.

idealized model of western women who served their country because of their active participation in society either with service or with profession. In the 1919 issue of *Phoenix*, Qingtang Yu wrote an essay about “The awareness that Women of Our Country Should Have After the World War.” This St Mary’s Hall alumna, who later became the Deputy Director of the Education Bureau in People’s Republic of China, glorified role of European women in facilitating the victory of Allied Powers and urged Chinese women to do the same to strengthen China. According to Qingtang, the victory was possible because women from these nations all participated by working in the Red Cross or working in the army. Not only did women’s work stop the economy from crashing, their participation also advanced women’s political rights in Britain. In the end, she maintained that Chinese women should follow the examples of European women and make better contributions in society. By promoting education among women, one could expect that Chinese women would one day be able to reach the standard of Western women as well.¹¹

Generalized and idealized as the image of western women was in this article, the author nonetheless conveyed her admiration for the patriotic women from the West and took that image as exemplary for Chinese women including herself. Although her analysis very much echoed the opinions of male New Culturalists during the May Fourth, her understanding of women’s agency would impact later generations as she later began her career in education following the path of her teachers.

Other students in St. Mary’s Hall and McTyeire School agreed with Qingtang’s view that women should pursue a career just like the women who had helped Europe and America to be strong. In addition, seeing their missionary teachers as women who “earned their own

¹¹ Qingtang Yu 俞庆棠, “The awareness that women of our country should have after the Great War 大战后我国妇女应有之觉悟,” *Phoenix*, 1919, 1-2.

salaries...and were not married” further affirmed that having careers was not only necessary but also feasible. Missionary teachers also made efforts to convince their Chinese students to pursue career. Motoe Sasaki introduced a female missionary who graduated from the University of Michigan with a PhD in medicine and became a teacher for girls in Nanjing. The female missionary tried to “conveyed the necessity of advanced educational courses” and most of her students chose careers in medicine or education. The education at the McTyeire School and St. Mary’s Hall School had similar effect on students’ aspirations.¹²

Several girls debated the harm of women not having a job. In the 1919 *McTyeirean*, Songfen Wang wrote that “a job was the key to make a living and to make use of what one learned in school.” Without a job, one “would not be able to contribute to the society or to the population.”¹³ In the 1921 *Phoenix*, Wenliang Peng claimed that if a woman “did not have a job, not only was she unable to live an independent life, but also she would get into the bad habit of idling around.” Women should understand that “there were no differences in the talent of men and women.” If a man should work in any industries, so should a woman, just as those “in Europe and America.”¹⁴ For these girls, having a job was not only crucial for self-sufficiency but also helped contribute to the society, which was in line with the May Fourth ideal women. Moreover, they understood doing the same work as men to be feminist and symbolic of gender equality.

In fact, the destinations of recent graduates also illustrated that students from the two missionary schools were following the model of their teachers. That is, they too sought advanced education or to work in social organizations. As a list from the 1925 *McTyeirean*, a large number of graduates became teachers in similar missionary schools or assumed leadership positions in

¹² Sasaki, *Redemption and Revolution*, 105.

¹³ Songfen Wang 王誦芬, “One cannot live without a job/论人生不可无职业,” *McTyeirean*, 1919, 11.

¹⁴ Wenliang Peng 彭文亮, “On the harm of women with no jobs/说女子无职业之弊,” *Phoenix*, 1921, 16.

organizations for women. A few of them also went to the United States for college education, in institutions perhaps where their teachers had studied. Although the destinations of the students depended on the direct network of the missionaries and the limited working opportunities for women at the time, the illustration shows that students did put into practice the ideal of self-sufficiency as a new woman.

Class of 1914

Hoo Zong-Tuk, Mrs. S. D. Lee; Died June 28, 1918.
 Kwo Tse-Tsau, Mrs. Z. Y. Woo, Nanking; Studied at Oberlin College, U. S. A.
 Mo Sieu-Ngoo, Mrs. I. Y. Sze, Shanghai.
 Pan Tsung-Pau, Mrs. H. K. Kwong, Shanghai; Studied at Oberlin College U. S. A.
 Sung Kyuin, Shanghai; Teacher at McTyeire School, Woo Pun School, Ming Lih Girl's School, and E Juin School; Secretary of Social Service Committee, Y. W. C. A.; Chairman of the Better Homes Union Committee.
 Chang Doen-Tsung, Teacher at Government Teachers' College, Nanking; Studied at Wellesley College, U. S. A.
 Chang Li-Tsung, Mrs. L. Y. Ho, Tsing Hua College, Peking; Studied at Oberlin College, U. S. A.
 Tsu Zung-Tsu, Teacher at McTyeire School, Shanghai; Steward, Moore Memorial Church.
 Wong Zoen-Yien, Shanghai; Graduate of Boston Conservatory of Music, U. S. A.; Teacher of Music in Shanghai; English Secretary of Shanghai Chinese Woman's Club.
 Woo Nyok-Fong, Shanghai; Teacher at McTyeire School; Chairman of Student Committee, Y. W. C. A., Board member, Y. W. C. A.; Chairman of Art and English Department, Shanghai Chinese Woman's Club.
 Zia Siau-Yuin, Mrs. Y. S. Lee, Da Yih.

Class of 1916

Fong Lien-Tsung, Student of Dentistry, University of Michigan, U. S. A.
 Pan Nyok-Me, Shanghai; Graduate in Music at Wesleyan College. Studied at Boston Conservatory of Music, U. S. A. Teacher at McTyeire School.
 Married June 21 to Mr. L. D. Chen.

Class of 1917

Soo Me-Ing, Mrs. K. C. Wong, Hangchow; Secretary of Tuesday Club; Deaconess in Baptist Church; Chairman, Pre-organization Committee, Y. W. C. A.
 Wong Oen-Sung, Shanghai; Secretary, McTyeire School (on sick leave).

Figure 4 Recent Graduates Information, *McTyeirean*, 1925. Shanghai Library

It is easy to notice that the majority of the social organizations that some alumni worked in had more or less some relationship with the missionary community. Since the McTyeire School and St. Mary's Hall were missionary schools, it was not uncommon for the students to participate in religious activities after graduation. The religious environment also provided opportunities to take part in such work while they were in school.

The Tsing Sing Wei (translated to and hereafter, Clear Heart Association) of St. Mary's Hall was one of the first student organizations to be established and was the most long lasting organizations in both schools. Clear Heart Association was a religious group for Christian students. Not only did students in the organization take charge of maintaining regular church services for the school chapel, but they also facilitated the annual meeting of Women's Auxiliary and organized speeches. In 1921, for example, Clear Heart Association invited Mr Peter Chen

who addressed the topic “How to Love Our Country.” Later in the year, another speaker talked about “Future China” and encouraged students to work for their country. As a religious organization, the Clear Heart Association also promoted social services, such as teaching Bible in “Sunday School”.¹⁵

For the Christian students in missionary schools, the emphasis on social services connected the western model to Chinese modern womanhood because service activities proved that they too could make contributions to society. Although religious teachings were an ideal from the West, when the Christian girls thought about their identity as Chinese, the act of serving society reaffirmed their ties to Chinese modernity.

Be Chinese, be nationalist

As much as the students followed the model of their American New Woman missionary teachers, they still felt a strong connection to their Chinese identity. At the same time when they followed the image of New Woman, they were also eager to portray themselves as responsible Chinese citizens and patriotic students. As a result, the yearbooks from the May Fourth period recorded thoughts and actions that manifested a fervent nationalism. The students from St. Mary’s Hall and McTyeire embraced the popular May Fourth rhetoric of being good citizens that strengthened the country, and practiced the ideals in their school activities, although their aspirations did not quite match the expectations expressed by male Chinese nationalists for their female counterparts.

Discussions on the duties and responsibilities of students, of women and of citizens were prevalent in students’ writings. In the 1922 of *McTyeirean*, Li Tsing Lien elaborated on what “responsibility” meant to her. For her and her classmates, “responsibility... was an

¹⁵ Anonymous, “Tsing Sing Wei”, *Phoenix*, 1921, 38-49.

encouragement to [them] during the process preparing for future service in China”; “it play[ed] its role by directing us in our choice” for education and career; and it constantly reminded them that “this is the time for [them] to help China.”¹⁶ They were determined to be the ones to make changes in the future, just as their male counterparts had done.

One of the founders of *Phoenix*, Ruiqing Yang, wrote an article in the 1921 *Phoenix* about her understanding of “The Natural Duties of Students.” She believed that because students were the future of the nation, their natural duties were renewing families, improving society and reforming the country, men and women alike.¹⁷ Men and women should share responsibilities in the family, although female citizens knew more about domestic chores. Students also had a responsibility to educate the masses, to inform those with fewer resources of the current issues in the world and to do charity works for people in need. Female students already demonstrated their ability to establish charity schools and to give public speeches during the May Fourth. As the article showed, Ruiqing clearly viewed herself as one of the female students who also had the natural duties to fulfill her citizen responsibility to “strengthen the country.”¹⁸

These two articles represented the female students’ visions for themselves and their fellow female classmates as future female citizens. They accepted the nationalist rhetoric of saving the country as their own future. As student movements became more radical during the 1920s, the number of student clubs proliferated. Young male students regarded themselves to be the ones to take on “revolution tasks” to “strengthen and modernize China.”¹⁹ The students from missionary girls’ schools tried to measure up to the citizen duty by following the trend. In

¹⁶ Li Tsng Ling, “Our Responsibility,” *Mctyeirean*, 1922, 122.

¹⁷ In Chinese traditional values, family, society and country are three levels in a hierarchical social structure, with family as the most basic unit.

¹⁸ Ruiqing Yang 杨瑞卿, “The natural duties of students/学生之天职,” *Phoenix*, 1921, 1-4.

¹⁹ Ka-che Yip, *Religion, nationalism, and Chinese Students*, 2.

practice, they also followed the May Fourth student activism to initiate clubs other than religious organizations, such as the Student Association and the Patriotic Club.

Among all the clubs, the establishment of student government was especially important because its operation was a potential training for their future national salvation work. The St. Mary's Hall Student Association started as the Students' Club in 1921.²⁰ The club was initially only in charge of the National Day and Confucius Day celebration. In 1924, the Students' Club changed its name to Student Union.²¹ Afterward, it started to organize fundraising activities for different groups in need, such as refugees from flooding or famine. Not only did the experiences of managing the student body give the students agency, but also the service activities enabled them to feel closer to the ideal of saving the poor, "saving the country."

Like the Student Union, the Athletic Club had the mission "to set up ideals for good health in order to strengthen the womanhood of China."²² One student advocated for the importance of physical education in one essay that, "women should strengthen their body so that they can also share the strenuous tasks that men are doing."²³ For the student body, the Athletic Club also organized annual sports meeting in which different classes competed with each other in different games. Beyond physical activities, the Athletic Club also took part in social services. In 1921, the Club made a donation to famine relief. In later years, students in the Athletic Club would also volunteer teaching drills and organizing games in charity schools.

The club activities in the missionary girls' schools were similar to the ones in the schools for boys.²⁴ Interestingly, although the female students did see the differences in gender roles,

²⁰ Anonymous, "Students' Club," *Phoenix*, 1922, 49.

²¹ Anonymous, "National Day and Confucius's Birthday," *Phoenix*, 1924, 45-46.

²² Anonymous, "Athletics," *Phoenix*, 1921, 44-45.

²³ Xizhi Sun 孙熙治, "Advice to fellow women to value physical education/敬告女同胞急宜注重体育," *Phoenix*, 1921, 4-5.

