

A Brief Analysis of the Changes of Female Images between China and South Africa

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A Brief Analysis of the Changes of Female Images in the Print Newspapers after the Fourth World Conference on Women

— In cases of China and South Africa

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Abstract

After the Fourth World Conference on Women, 'Media and Women' became a significant issue in the academic research. Platform of Action made requirements about the development of media, especially focusing on the female news and images. Breaking the singular stereotypes of female images became an urgent topic. After selecting two representative newspapers and collecting all the female related news from China and South Africa respectively, we can conclude similarities and differences between the two countries. The first six months in 1995 and 2015 was the period, we could find changes on propaganda of female. Furthermore, according to the different backgrounds between two countries, analyzing reasons of changes.

Key words: Female images Newspaper China South Africa Changes

Chapter 1 Introduction and background

"Female image" has been a hot topic in the study of media research which has been about "women and communication" recently. The female image in the specific field of the media, based on the feminist theory, it can not only reflect the current significant changes on females in all kinds of aspects, but also help to awaken women's own subjective consciousness. Meanwhile, it can also correct some stereotypes and distorted reports on female portraits of the media, thus forming the correct guidance of public opinion, which is meaningful to practical significance.

There is an issue -"An absence of women" existing in the media around the world, China and South Africa are no exceptions. There are two aspects which are related to the absent issue in China: First, women rarely appear in the news reports; Second, when women appear in the news reports, the women's occupations and identities are not reasonable and balanced. (Liu Bingxin, 2011) Men dominate the social role, while women are closely related to family roles. Authoritative roles are monopolized by male, women just are trapped in the traditional and auxiliary roles. For South Africa, Pippa (2001) pointed that seven years after the end of Apartheid, and three years into a new employment equity law intended to promote blacks and women, there are only three women newspaper editors in the country. That is to say, female staff were also absent in this field at that time.

In order to understand the reports of women's media on women's images, the author selected China and South Africa as the object for comparative study and selected Chinese newspapers *Southern Weekly* and South African newspaper *Mail & Guardian* as specific samples.

The two newspapers have something in common: Firstly, both newspapers are released weekly kind. And the readership includes all the citizens of the country, no matter the age, job, race and so on. Secondly, in terms of

the circulation, *Mail & Guardian* was 33 210 in 2015, the population of South Africa is 54960 thousand. That is to say, the percentage was about 0.06%. By contrast, *Southern Weekly*'s circulation was 1.6 million, and the population of China is 1.371 billion, that is to say the percentage was about 0.11%. Thirdly, the two newspapers are printed simultaneously in many cities, and distributed to the whole of the countries. Fourthly, in terms of the contents of newspaper, they not only focus on the domestic news but also international news. What's more, they both include content related to law and art and both comment on central issues. Finally, they both have the reputation "Dare to say". They had the same experience of being prohibited by government in the past.

The researcher selected 51 and 48 newspapers from China, South Africa respectively. The newspapers were selected as follows:

Southern Weekly—51 copies

Mail & Guardian