²⁴ Chen, *Education History of Modern*, 301.

they got around the limits of female domesticity by emphasizing their service activities in society. As the previous section discussed, the female students were able to borrow the social services ethos that originated from religious groups so as to put into practice other aspects of their ideas about strengthening the country amid other school club activities.

In addition to the students' endorsement of nationalist movement through club activities, the community of students in the two missionary schools also reinforced national salvation through their career choices. In the 1919 issue of *Phoenix*, an alumna explained the process of choosing medicine as a field of work to encourage her fellow alumni to do the same. Although at first she thought medicine was not an ideal job because the working conditions were arduous and unsanitary, she changed her mind after learning that "millions of Chinese women are sick" and that "Chinese women physicians are urgently needed to meeting the emergency."²⁵

However, the girls' efforts to match up to the ideal May Fourth new youth did not fit the exact expectations of male nationalists. While the female students believed their way to be full citizens was to serve society in addition to sharing the responsibility of homemaking, male nationalists thought that a good female citizen ought to be a good enough housewife so that they could focus on saving the country.

Similar ideas appeared in the advertisements in the yearbooks. In ads from 1926, an insurance company offered a story that a wife convinced her husband to buy life insurance for him, in case he passed away and she didn't have income to support their son's education and marriage. The advertisement was titled "The Gospel of Women" and the wife in the story was especially content in the end because she got an insurance contract worth one hundred thousand

²⁵ V.S.NYI, "Medicine as a profession for women," *Phoenix*, 1919, 57-58.

Yuan.²⁶ Interestingly, the insurance company also appealed to female students by assuming that they would eventually embrace the status of dependent housewives, which was not the ideal that the female students advocated.

As the Chinese nationalist movement continued, the conflicts between missionary agenda and Chinese Confucianism traditions grew. As a result, the standards for an ideal modern Chinese girl became more difficult to sustain. Yet female students still managed to find their place amidst these competing ideals.

Between Western Modern Woman and Female Chinese Nationalist

The first competing ideals were the presence of west versus the Chinese nationalism. While being a “new” Chinese citizen meant getting educated about modern knowledge from the West, being an “authentic” Chinese citizen meant they needed to clarify the boundary between Chinese culture and Western ideologies. Among all things from the West, western religion became one of the first targets of the May Fourth movement. Although missionary institutions showcased the prospect of modernity, many Chinese thinkers viewed Christianity as a dangerous sign of western imperialism. From 1922 to 1927 the Nationalist Party, (Kuo Ming Tang, or Guo Ming Dang, hereafter as KMT) and the emerging Chinese Communist Party (hereafter as CCP) supported anti-Christianity student movements.

However, as students of Christian missionary schools, even if they were not converts to Christianity, the girls were acceptant of religion. Their Christian identity clashed with prevailing notions of the loyal and patriotic Chinese citizen, but they formulated a way that the two ideals could coincide. As a result, girls from the missionary schools, like other Chinese Christians who

²⁶ “Shanghai Xianshi Insurance Co./上海先施人寿保险公司,” *Phoenix*, 1926, n.a..

felt threatened by an anti-Christianity sentiments, made extra effort to assert their loyalty to the new Chinese citizen identity by writing about their thoughts on Chinese modernity.

In 1921 *McTyeirean*, Zee Yeu Yong wrote an essay on “Chinese Women’s Birth Right.” She started the essay with a quote from the Bible: “in Mark I: 6-10, it’s written: From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female...they are no more twain but one flesh.” Then she argued that the gender situation in China didn’t follow God’s intentions. As she listed all the problems about gender equality, she repeated the arguments of New Culturists, such as the historical discrimination against women and a need to promote equality. In the concluding statement, she claimed that “women’s movement [was] nature’s own movement...to improve the physical and spiritual advancement of mankind.”²⁷ Her argumentation brilliantly fused the influence of both Christianity and New Culture Movement in saying that China needed new changes especially in gender equality because this was the intention of nature or God. In this way, she embraced both of her identities as Christian and as a true Chinese citizen.

The competition between western ideals and Chinese traditional values turned into a second debate about the meaning of gender equality and its implications for women’s role in this new era. Since ideologies like feminism and human rights emerged in Chinese discourse as western ideals, the concept of gender equality challenged traditional Chinese female gender roles. Students from the two missionary girls schools found themselves in the middle of the debate. On one hand, they learned the concept of gender equality from their New Women teachers that women should be able to do the same work as men, especially for national salvation. On the other hand, they also wanted to abide by their identity as good Chinese women, which the male New Culturalists defined as good mothers and good wives that served the country by raising patriotic male citizens for the future.

²⁷ Zee Yeu Yong, “Chinese Women’s Birthright,” *McTyeirean*, 1921, 35-36.

As a result, the students fashioned themselves with characteristics from both sides of the debate yet were resistant to fully conforming to either side. Perhaps they realized their ideals about participating in society through student clubs, or perhaps their female teachers provided sufficient examples as working women. The students often envisioned themselves as nationalists in all walks of life, contributing to the society with their male counterparts.

A class prophecy of the class of 1922 from St Mary's hall was a representative example. The prophecy, in the form of a travel log ten years in the future, started in the author's "office in the YWCA in Shanghai." She was designated "to investigate the YWCA in America" where she had "longed to go for ages." When she arrived in America, she visited her classmate "Woo Weishing...[who] had got a degree as a doctor." Then, she paid a visit to Wellesley College where she ran into another classmate who now "had a foreign air" after years of education in America. In their conversation, she realized "Dzung Yao-tsung...had taken a position in Ginling College as Dean of the Science Department."²⁸ Later, the class of 1922 hosted a class reunion only to find that "Our missing Yoeh-faung had been chosen as the head of the 'Political Board of Women'...from Canton..." While they cheered for Yoeh-faung who "has done her best for China," they also lamented their "poor Mrs.K was unable to leave her family."²⁹ The prophecy revealed the graduates imagining themselves in all walks of life, while the image of the "poor Mrs. K" represented their refusal of the limits of domesticity.

Another short story in the 1921 *McTyeirean* demonstrated more directly the perspective of a female school student growing up around the May Fourth Movement.³⁰ A girl and a boy from two different villages were the subjects of a childhood engagement arranged by their old-fashion parents. However, both the boy and the girl went against their families' will to pursue

²⁸ Ginling College is a missionary girl's college in Nanjing.

²⁹ "Class Prophecy of 1922," *Phoenix*, 1922, 20-23.

³⁰ Tseu Mei Yuin, "The Broken Engagement," *McTyeirean*, 77-81, 1921.

further education outside of the village and abroad. The boy's family was not satisfied that the girl went to school and even performed in the school play, because actresses were considered to be the lowest status in all occupations, so they broke the engagement with the girl's family. Her parents banned her from going to school in the village. However, during those ten months of grounding, she became the "sister of charity" in the village, serving the old and the young while secretly preparing for a test that would admit her to American universities. She successfully passed the test and got admitted, but on the day that she was to leave, she realized that her parents had arranged yet another marriage. She had to secretly run away to follow her aspirations. Sadly, her little sister was substituted in the arranged marriage. After four years of college, the girl met the boy again on their ship back from America, both having studied medicine and nursing. They opened the only hospital in the village and saved lives during an epidemic. After working together and appreciating each other's work and opinions, the boy and girl finally mended the engagement and got married, in spite of their previous struggle to avoid marriage.

This story represented a particular notion of ideal gender dynamics for some female students during the May Fourth. As a student, she was just as fervent for the student movements as her male counterparts, which not all the public appreciated. As an aspiring "modern girl," she didn't think marriage was the only thing that mattered in her life; instead, she was eager for education. She had the drive to serve the population and save the country from misery (disease). With the exception of choosing the gender specific job as nursing, she did not see herself as much different from the role of a male student.

Opening up a window in the May Fourth

Wang Zheng characterized the May Fourth Movement as a clash between western ideologies and Chinese traditional values. The first decade of yearbooks witnessed the

emergence of May Fourth ideals and how the students managed to navigate their identity between the expectations for a nationalist Chinese citizen and a modern student from missionary schools. The missionary-school students manifested a strong sense of being the equal of males and a fervent desire to behave as patriotic Chinese citizens, which modeled after the May Fourth nationalist ideals, while they still embraced their western missionary education.

Historian Christina Gilmartin suggested that the Chinese women's emancipation movement in the 1920s failed to advance women's rights in a significant way.³¹ Although the May Fourth Era put gender equality as a key in the advancement of modernity, the actual status of women did not change much. An ideal "modern" woman was still the manager of home and female domesticity continued through 1910s to 1930s. However, the May Fourth Era did give women a "new subjectivity" that enabled them to imagine themselves transgressing traditional gender norms, as Wang Zheng argued. When the Chinese nationalism movement turned into a more fervent movement in late 1920s and the male nationalists became more anxious to urge women to come home, this May Fourth "new subjectivity" helped the female students to resist.

³¹ Christina K Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution : Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.) *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 27, 2018).

Chapter Two: Virtuous Wives, Good Mothers, or Patriotic Women, 1927 – 1936

Although during the May Fourth Era, the girls from the two missionary schools argued endlessly for gender equality in writings and emphasized how female students should contribute to society as much as their male counterparts, they began to pay more attention to their relationship with domestic duties after 1927. Not only did they receive various messages telling them to focus on domestic life, but they also felt an increasing pressure to stay with their families after graduation. Nevertheless, the female students were still eager to take part in the national salvation task, following the Chinese nationalism inspired by the May Fourth Era. However, after 1927, the target of nationalist critique became more focused on Japan because the tension between China and Japan escalated so much that it replaced the threat from the West.¹ This chapter will show the new challenges from the emerging political conditions and reveal the girls' attempts to manage the tensions.

In 1926, the KMT in alliance with the CCP launched the Northern Expedition, which aimed to eliminate the remaining warlord powers after the downfall of the old empire. After two years, the Northern Expedition successfully took down warlords and the KMT was also able to establish the Nanking Nationalist Government under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek. Thus began the Nanking Decade in 1927 until the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War interrupted the Nationalist ruling in 1937.

After its establishment, the Nanking Government made every effort to tighten its control over the state. One of the top priorities was controlling the educational institutions established by

¹ Ji, *Construction of Nation State*, 246 - 250.

missionaries. In the late 1920s, government officials launched a “Campaign to Regain Educational Rights (*shouhui jiaoyuquan yundong*)” to assert control over missionary schools. The campaign required all missionary educational institutions to register with the government and adjust personnel to make sure at least half of the administrators were Chinese nationals. At first, the McTyeire School was reluctant to obey the new legislation because the Nationalist leader was married to a McTyeire alumna, Song Mei-Ling. In order to marry her, Chiang had agreed to convert to Christianity on the demands of Song’s mother. However, this personal connection failed to exempt the school from governmental intervention. As a result, St. Mary’s Hall and the McTyeire School had their first Chinese principals in 1932.²

Another aspect that the government wanted to control in the state-building process was the behavioral and moral standards of new citizens. In order to achieve this goal, Chiang Kai-Shek launched the New Life Movement in 1934 with the help of the McTyeire-educated First Lady, Song Mei-Ling who took charge of the Women’s Directing Committee in the New Life Movement.³ Although the New Life Movement started in Jiangsu province, it soon spread nationwide including to Shanghai. In general, the movement aimed to promote detailed day-to-day practices to maintain hygiene and recall “inherent Chinese virtues” such as “etiquette, justice, integrity and consciousness (*li-yi-lian-chi*)” based on Confucian values.⁴ Essentially, the New Life Movement advocates were trying to create a new version of Chinese modernity that steered the discourse from western ideals of the May Fourth period to what they considered traditional Chinese values.

² Chen, *Education History*, 581 - 585.

³ Federica Ferlanti, "The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934-1938." *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 5 (2010): 991. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40926538>.

⁴ Xiaoping Sun, "New Life: State Mobilization and Women's Place in Nationalist China, 1934–1949." (PhD Thesis, Order No. 3317415, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2008): 23.

Just as women's status was one of the symbols of modernity in the May Fourth discourses, proponents of the New Life Movement also provided a version of the ideal modern woman, which emerged as a more conservative model. While the May Fourth period characterized an advocacy for gender equality and women's self-sufficiency, the New Life Movement dismissed May Fourth women's pursuit of independence as "selfish" behavior and instead emphasized women's duties in the home. The argument for women's education changed from bringing up dutiful citizens to producing "virtuous wives and good mothers (*xianqi liangmu*)" so that they could reduce the burden on their husbands and raise future citizens who can better save the nation.

Moreover, the New Life Movement also tried to regulate women's clothing. Supporters of the New Life Movement argued that May Fourth women only learned to adopt western dress styles and thus their modernity was superficial. Instead, the New Life Movement supporters set up standards for details such as how much skin a woman could show to still be considered as a good modern Chinese woman. Historian Louise Edwards detailed the process of negotiating the appropriate dress line through a popular women's magazine *Linglong*. She argues that the magazine provided a spectrum of appropriate women's behaviors, with "American depravity" on one extreme and "Confucian morality" on the other. For an ideal modern Chinese woman presented in the magazine, "displays of flesh were limited to the extremities of their limbs." For example, only when high collar covered the neck could arms be naked etc. According to Ailing Zhang who graduated from St. Mary's Hall in 1937, this magazine was so popular that "every female student had an issue at hand."⁵ Due to such popularity, it was clear that the girls from the

⁵ Louise Edwards, "The Shanghai Modern Woman's American Dreams: Imagining America's Depravity to Produce China's "Moderate Modernity"." *Pacific Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2012): 567-601. doi:10.1525/phr.2012.81.4.567.

missionary girls' schools were immersed in the messages that promoted similar ideals as the New Life Movement.

It is noteworthy that the advocacy for female domesticity and conservatism in women's clothing was not a new idea in the 1930s. However, partly because of the New Life Movement, such rhetoric gained much more force in the Nanking Decade. The fact that Song Mei-Ling learned about liberal May Fourth ideals in the McTyeire School but became a leader of a conservative movement brings to light the processes and contestation at the center of attempts to shape prevailing standards and norms of modern Chinese femininity.

However, while the Nanking Government was busy policing the internal social order, it could not ignore the existential threat coming from the increasing harassment of Japan. On September 18th 1931, the Japanese Army staged an explosion on a railway in Northeastern China as an excuse to occupy the Manchuria region. This incident initiated a decade-long tension between China and Japan, which led up to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. In Chinese historical scholarship, this war is also called the War of Resistance Against Japan. Because of this conflict, during the 1930s, Chinese nationalism shifted away from anti-western sentiments, such as anti-Christianity movements, and instead started to target the presence of Japan.⁶ Part of the mission of the New Life Movement was also to prepare its citizens to fight against Japan. Through the Movement, the Nationalist government made sure to include patriotism in the curriculum of its public education. Of course, the targeted audience was mainly male students.

Therefore, the female students in the missionary girls' schools, facing the messages of women staying home and students defending the country, were yet again trapped in a paradox of what it meant to be modern women. On one hand, they witnessed their alumni's involvement in

⁶Ji, *Construction of Nation State*: 246.

society and aspired to follow their path in the new decade. Although they were female, they responded strongly to their identity as students, and as students, they felt obliged to participate in the task of national salvation against Japan. On the other hand, they inevitably felt the pressure to stay away from public issues and instead return home as appropriate “virtuous wives and good mothers.” The subsequent decade would show how the girls contemplated the conflicting demands for female students, persisted their patriotism, and asserted of independence under the pressure of domesticity in the Nanking Decade.

Patriotic Female Students

Just as they saw themselves as dutiful citizens in the May Fourth Movement, students continued their patriotism after the Northern Expedition started in 1926. Since the Northern Expedition was a military revolution launched by the Nationalist Party, the Nationalist Army used various strategies to assert its legitimacy over the regions that it had occupied. One of the strategies was to encourage women to cut their hair short. In Chinese tradition, one’s hair and skin signifies one’s connection with their parents.⁷ Modifying one’s body suggests disrespect of their parents. Thus, although this nontraditional short hairstyle was available in China as a western style in early twentieth century, it was hardly acceptable until it was reframed as a sign of solidarity for the Nationalist revolution. As the revolution of Northern Expedition progressed throughout the country, more and more women started to cut their hair. Students from the two missionary schools were no exceptions. The following chart showed the years in which the Class of 1932 from the McTyeire School cut their hair.

⁷ One’s body, skin and hair were given by ones’ parents. One shouldn’t modify them. 身体发肤，受之父母，不敢毁伤。

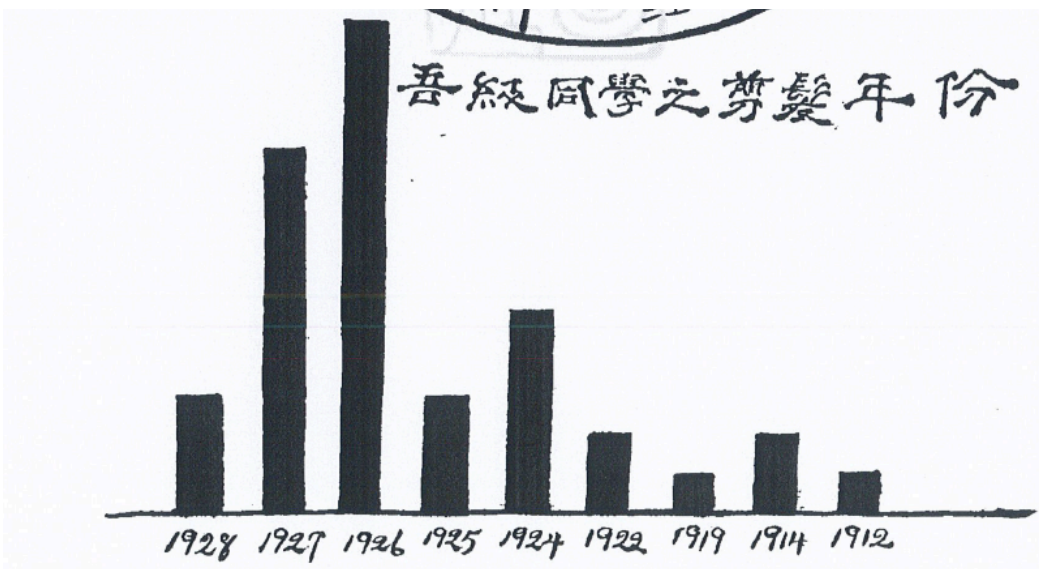


Figure 5 The Years in which Class of 1932 Cut Hair, McTyeirean 1932

As the chart indicates, most girls changed their hairstyle after 1926, most likely following the national trend. The effort of collecting the data and putting together a chart also speaks to the elevated symbolism of the act of cutting their hair, which was so meaningful to them that it was worth including in the yearbook. To the aspiring modern female students, not only did short hair show their nationalism, but also it signified that they were at the forefront of creating Chinese modernity.

Female students also demonstrated their eagerness to participate in the nationalist movements through student clubs. In 1926, the St. Mary's Hall Student Union changed its name to Student Association and established its first constitution clarifying its mission to promote a sense of citizenship among students.⁸ In 1932, the Student Association amended its constitution again. The committee decided to introduce "a new plan of self-governing ... which is akin to the modern governmental departments of China." The plan "was approved by the principal."⁹ Just as

⁸ Lin Qinjun, "St Mary's Hall Student Association Constitution 圣玛丽亚学院学生联合会分会修改章", *Phoenix*, 1926, 7-8.

⁹ Tai Kuh-van, "The Student Association," *Phoenix*, 1932, 69-70.

the students sought to look patriotic with their shortened hair, they also sought to reflect the modernized administrative structures in their own clubs.

In 1928, students in St. Mary's Hall also established a Patriotic Club. In the 1929 *Phoenix*, the Patriotic Club changed to its Chinese name, Koh Kwang Wei, which meant "The Light of the Country" or "Country Light Association."¹⁰ As the name indicated, the mission of this club was to enlighten the student body, to "cultivate a patriotic spirit" and to encourage any work that students did to show their love and loyalty to the country.¹¹ The Patriotic Club had several departments: Speech, Publicity and Drama etc. The Club also created a Mandarin School and a Student Shop. All the departments organized their activities to help "keep students' interest and attention attuned to the welfare of China."

Because most students in St. Mary's Hall spoke the Shanghai dialect and some also spoke other dialects, the Mandarin School department taught students to speak Mandarin, "for a common language exerted a great influence on the union of a country by helping people to understand each other better."¹² By teaching and learning Mandarin, students were performing a "great service to the nation" and showing their support of the modern standardization of language.

The Student Shop also functioned as a way to manifest patriotism. For the female students, the most important thing for the Shop was "that all the goods sold there were native products." In 1937, the Student Shop took a firm stand in boycotting all Japanese products to demonstrate their support for the national economy. Besides all these activities, the Patriotic Club also did its part in "contributing money to help the government on special occasions such as

¹⁰ "Koh Kwang Wei", *Phoenix* 1929, 77.

¹¹ "Koh Kwong Wei," *Phoenix*, 1932, 70-71

¹² Nyui Li-Lien, "The Patriotic Club," *Phoenix*, 1937, 73-74.

giving money to the famine districts.” The Patriotic Club also fundraised five hundred dollars for the “Manchurian crisis” relief in 1931.¹³

As self-fashioned patriotic revolutionaries, the girls also saw themselves as participants in the anti-Japanese movement. Just as the students recorded their boycotting of Japanese products in the Student Shop, students’ writing was full of the theme of defeating Japan as well. One of the dramas was named “The Talk to Avenge (*xuechi tan*)” and it contained three acts: *The Last Class*, *The Shame of A Conquered State* and *The Sacrifice of A Loyal Couple*. The playwright also named the main characters after nationalistic terms: a male protagonist was called Hua Meng-Xing (华梦醒), which meant “awakening from Chinese dream”; a female protagonist was called Huá Mulan(华木兰), which translated to the Mulan of China and was also a homophone resembling the classic Chinese female heroine Huā Mulan (花木兰).¹⁴ In the play, the protagonists face Japanese officials on different occasions. In some, they gave patriotic speeches to chide the Japanese invasion; in others, the protagonists sacrificed their lives to protect China. The playwright indicated that the motif of this play was to turn acting into speech, showing patriotism in tears and alerting fellow Chinese people of the threat.

Even students who have graduated from the two schools were active members in the anti-Japanese movement and the involvement of alumni was an encouragement for the current students to embrace surging patriotism. On December 9, 1935, college students in Beijing (then Beiping) initiated a major strike and protested against Japanese imperialism. The movement soon spread across the country and students in Shanghai enthusiastically responded. An alumna of St.

¹³ “Koh Kwong Wei,” *Phoenix*, 1932, 70-71.

¹⁴ Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History: The past, the West and the Woman Question in China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008): 145-146.

Mary's Hall who was attending college in Beijing also wrote back to encourage her schoolmates to take part in the movement to defend their country.

In the letter, she interpreted the significance of the movement as more than a “students’ strike or propaganda” but “a threatening warning” that Chinese students gave to “the imperialism of the world.” She reminded the students who were currently in St. Mary’s Hall that China was “facing the danger of perdition at every moment.” She also urged the current students to “prepare... best effort to advance a liberalization movement for the entire Chinese race” with “passion and courage that belongs to the youth” as well as “with our rational and calm mind.”¹⁵ Not only does this letter demonstrate the extent of nationalism that was prevalent among young students, but also it shows that the connections between alumni and current students through the yearbooks created a space for the female students to express their practices of nationalism.

Besides following the call of the anti-Japanese movements, the female students also took part in other activities the New Life Movement that followed the demand of nationalism. Since the New Life Movement focused on promoting hygienic practices among Chinese citizens, the female students made sure to include hygiene in their social services that were originally more evangelical. The religious organization, Clear Heart Association, organized most social services. The biggest program was the Sunday school. “Every Sunday afternoon from 1:30 to 2:30,” members of Clear Heart Association organized “the merry little school” for “poor children” to increase literacy and teach Christianity. Students also instructed the children about appropriate hygiene practices, such as “keeping water storage covered” and “separating trashes from living areas.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Xiuzhen Luo 罗秀贞, “Beiping 北平,” *Phoenix*, 1936, 199.

¹⁶ Anonymous, “St Mary’s Hall Gate Sunday School,” *Phoenix*, 1929, 50.

Similar to how female students expressed their pursuit of nationalism through social activities and in writings during the May Fourth, these students continued to model their enthusiastic patriotism through the spaces in the yearbooks in the Nanking Decade. Even if the New Life Movement provided different values for women's behavior than May Fourth, the female students still adopted some of the more progressive teachings within the conservative movements. However, as the students continued to manifest their nationalistic enthusiasm, they soon found themselves limited by the gender boundaries set by the conservatism of the decade.

Virtuous Wives and Good Mothers

The female students' nationalistic enthusiasm was a vast contrast to the mainstream educational ideals for Chinese women in the 1930s. Paul Bailey, in his *Gender and Education in China*, characterizes women's education in the early twentieth century as "modernizing conservatism."¹⁷ That is, education designed and endorsed for women was meant to train them to be good wives rather than help women become self-sufficient individuals. Xiaoyan Wang also points out a similar pattern of "Virtuous Wife and Good Mother (*xianqi liangmu*)" education that prevailed in the 1930s when boys and girls still had separate schools. She argues that even after the advocacy for vocational education in the May Fourth Era, the curriculum for girls' schools in the 1930s still focused more on female domesticity. Along the same line, the argument for urging women to come back home instead of working in a job also increased in the 1930s. The preference of female domesticity was also partly due to the Great Depression that slowed down

¹⁷ Paul John Bailey, *Gender and Education in China: Gender Discourses and Women's Schooling in the Early Twentieth Century*. (London: Routledge, 2007): 113.

the economy and affected the job market.¹⁸ Because the job market was shrinking, women took the blame for taking up men's jobs and faced pressure to give up working.

Students in the missionary girls' schools were not sheltered from these conservative ideals. In 1930, the McTyeire School invited a speaker to give a lecture to its graduating students on the topic "Marriage and Women's Occupation," which was later published in a local journal. In the speech, the speaker concluded that marriage was "the best career option for female students." Even though the speaker agreed that educated women should have other achievements in life, the priority for female students should be getting married because it was the safest way to secure a living given the current economy.¹⁹

Advertisers that once promoted books from a variety of disciplines to appeal to modern girls in the May Fourth Movement now also expanded its inventory specifically in the realm of what they termed "Home Sciences." An advertisement from the 1934 *Phoenix* suggested a list of must-reads for young girls:

Readings for Young People, Married or Single alike
From rich experiences and new theories, the programs to perfect homemaking instructions will make you enjoy the real happiness of the modern family: Daily Home Science, New Family Life Instruction, New Women's Education, The Reality of Family Education, Accounting for Modern Family, Modern Home Décor, Home Management, Motherly Love, Children and Mother, Infant Nursing and Caring, Nursing Commonsense, Studies of Heredity, Antenatal Training, Gardening.²⁰

Compared to the book advertisements from the May Fourth, this advertisement depicted a different version of modern woman for the new decade. While the 1919 book publishers wanted their female consumers to look up to what western women did in the Girl Scouts, advertisers from the 1930s suggested readings that focused entirely on family life. Assuming its readers to

¹⁸ Xiaoyan Wang, *Controversy History of Women's Education in China*, (Beijing, China: China Social Sciences Press, 2015): 81-104.

¹⁹ N.A., "Marriage and Women's Occupation(婚嫁与女子职业)," *LunYu 论语*, 1930, n.a..

²⁰ *Phoenix*, 1934, n.a..

be female students or their parents, the publishers couched their products' value in terms of "modernizing conservatism." Although a woman would have to be educated in order to read these instruction books, her role was still to be the master of the home. A family was considered modern only if the women at home would be able to follow the instruction books.

The message that marriage and domestic life were the preferred place for women in Chinese society was so prevalent that students even made jokes about it. One student in the McTyeire School wrote a poem in 1930 titled "Husband Hunting":

It matters not if he is young or old,
The only question is if he has gold;
It matters not if he is thin or fat,
His fame and wealth are what I'm looking at.

Wu Waiz, '30.²¹

The poem appears as satire, mocking the superficial process of locating a future family partner. It also suggests that the girls who were mostly from upper-class families often heard about the demand for them to look for a husband, instead of considering their other life plans.

The message that encouraged the girls to get married and go home clearly contradicted the aspirations that the students had for themselves. Ping Zhang wrote in the 1935 issue of the *Phoenix* about the fear and anxiety for her future after graduation. She was worried that once she "graduated from the school," she would "become unemployed." She contemplated three major paths for female students in a similar situation like her. First, "for the ambitious, they could continue with school, to further their education and to serve the society and benefit the population in the future." Second, "for the less ambitious, they just want to get on with one career and cautiously be a good citizen." Last but not least, there were also "who [wanted] to get married...and [take] care of their parents at home." Ping believed that all the choices would "not count as unemployment...as long as one [did] not wander around and waste time." However, she

²¹ Wu Waiz, "Husband Hunting," *McTyeirean*, 1930, n.a..

still had a low expectation for her future outlook because she worried that “unemployed people still take up the majority.”²²

Simplistic as it seemed, the future plans that Ping mentioned did cover about all the possible choices for a high-school-educated girl in the 1930s like herself. However, none of these choices were easy to achieve. Not many people wanted to pursue further education in the first place, so claimed Ping, and for those who did, some were hindered by family “financial issues” and others were discouraged because they did not know if more education would be “useful.”²³ In the 1930s, the Great Depression impacted China and slowed down the economy. The economic situation already made it difficult for anyone to find a job, let alone for a “powerless, high-school-educated girl.” Moreover, although Ping believed that serving one’s parents at home was the easiest “work” to do, she worried that doing so would make one bored and “waste more time.” Last but not least, marriage, arguably a common post-graduation plan, was also a challenge in Ping’s view. On one hand, “there was little chance to find a marriage partner” on her own.²⁴ On the other hand, to accept an arranged marriage coordinated by parents obviously countered her aspiration for freedom as a New Woman. In addition, Ping also suggested that one would still be reduced to dependence in marriage and end up spending time “socializing,” which would not count as real work. Therefore, even marriage failed to become a promising future plan. Whether or not the situation was as hopeless as Ping described, the tendency to want women to retreat from public life was fairly strong in the Nanking Decade.

As the pressure of domesticity went on, students started to contemplate whether or not such a demand was actually valid. In the following 1936 issue of *Phoenix*, several girls from St. Mary’s Hall presented essays debating whether “Today’s Chinese Women Ought to Return to

²² Ping Zhang 张苹, “Hope for the future(今后之希望)” *Phoenix*, 1935, 57.

²³ *Ibid.*,

²⁴ *Ibid.*,

Their Families.” The affirmative side represented the position that women should not abandon their family duties for the benefits of women’s liberation. Their argument mirrored the New Life Movement rhetoric that women could enjoy all their equal rights of education and such, but they should return to their families after school. Serving their families was the same as serving society because the family was the basic unit of a society. The first speaker, Meizhen Dong, stated that by returning to their families, women would decrease the competition for jobs and ease the anxiety of unemployment. Women and men should be responsible for different parts of a more civilized society due to the more precise division of labor and increased efficiency. For example, women ought to take over household duties as dictated by Confucian traditions.²⁵ The second speaker, Longxin Wu, pointed out that, “biological differences” between men and women supported women’s domesticity. It was women’s “sacred mission” to raise the next generation of “great citizens” because biologically speaking, only women could produce breast milk which was medically proved to have the best nutrients. Moreover, mothers’ care was important to children because “motherhood was the only true and genuine love in the world” and it only worked when mothers stayed at home.²⁶ The last speaker on the affirmative side, Lili Lin argued that, “if a woman went out and worked in society,” the family’s expenses would increase because of “salaries paid to servants or babysitters.”²⁷ Since women were not able to earn as much to cover the expenses, staying at home could save money. One mother would have more than one child, so by the time the children grew up to be independent individuals, the mother would not have the energy to serve in society.

²⁵ Meizhen Dong 董梅真, “Today’s Chinese Women Ought to Return to Families: Affirmative One/今日中国应提倡妇女回家: 正面第一位,” *Phoenix*, 1936, 147-149.

²⁶ Longxin Wu 吴隆新, “Affirmative Two/正面第二位,” *Phoenix*, 1936, 149.

²⁷ Lili Lin 凌励立, “Affirmative Three 正面第三位,” *Phoenix*, 1936, 149-150.

The Opposing side, however, presented the view that women's liberation should include women's right to work in society rather than to just stay at home, much like the rhetoric from the May Fourth Movement. They argued that urging Chinese women to return to their families was a step backward for women's liberation in China. The first debater on the Opposing side, Yiyun Zhang, challenged the assumption that women could only choose between jobs and family chores, rather than finding a balance. Citing the maternity leave policy in Russia, she argued that, "women should not give up a whole lifetime of work for a few years of child birth, breastfeeding, or housework." It would be a total waste of talent if women were trapped in housework all the time.²⁸ The second Opposing debater, Aili Shen, dismissed the accusation of women taking up jobs from society. She pointed out that the cause of unemployment was not that women's involvement in society drove up competition but that the industries in China were not well developed. Women had a lower wage not because they were less qualified, but because their ability was not equally valued as that of men.²⁹ The third speaker the Opposing side, Shuqi Gu, argued that allowing women to take jobs in fact benefited the society more.³⁰ The more women worked, the more manpower there was to produce, thus helping economic development and alleviating the poverty issue in society. By achieving women's liberation, China could catch up with the international trend and compete with foreign countries.

This debate illuminated a significant moment in the yearbooks. It demonstrated the conversations that the girls were having with each other as the demands for female domesticity increased in this decade. These conversations not only allowed them to voice their own views but also played an important role in shaping their understanding of the issue of domesticity. As they

²⁸Yiyun Zhang 张倚云, "Today's Chinese Women Ought to Return to Families: Negative One/今日中国应提倡妇女回家庭: 反面第一位," *Phoenix*, 1936, 153-154.

²⁹Aili Shen 沈爱丽, "Negative Two/反面第二位," *Phoenix*, 1936, 154.

³⁰Shuqi Gu 顾淑琪, "Negative Three/反面第三位," *Phoenix*, 1936, 154-155.

archived their communications and detailed their thoughts in the space of the yearbooks, they also developed strategies to handle the challenges.

The solution to the dilemma

This debate represented the paradox facing the female students in the missionary schools in the 1930s. The fact that the students could formulate the arguments for both sides not only indicated that they were aware of the oppositions for women working, but also showed that they struggled to justify their ambitions to go beyond the domestic constraints arising from their identities as women. With this discussion happening in the schools, the students started to navigate between the conflicting demands for a real modern woman and the dictates of conservatism. In fact, the third speaker who argued for women's return to family, Lili Lin, published another article in an earlier section of the yearbook encouraging high school graduates to either continue with their education or enter the workplace with "persistence and courage."³¹

Despite the reiteration of family values both in school and in public discourse, female students did not accept that marriage was the best solution to their life problems. Instead, they were critically aware of the problems with marriage and constantly emphasized the idea of women's self-sufficiency. The "new subjectivity" that Wang Zheng noted from the May Fourth women showed through in students' writings, including essays and fiction from yearbooks of this decade.

In the 1930 *McTyeirean*, Wenyun Ding wrote about the relationship between women's education and women's domestic duties. She acknowledged that being "virtuous wives and good mothers" was indeed an important aspect of women's duties but women should not be limited to only "sewing and cooking." She acknowledged that "men and women [were] doing the same

³¹Lili Lin 凌励立, "Immediate Issues of High School Students/中学生的切身问题," *Phoenix*, 1936, 144-145.

jobs” and therefore women should get the same “training for jobs” in their education as well.

Women’s education should also prepare them for at least “economic independence” because it was the best way to advance “women’s status.”³² Wenyun’s endorsement of women’s vocational education differed from the domesticity ideals and exemplified the May Fourth liberal discourse.

In the 1930 *Phoenix*, Zhen Xie wrote a three-scene drama about the marital problems of a 20-year-old female college student. After she visited her parents and came back to her house, she found out that her husband did not come home the night before because he was cheating on her with her childhood best friend. She was furious and upset. When she ranted to her widowed aunt about her discovery, she denounced the dishonesty of men and decided that she would leave him. She asserted repeatedly, “I could still make a living without him.”³³ The author based the story on the assumption that the income of a husband was the default source of living for a married woman. Problems in marriage also indicated threats for financial stability for a young wife like the female protagonist. However, giving a gloomy depiction of marriage, the story ended with the implication that the female protagonist could be self-sufficient and save herself from misery through work outside of the home because she was a college-educated student after all.

The importance of women’s education and self-sufficiency versus failed marital relationship continued to be a theme in later yearbooks as well. The 1935 *McTyeirean* recorded a story of elopement.³⁴ One day, a little sister, Shan, went missing after school. Her big sister Ying and their mother both went out to look for her but couldn’t find any clues. With no further news for several days, Ying had to go back to high school to continue her studies. However, the mother could not bear the sorrow, became ill and died soon after. After five years, Ying went on

³²Wenyun Ding 丁文蕴, “On Women’s Education/女子教育谈,” *McTyeirean*, 1930, 1-2.

³³ Zhen Xie, “Regrets,” *Phoenix*, 1930, 37-44

³⁴Shugui Shen 沈漱瑰, “After school 课后,” *McTyeirean*, 1935.

to college. One day after class, she passed by a girl who was selling flowers on the street. Suddenly Ying recognized that the flower girl was her little sister. Shan told Ying that years ago, she eloped with a businessman who promised to provide for her. However, the businessman had failed in his career and lost all his money. He left her afterwards so she could only sustain herself by selling flowers. Regretfully, Shan said she should have learned how to “support herself” better so as to not be in such a poor condition. The story repeated the earlier theme that marriages could also fail and might not be the safest way to make a living, but if a girl received education, she would have the ability to sustain herself.

Both the essays and the fiction in the 1930s yearbooks showed that female students were defending their independence as modern young women. They witnessed the increasing demand for women’s domestic duties in marriage and felt deep frustration with it. They were critical about the limitations of female domesticity and constantly argued for alternatives. To them, it seemed perfectly reasonable to handle both family duties and job requirements as long as they were able to get a good education. Facing a wave of conservatism, they insisted on the value of self-sufficiency that originated in the May Fourth Era and persisted through the rest of the decade.

A Decade of Restriction and Resistance

In the second decade of yearbook publications, anti-Japanese nationalism became the main social and political concern of the female students in the two missionary schools. An endorsement of domesticity also characterized this decade of restrictive gender roles. The girls were aware of the conservative ideals from the New Life Movement, but they were reluctant to accept the rhetoric. Through words and activities, they asserted their pursuit for independence.

In response to the political, social and cultural challenges of the decade, the girls managed to create their version of ideal good modern Chinese women, who valued education, who pursued self-sufficiency and who took action in services to show support for the nation. Their initiatives resembled the characterization of “new subjectivity” from the May Fourth Era. However, when the Second Sino-Japanese War finally broke out, the discussion on segregated gender roles became less obvious in the face of the more pressing national crisis. New challenges were ahead for the girls.

Chapter Three: Wartime Mobilization and Divided Gender Role Expectations, 1937 - 1948

After a decade of tension, the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937. On August 13, the first major battle happened right in Shanghai, where the two missionary schools were located, bringing the most intense combat at the beginning of what was to become a “total war” right to the doorstep of these institutions. The Battle of Shanghai caused immediate damage near the international concessions, drastically changing the lives of the girls from the two schools.

The outbreak of war, naturally, interrupted the operation of the two missionary schools. During the battle of Shanghai, the Japanese Army bombarded the area near the school buildings of St Mary’s Hall.¹ As a result, the school had to move to a business building in downtown Shanghai. In 1941, Japanese troops occupied the campus of the McTyeire School and used it as a medical facility for their injured soldiers. From 1942 to 1943, all the foreign missionaries were placed into what the Japanese Army called Civilian Assemblies, which were internment camps for European and American residents in areas occupied by the Japanese Army. Under these circumstances, the majority of American and British faculty members were forced to leave St. Mary’s Hall and the McTyeire School.² Only after Japan surrendered in WWII in 1945 were students from both schools able to come back to their original campuses and resume their secondary education.³

The impact of the war permeated students’ writings in the yearbooks from this era. In *Phoenix* 1938, Tsu Foh-Pau from St. Mary’s Hall complained that because the temporary school

¹ Yongchu Xu and Jinyu Chen, *In Memory of St. Mary’s Hall 追忆圣玛丽女校* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2014): 72.

² Jinyu Chen, *McTyeire School(1892-1952)中西女中* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2016) 47.

³ Yongchu Xu and Jinyu Chen, *St. Mary’s Hall 圣玛丽女校* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2014) 47 - 50.

was a “business building located in the noisy section of the city,” it became more difficult to concentrate in class.⁴ She also pointed out that, “there [was] great difficulty in getting rice” and “the purchase [was] limited to one dollar each buyer” after “one waited hours and hours...in front of a rice shop under the supervision of a policeman.”⁵ In *McTyeirean* 1946, Yuncai Xie recalled the day when the Japanese troops took over their campus. On hearing the news, she and her classmates rushed to school to “take as many books as possible” from the school library in order to protect them.⁶ So Man-Shan felt very upset at the “first sight after [their] return” to campus. She wrote that, “the garden that was once so lovely was damaged by the tracks of trucks and dugouts” and “the auditorium where meetings were dignifiedly held” were full of “piles of worn out beds.”⁷ Their inconvenience was no comparison to the absolute devastation experienced in other parts of China, but as the war went on, the students would come to an increasing understanding of the real hardship of the war.

Because of the turbulence caused by a decade of war, yearbook publication also faced tremendous difficulty. The last existing St. Mary’s yearbook dates from 1942 and possibly they never resumed publication after that. The yearbook publication of McTyeire School also stopped in 1941 and resumed in 1946 only to cease entirely in 1948. The content in yearbooks also decreased in volume. Especially in the 1940s, the yearbooks no longer had a section for essays that featured most of the discussions about social and political issues, such as gender roles or citizenship. The advertisement section also shrank, indicating the economic difficulties facing businesses and private schools.

⁴ Tsu Foh-Pau, “Difficult Conditions,” *Phoenix* 1938, n.a.

⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶ Yuncai Xie 谢蕴才, “Snapshot of School life – Rescuing Books/学校生活片段----抢救书籍,” *McTyeirean*, 1946, n.a.

⁷ So Man-Shan, “First sight after Our Return,” *McTyeirean*, 1946, n.a.

Not only did the war interrupt school operation as well as yearbook publication, it also changed the discourse on gender roles. As with the liberal ideologies, which had emerged from the May Fourth Movement, and the conservative messages that stemmed from the New Life Movement, continued to contradict each other, war brought new intensity to issues of gender and nationalism. The two leading political parties, the KMT and CCP, also used gender as a tool to mobilize women. The demands for being proper modern Chinese women shifted again. Some familiar rhetoric returned such as the exhortation to be a “dutiful citizen,” although “duty” and “citizen” bore different meanings in this decade. Therefore, the last decade of yearbook publications witnessed the final stage where the female students navigated between all the identities and ideologies available to them: dutiful citizen, patriotic student, proper young woman, socially conscious professional and, sometimes, faithful Christian.

Ambiguous Gender Role Expectations

If the May Fourth Movement opened up liberal discourse on gender equality while the New Life Movement steered towards more conservative and segregated gender roles, the war interrupted the discussion of gender ideals, leaving the two sides of the debate running parallel to each other. In public discourse, women’s domesticity and women’s independence, two concepts that in previous decades were treated as contradictory, both became equally valued and emphasized. On one hand, the conservative values from the New Life Movement posited that the household was still the proper space for women. Managing the home was still mainly women’s task. On the other hand, women’s work outside of the home was not frowned upon and woman’s careers were encouraged again after the war started. The advertisements in the yearbooks from the war era reflected the double-sided expectations for women.

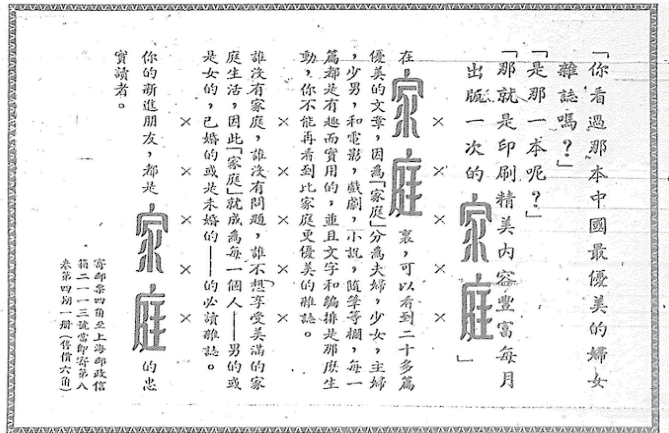


Figure 6 Family Magazine Advertisement. *Phoenix*, 1941.

The emphasis on family appeared to be a normal theme in the advertisements of this era. An advertisement for the Da Xing Restaurant in 1938 depicted a husband, wife and child having a happy dinner to illustrate that this place was “perfect for family gatherings.”

Diamond rings and wedding portrayals appeared repeatedly as well.⁸ The advertisement for *Family* magazine stood out in the 1941 *Phoenix*. With the word “family” bolded, enlarged and embedded in every other sentence, the advertisement emphasized that this magazine was the most “beautiful women’s magazine.” According to this magazine, every woman needed their advice because “having a perfect family” was the desire of “everyone, married or unmarried alike.”⁹ As in the previous decade, women here appear as the center of the household, and having a family was deemed ideal and appropriate.

Unlike what the early 1930s New Life Movement proposed, however, the emphasis on women’s careers resurfaced. In addition to depicting perfect family life, the advertisers and businesses also appealed to women’s economic independence as well as their education. An advertisement in 1937 *Phoenix* from the Central Depository Institution imagined a conversation between a father and a daughter. The daughter asked her father to create an account for her in the Central Depository Institution because her girls’ school classmates who did so had started to earn a decent amount of interest. On hearing this information, the father, who was worried about his daughter’s college tuition fees, decided to join the Institution. While this advertisement indicated

⁸ *Phoenix*, 1938, n.a.

⁹ *Phoenix*, 1939, n.a.

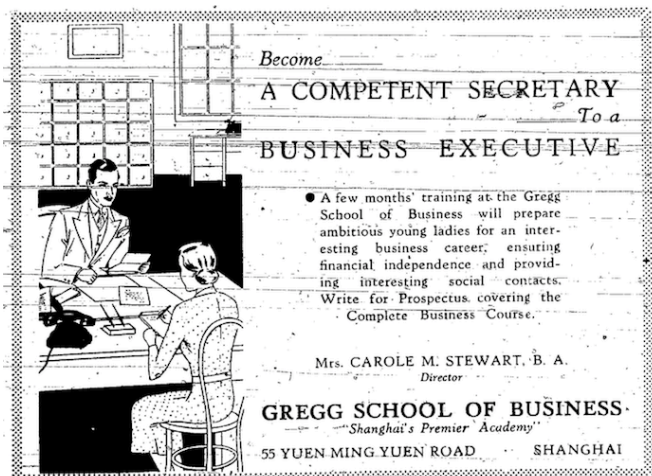


Figure 7 "Become A Competent Secretary to a Business Executive", *Phoenix*, 1941.

that women's higher education had become more and more normal, others showed that there were fewer restrictions on women returning to their families after getting education. The 1941 *Phoenix* contained an advertisement from the Gregg School of Business. The ads stated that the school was able to "prepare ambitious young ladies for

an interesting business career, ensuring financial independence."¹⁰ Although the position that the Gregg School was preparing the female students for was by default a "secretary to a business executive," which implied a secondary status of women in workplaces of the time, the presence of this advertisement in the yearbook nevertheless suggests that more options beyond domesticity were open to the female students.

The messages in the advertisements represent a window on the dilemma about women's proper role facing the female students. As consumers of these advertisements, the girls had different options in front of them. Although female domesticity was no longer the only ideal women's role in society as it was in the 1930s, the maternity was still supposed to be central to their lives. Even if women's economic independence was increasingly emphasized and championed, their relationship with their husbands was given priority.

The dilemma appears in students' writings of this decade as well. Contemplating the importance of marriage and married life seemed to be a struggle for the female students. In the 1939 *Phoenix*, Ruiyu Li wrote a short story about an argument that happened between a husband and wife. The husband was obliged to join the army and show a strong ambition to defend the

¹⁰ *Phoenix*, 1941, n.a.

country. Although the wife was not willing to let him go, she understood his ambition and promised that she would take care of the children. With her compromise, the husband complimented, “this *is* the *new* woman!”¹¹ The use of the term “new woman” most resembled the ideal woman from the 1930s who served the country by managing the household and supporting her husband. In 1941, another student, Chengyun Ge, also wrote a short story imagining herself at the end of her life, but she did so from a Christian perspective. Repenting to the Lord, she “regret[ted]” that she did not get married and enjoy the happiness of marriage in her lifetime.¹² While the female students from earlier years had been skeptical of marriage, this piece indicates that the idea of spending a lifetime without marriage was undesirable for girls like her.

Although getting married seemed to be a necessary component in female students’ reflections on women’s life, simply being a housewife was insufficient for them. In the “Highlights of Class of 1943” from the 1946 *McTyeirean*, the author described that their class president “was the first to set the example” to get married and raise children because “practically... marriage is a young woman’s career.” However, the author immediately cautioned the readers not to “worry” because the president “hasn’t buried herself neck deep in domestic-life...”¹³ The author’s explanation of her classmate as a housewife revealed the implicit suggestion that married life entailed embracing the burden of domesticity. This burden, however, was something undesirable and worthy of caution.

Hongsheng Wang from St. Mary’s Hall also expressed her concern with being a housewife when she thought through her goals for “self-realization.” She commented that, “men would never see marriage as a path for their future...it totally lowers self-value and shows a

¹¹ Ruiyu Li, “Good couple 贤伉俪,” *Phoenix*, 1939, 21-23.

¹² Chengyun Ge 葛成筠, “Last Wish/送终,” *Phoenix*, 1941, 57-58.

¹³ Anonymous, “Highlight of Class of 1943,” *McTyeirean*, 1946, n.a.

complete loss of independence. If female students consider marriage as a future career...once becoming a housewife, there's no difference between getting married and laying back at home..." What Wang regarded as a "real valuable path" for female students was to "achieve self-realization" or "contribute to society as much as one can in a lifetime."¹⁴ Wang's argument echoed the liberal May Fourth ideals that women should be self-sufficient and participants in society to make concrete contributions.

The significance of women's self-sufficiency also appeared in other students' writings as well. In the 1939 *Phoenix*, another student created a story about an after-war reunion of two old friends. Because of the war, one friend became an actress and singer in a dancing club for a living. Looking down upon her own occupation, the actress and singer mourned the loss of her reputation. The other friend, however, consoled that "all occupations contributed equally to the Republic of China" and praised her ability to "sustain herself."¹⁵ Working in entertainment implied low status in the 1930s in China, but because the actress and singer achieved independence due to her work, the negative connotation of being in entertainment was balanced out. Compared to the narratives of worrying about the burden of domesticity, this story indicated the girls' implicit preference of self-sufficiency.

While female figures continued to be the protagonists in student fiction, the discussions of gender roles disappeared from other forms of writing, such as essays. Unlike the prevalence of "gender equality" or "women's education" in the 1920s, or the debates on whether or not women should return to their families in the 1930s, the yearbooks in the last decade barely contained any formal discussion of gender roles. On one hand, this indicates that women's work and education had perhaps become more normal and less controversial. Thus, the need to promote gender

¹⁴ Hongsheng Wang 汪宏声, "Self-Realization/从金丝桃说到自我表现", *Phoenix*, 1939, 83-84.

¹⁵ Shiwei Li 李士玮, "Accidental Reunion(意外的重逢)," *Phoenix*, 1939, 13-15.

equality was no longer necessary. On the other hand, the lack of discussion also suggests that there was not a clear and unified rhetoric on women's proper roles in this decade. The ambiguity in gender role expectations did not propel the girls to make a stand. Therefore, the ideals for women's proper roles became less restrictive than previous years and thus allowed girls to experiment.

Students on the Frontier

Although the war brought a pause to the debate about the ideal roles for women, it nevertheless exposed the female students from the two missionary girls' schools to cruelties that they had never directly witnessed before. Meanwhile, the leading political parties, the KMT and the CCP, also began mobilizing women to join the defensive forces in the war. Motivated by the political ferment as well as by sincere compassion for the suffering of others, the students in the clubs reacted by increasing their philanthropic work. The relief efforts became the center of their new "duties" as "citizens." By collecting donations, participating in relief services and organizing discussions, the girls strived to show that they were fully aware of the national priority.

Since the start of the war the students had witnessed people running away from the war zone, taking shelter in the international concessions. For example, in the 1938 *Phoenix*, Li Me Chung remembered one morning when she witnessed refugees fleeing from the war area. Woken up by the unusual noise of crowds one day, she saw from her bedroom window that "some very old men and women were lingering on the street, with their grandchildren crying behind" and "one little child had evidently lost track of his family for he cried and cried, calling his papa and mama, but had no response." Seeing that "people had been passing by on the street for four hours,

and ...there were thousands more who became homeless,” she exclaimed that “it was piteous!”¹⁶

Living in the international concessions, these upper-class girls perhaps never had similar experiences before, but as the war continued, these experiences were hard to ignore.

With students being acutely aware of the hostile environment around them, the philanthropic work of student clubs reached its peak during the war.¹⁷ Direct donation became the first major activity that students were able to carry out and they also adopted various strategies to raise funds and collect materials. In 1937, the Patriotic Club at St. Mary’s Hall collected monetary donations from students and purchased a total of “two thousand items” including “gloves, socks, towels, toothbrushes and toothpaste.” In addition, the Patriotic Club also encouraged students to sew “cotton vests” and donated the clothes to refugee camps.¹⁸ In 1938, the Student Association collected old clothes from students. Even the Athletic Club “contributed eighty dollars to buy some winter clothes and medicines” for the soldiers in 1939.¹⁹

Planning fundraising campaigns and events was another strategy that the girls used to collect donations. In 1938, the Patriotic Club organized a Charity Bazaar during the Christmas Season, collecting crafts from students and selling them to raise funds. In 1939, the Patriotic Club and the Clear Heart Association planned a Charity Concert and organized a Christmas Play at “Thanksgiving and Christmas.” Similarly, students from the two organizations raised funds by selling tickets of the performances to the public.²⁰ In 1939, while all the clubs continued to collect money and old clothes for refugee relief, the Student Association also launched an “Anti-Extravagance Campaign.” The campaign urged students to save money on entertainment and

¹⁶ Li Me Chung, “The Piteous Sight I Witnessed”, *Phoenix*, 1938, n.a.

¹⁷ “Report by Student Association, Patriotic Club, Tsing Sing Wei and Athletic Club/自治会国光会清心会体育会联合报告”, *Phoenix* 1938, page missing.

¹⁸ “The Patriotic Club/国光会”, *Phoenix*, 1937, 77-78.

¹⁹ Ling Kuo-Fen, “A Helping Hand”, *Phoenix* 1939, 37-38.

²⁰ *Ibid.*,

luxury goods, such as going to movies or buying stockings, and instead donate the money to the Student Association. With this campaign, the Student Association was able to donate “thirty dollars per month to the relief organizations.”²¹

Service was the second major activity that the student clubs focused on. In 1938, Clear Heart Association initiated visits and volunteer work in hospitals and schools where the refugees stayed. After four weeks’ training in nursing, a group of ten students from St. Mary’s Hall was sent to the Red Cross Medical Corps for a day’s practical work. Besides medical care, they also “wrote letters for the soldiers to their families or friends” and “conversed with them and sang for them when they asked.”²² In 1939, Clear Heart Association also sent other students to help in refugee camps. In the camps, the students were mainly in charge of teaching the refugee children to read and write.²³ The students from the McTyeire School established a Charity Elementary School in 1945 for children who could not go to school due to the war. Although they “faced difficulties” in opening the school, they persisted in maintaining the educational service because they believed that “elementary education is the basic education that everyone should get,” and “hope[d] that the children could get the same level of education as everyone else.”²⁴

Other than doing service and fundraising for relief work, the students also made an effort to keep up with the current political situation. Following their “News Examination” program in 1937 that distributed weekly news pamphlets, the Patriotic Club added subscriptions to more news magazines to the school library.²⁵ The club also hosted news discussion seminars every

²¹ Yu Yuling 俞毓灵, “Student Association Report/学生自治会工作报告”, *Phoenix* 1939, 73.

²² LOO KYAN-FAUNG, “A DAY’S WORK IN THE RED CROSS SOCIETY,” *Phoenix* 1938, n.a.

²³ Lu Anwen 陆安文, “Tsing Sing Wei Report 清心会工作报告”, *Phoenix*, 1939, 77-78.

²⁴ Zufeng Xu 徐祖丰, “About Charity Elementary School/关于义务小学,” *McTyeirean*, 1946, n.a.

²⁵ Wu Huaying 吴华英, “Patriotic Club Report 国光会工作报告”, *Phoenix* 1939, 74-77.

other week to “inform the students of the political and social conditions in the country” and encourage them to “express their own opinions and ideas.”²⁶

The club activities in the missionary schools drew inspiration from the KMT’s New Life Movement in the wartime. After the start of the war in 1937, the KMT continued to use the New Life Movement as part of its strategy to mobilize participation in the war, although the movement redirected its focus along gender specific guidelines. Instead of detailing the specific hemline of dresses or promoting the ideal of “virtuous wives and good mothers” as in the early 1930s, the New Life Movement directed women to focus on serving “the poor” to “diminish class conflicts.”²⁷ Specifically, for the Women’s Guidance Committee led by Song Mei-Ling, the main tasks were to “fundraise” for “the poor” and to “carry out relief work” for war refugees.²⁸ Because of Song’s missionary educational background, networks, and religious beliefs, many of the service activities that the Committee launched were closely tied to missionary institutions, where a good number of graduates from the two schools worked. Other alumni from St. Mary’s Hall also worked closely with the Committee during wartime, such as Qingtang Yu, an alumna from the Class of 1919 who was “the head of the production division” of the Committee.²⁹ Due to the missionary educational environment and the close connections to the KMT, it was easy for the girls to follow the KMT models in their school activities.

The club activities deepened the students’ understanding of social problems. Students who worked in medical facilities and refugee camps had vivid memories of the disheartening

²⁶ TSANG SIEU-AI, “Some Duties We Have Done for Our Country,” *Phoenix* 1937, 71.

²⁷ Sun, “*New life*,” 46.

²⁸ Ferlanti, Federica. “The New Life Movement at War: Wartime Mobilisation and State Control in Chongqing and Chengdu, 1938—1942.” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 187-212.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23615456>.

²⁹ Schneider, Helen M. “Mobilising Women: The Women’s Advisory Council, Resistance and Reconstruction during China’s War with Japan.” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 213-36.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23615457>.

scenes that they then recorded in the yearbook. Kwauh We Tsung, who visited a refugee camp, described her first impression of the refugee camp:

Entering the shed I saw a group of people with pallid faces and humped backs shivering violently on the muddy and chilly ground. What they had on their bodies were thin, torn summer clothes. The innocent little children were mere skeletons, idly clinging to their mother's arms with feeble and sorrowful looks. The grown-ups who used to be strong and energetic threw themselves on the ground as the corpses of the wounded soldiers on the battlefield.³⁰

Loo Kyan Faung, who worked in the Red Cross Medical Corps, noted that, “as soon as I entered the main building, I found that it was not a very desirable place...the house, having long suffered from wind and rain, was now old and decrepit...we smelled medicine and blood every second...there were about a hundred wounded soldiers in one big room...” Despite the poor conditions, they still followed the doctors’ instructions to prepare medicines for the soldiers.³¹

As the social problems became more pressing during the war, the service activities played a central role in shaping the girls’ self-conception. Xiang Xiong, a student teacher in the Charity Elementary School from McTyeire, recalled an episode from her teaching experience. One day, she was checking her students’ homework, and one student was not able to hand it in. Angry and disappointed at first, she was moved by the student after he explained that he did not have time to review schoolwork because he needed to take care of his sick mother and little sister, but he still wanted to learn.³²

Xiang recalled that this interaction made her realize her students’ conditions and confirmed her enthusiasm for service.

³⁰ Kwauh We-Tsung, “A Visit to Refugee Camp”, *Phoenix*, 1939, 38-39.

³¹ LOO KYAN-FAUNG, “A DAY’S WORK IN THE RED CROSS SOCEITY,” *Phoenix* 1938, page missing.

³²Xiong Xiang 熊翔, “Extracurricular: A Scene in Teaching/课外活动：执教的一幕,” *McTyeirean*, 1948, n.a.

On one hand, these social experiences became an important component in the girls' thinking about their new duties as female citizens. The horrifying consequences of the war became evidence that the students should follow the ideals of the Women's Guidance Committee and fulfill their duties as citizens to save the country. On witnessing the conditions of refugees, Ling Guo-Fen urged her fellow classmates that, "each one of [them] should be aware of the citizen's duty." She reminded her classmates of the urgent situation that China faced and expressed her determination to help the refugees in any way she could:

"Each new morn, new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike on the face of Heaven" is a very excellent and exact statement fitted for describing the present conditions of our China... Since we are citizens, we cannot stand by and watch our country fellows being starved and frozen to death. Sympathy and pity are of no use to them unless we put our sympathy and pity into practice with our whole heart... Rich people can contribute money, while the others can offer their wits and energies.

On the other hand, the students from missionary schools considered their social service as a manifestation of being good Christians. They helped the refugees not only because the country needed them to, but because they "must remember the words of Jesus," such as "Freely you have received, freely give" and "To minister, not to be ministered unto."³³ They also criticized their classmates who didn't participate in the "Anti-Extravagance Campaign" by citing the Bible. Ling Kuo-Fen wrote that, "in school alone, I see many students who spend a great deal on amusements without a thought of the poor refugees... I sincerely hope that many will recall and bear in mind the verse in the Scriptures: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'³⁴ The opportunities provided by the club activities during

³³ Ling Kuo-Fen, "What We Did For The Refugees", *Phoenix* 1939, 39-40.

³⁴ Ling Kuo-Fen, "A Helping Hand", *Phoenix* 1939, 37-38

the war, especially the ones that mirrored the Women's Guidance Committee, allowed them to think through the different teachings from their identities.

Because the students from St. Mary's Hall and the McTyeire School had strong connections with the Women's Guidance Committee and because of their elite family background, they also borrowed the terms from the KMT rhetoric, which was serving the "poor" to "diminish class conflicts." The students in their writings often used terms as "poor children" or "poor village people" to describe the group that they were serving. For example, when selling tickets for their Christmas showcases, Ling Kuo-Fen described their purpose was to support the "poor children" around the students.³⁵ The use of "serving the poor" indicated KMT's elite attitude that only the educated class could lead and save the rest of China. This attitude was in contrast to the CCP's agenda to mobilize the peasant population to "unite the poor", according to scholar Xiaoping Sun.³⁶

These distinct approaches to the "poor" was only a part of the strategic differences between KMT and CCP in their competition for the control of the state, and the resultant divisions were also reflected in the strategies to mobilize women during the Second-Sino Japanese War. Gender roles had been one of the major political battlefields since the May Fourth Movement. In the early 1920s when the KMT had been in power for a decade and when the CCP had just started to take shape, both parties took on the May Fourth's "gender equality" as one of the founding stones of their constitutions. However, later in the 1920s, the two parties started moving in different directions in terms of which women they were targeting and what exactly constituted "gender equality." From 1929 to 1934, the CCP used "radical" Marriage Law to win support from the "peasant" communities in Jiangxi Province in the process of establishing its

³⁵ Ibid.,

³⁶ Sun, *New life*, 46.

regime. The CCP advocated for women's emancipation in the manner of "saving women from forced marriages and encouraging women to participate in class associations and political institutions."³⁷ In contrast, the KMT focused more on the role of middle- to upper-class women in urban areas, such as the McTyeire-educated First Lady Song Mei-Ling and promoted female domesticity, as illustrated in Chapter 2. The fact that the KMT decided to launch the New Life Movement with Song as an exemplar in 1934 in Jiangxi Province was partially motivated by their competition with the CCP.³⁸ After the war started, both parties began to mobilize women to participate in the war. However, while the CCP emphasized that women could do the same tasks as men, the KMT continued to mobilize women to lead the service end in the war.

Although students' club activities in the two missionary schools clearly resembled the ideals of the KMT, this connection did not stop them from identifying with the CCP as well and even holding leadership roles and parts in the CCP after the war. After graduating from St. Mary's Hall in 1945, Manrong Ying joined the CCP as an underground member, organized protests in student movements and worked as a translator for the CCP.³⁹ Mingming Qu became the first Communist Party underground member from the McTyeire School in April 1949.⁴⁰ Alumni from the two schools also supported CCP. Feixia Wang, class of 1919, St. Mary's Hall, used her house as a communication point for the CCP during the war and she also became a leader in the Women's Bureau after the establishment of the People's Republic of China.⁴¹

Even though the strategies differed between the two parties, neither of them denied women's participation in society in the decade after the war started. As Xiaoping Sun observes,

³⁷ Ibid.,

³⁸ Ji, *Construction of Nation and State*: 244.

³⁹ Yongchu Xu and Jinyu Chen, *In Memory of St. Mary's Hall 追忆圣玛丽女校* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2014): 67.

⁴⁰ Jinyu Chen, *McTyeire School(1892-1952)中西女中* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2016) 58.

⁴¹ Xu and Jinyu Chen, *In Memory of St. Mary's Hall*, 142.

women who worked with the Women's Guidance Committee, "saw their own civil responsibility as directly tied to social reform and enlightenment and developed ways of enacting patriotic morality to create a more productive, rational and operationally effective nation."⁴² No matter which political party the female students identified or worked with, many of them embraced the opportunity to provide services, and in doing so practiced the skills linked to work outside the home.

Expanded Opportunities

By exploring their capacity for independence within club activities and amid the less-restrictive social environment for women during and after the war, the female students of this decade developed wider imagination and an expanded understanding of their future life choices than during any other previous decades. The practices in club works allowed the students to navigate between the ambiguous debates over women's proper roles.

Shican Li dreamed about her future in the 1941 *Phoenix*. With her passion in literature, she wanted to be a "poet" or a "book author," but this career was too "idealistic." After going to a concert, she then thought about becoming a "musician," but the stories of musicians who were "broke" and led "difficult...lives" discouraged her from this job as well. Eventually, when she read a novella about the life of a schoolteacher, she was moved by the "sacredness" of being a teacher. She volunteered to teach in the Charity Elementary School during the summer and found teaching to be an interesting job. Although teaching was "hard work," she believed that she could make "the greatest contribution" by being a teacher and therefore, that was what she wanted to do.⁴³ Shican's dream exemplifies expanded opportunities available to these schools girls and the connection between school activities and future choices. While the girls in previous

⁴² Schneider, "Mobilising Women," 231. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23615457>.

⁴³ Shican Li 李士璨, "My Future/我的前途," *Phoenix*, 1941, 47-48.

yearbooks mainly focused on teaching or doing medical work, Shican did not exclude other professions from her consideration. She made her final decision not only because teaching would be more beneficial for the children but rather because she did not believe she had that enough “talent” in arts or literature.

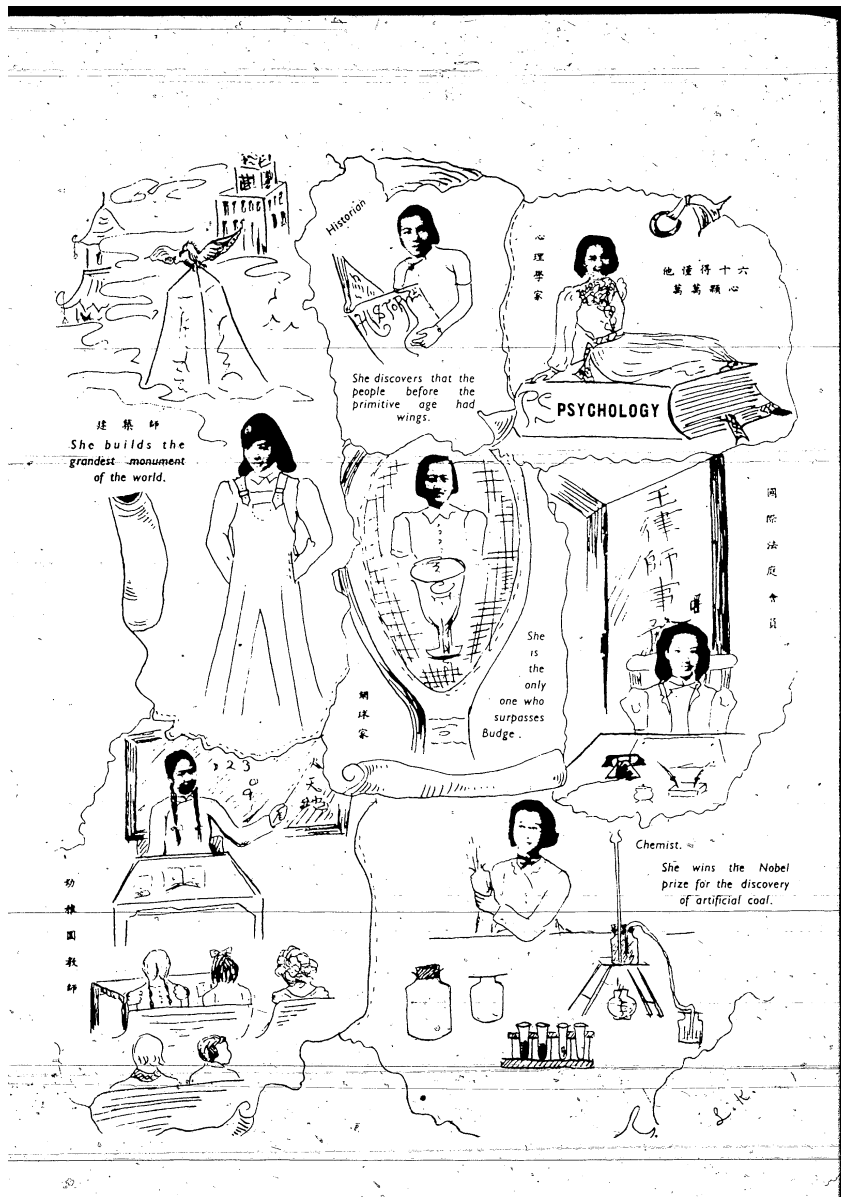


Figure 8 Class Prophecies, *Phoenix* 1941.

Class prophecies from the decade also included a broader variety of life choices after graduate. A class prophecy from 1941 illustrated the professions from all walks of life that the

girls imagined themselves to have in the future (Figure 3.) Not only were the types of job different, the girls also wanted to make the biggest achievement in their imagined professions. One girl wanted to be a lawyer who opened up her own law clinic and joined the International Law Committee. Another wanted to be a tennis player who was “the only one to surpass Budge,” an American tennis player that won world champion in 1938. Another girl wanted to be a chemist who would someday win the “Nobel Prize for the discovery of artificial coal.” The list of ambitions expressed in the yearbooks extended to include architects, psychologists, musicians, bankers as well as leaders in international women’s organizations.⁴⁴ The long list remains a testament to the ambitions of the female students during this era, which shows a marked capacity to escape the restriction of female domesticity, at least within the pages of the yearbooks, in contrast to previous decades.

The girls’ hopeful musings did not stop in the yearbooks but continued in reality as well.⁴⁵ The 1946 *McTyeirean* recorded the locations of alumni from the Class of 1943.⁴⁶ While some “[were] planning to be engaged,” other either continued their education in a variety of realms or started working. For those who were still in school, some “doctors-to-be” were studying at Shanghai Medical College, some were at the “University of Commerce,” and others attended “Soochow University” to study law. For the female graduates who started working, one worked in “an import and export company...buying and selling businesses” as a “speculator” and some worked in the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. As the records from the official history of the two schools showed, a great number of graduates did go on to make major achievements later in their life.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, “Class Prophecies 1941,” *Phoenix*, 1941, n.a..

⁴⁵ Lingyu Lu 卢玲玉, “Recent News of Class of 1946/一九四六级近况”, *McTyeirean*, 1948, n.a.

⁴⁶ “Highlight of Class of 1943,” *McTyeirean*, 1946, n.a..

Conclusion

In 1949, the CCP established the People's Republic of China (PRC), replacing the governance of the KMT in Mainland China. The establishment of the PRC soon brought about the end of the McTyeire School and St. Mary's Hall. In 1950, the CCP launched a second round of the "Campaign to Retrieve the Educational Rights," once again targeting missionary-run educational institutions. Being steadfastly Marxist, the CCP took a firmer stance against Christianity than the KMT did 20 years earlier, and insisted on expelling missionaries from China. As a result, Chinese nationals replaced the missionary teachers at both schools, and majority of them subsequently left China. In 1952, in keeping with the campaign, the Education Bureau of Shanghai decided to merge the administration and student body of the McTyeire School and St. Mary's Hall into one entity, which marked the definitive end of elite missionary education in these schools.¹ This new school is now known as the Shanghai No.3 Girls' Middle School and continues to be an all-female public education institution.²

Although the names of the McTyeire School and St. Mary's Hall no longer exist in Chinese education system today, their legacies are well preserved in the yearbooks. By the time the last issue of the *McTyeirean* was published in 1948, the students in the McTyeire School had created a total of 27 yearbooks, and their counterparts in St. Mary's Hall had created 21.³ The yearbooks not only reflected the changes in the institutions, but essentially archived the thoughts and experiences of their students. These unique records open a window to the past and allow us to hear the changing voices of young girls and their expressive explorations against a remarkable historical backdrop spanning from the peak of the May Fourth Movement to the takeover of the

¹ Liu, *The Changing Face of Women's Education in China*, 175.

² Chen, *McTyeire School(1892-1952)*: 54. Xu and Chen, *St.Mary's Hall*: 176.

³ Chen, *McTyeire School(1892-1952)*: 143.

People's Republic of China. As Chinese society struggled to create a modern state and social order amid considerable foreign pressure, it also conveyed an array of sometimes conflicting gendered expectations. This thesis, therefore, features nearly three decades of schoolgirls attempting to navigate between these varying pressures while negotiating their own versions of the modern female self and sharing their thoughts in the space of the yearbooks. In analyzing these materials, I have highlighted particular patterns shaped by the shifting social and political contexts roiling Chinese society beyond the confines of the schools in question.

From late 1910s to early 1920s, the May Fourth Movement opened up a vibrant discussion centered on feminism and gender equality, and provided a variety of attractive possibilities and new models for the female students. While the discussion on women's new opportunities was inspired by western ideals, the Chinese nationalism fueled by the May Fourth also sparked increasing doubts about Christianity, which represented a visible cultural legacy of Western intervention. Under pressure to emulate the West and identify with Chinese nationalism, the girls modeled themselves as progressive, dutiful, female citizens who took part in "strengthening the country" by doing service activities steeped in their religious values and pursuing careers. Their ideal version of modern Chinese womanhood included a sense of citizen duty and an awareness of being equal to men, while accepting western ideals including Christianity.

After the KMT established the Nanking Nationalist Government, a conservative agenda regained force and put more restrictions on women's roles, essentially promoting their return to a traditional "proper place" from late 1920s to 1930s. Called the New Life Movement, it celebrated an exemplary female figure in the person of Chiang Kai Shek's wife, Song Mei-Ling, an alumna from one of the schools. She both modeled and promoted women's domestic duties

and a conservative maternalism. While the ideal of “virtuous wife and good mother” gained new force, rising anti-Japanese sentiment catalyzed a new wave of Chinese nationalism, motivating young students to participate in patriotic activities. Hearing the constant demands for them to stay in their families, yet sensing the need for patriotic action, the girls remained skeptical of female domesticity, persisted in championing self-reliance and participated in activities to demonstrate their commitment to China’s advancement and sovereignty. In a sense, they constructed a new merger of modernity and tradition: they spoke of an ideal modern woman that was both a good marriage partner but still sought self-sufficiency while sharing the responsibility to “save the nation.”

When the Second Japanese War broke out, Chinese society was forced to refocus its energy on resisting invasion. The leading political parties changed their strategies to mobilize women to participate in the defensive forces. The girls also regarded themselves to be in the center of the coalescing patriotic forces and increased their involvement in relief work. By launching charity campaigns and embracing involvement in political debate, they strived to help resolve the surrounding national crisis. Thus, we see in the yearbooks from this period a general endorsement of women’s careers and advanced education alongside the celebration of family. In a way, the sense of crisis in wartime lifted the restrictive focus on female domesticity and propelled women to explore a wider array of possibilities. During this time, the girls envisioned themselves exploring new opportunities while breaking out of the traditional gender norms in all walks of life.

The experiences of these girls from the two missionary girls’ schools in no way represents the historical reality experienced all Chinese women in the first half of the twentieth century, but their thoughts and actions, as reflected in their yearbooks, nevertheless illustrate the

evolving process of imagining an ideal, modern, Chinese femininity among young girls. Gender as a social construct can be used as political rhetoric and can play an important role in shaping people's behaviors and belief. As this thesis illuminates, rather than passively following an ongoing rhetoric of gender, the schoolgirls analyzed here actively responded to the expectations of young female students and constructed their own ideal selves. The yearbooks also provided an experimental space for them to express and explore the possibilities. Although it is hard to know whether or not the girls were able to achieve the ideals they set out for themselves, their education equipped them to advance.

This thesis, therefore, reveals how the construction of gender can be flexible across time. During the more liberal times characterized as the May Fourth era, these young women voiced egalitarian perspectives and maintained that they should be allowed to perform the same tasks as men. At a more conservative juncture, their ideals shifted toward an emphasis on domesticity, and being "virtuous wives and good mothers." The changes in gender ideologies, however, do not necessarily follow a linear progression, and can shift back and forth depending on the social, political, economic, and cultural factors. However, it matters that who promotes the reigning ideals at any particular moment. Thus, this thesis provides insights into an alternative voices in the process of constructing gender ideals.

The first yearbook (from the McTyeire School in 1917) was published exactly one hundred years from when this project started, yet many of the similar debates about women's roles still persist in contemporary China. While women's work outside of the home is common, the pressures anchored in notions of female domesticity never disappeared. Women who are not married by the age of 30 bear the label of "leftover women." On another level, Women who occupied management positions face the stereotype of being unfeminine, as they are not

shouldering the female responsibilities in their families. Astoundingly, even though these debates took shape one hundred years ago, women in contemporary China still struggle in a similar bind as they seek to balance family and work.

Scholar Xiaoyan Liu, a No.3 Girls' School alumna as well, remarks that the progression from the McTyeire School and St. Mary's Hall to the No.3 School sheds light on the changing face of women's education in modern Chinese history.⁴ The changing women's education no doubt benefited the girls who studied at the McTyeire School, St. Mary's Hall, and even the No.3 Middle School. Hopefully, this thesis can help us understand the ongoing struggles facing Chinese women and provide implications for the future development of women's education.

⁴ Liu, *The Changing Face*, 14, 22.

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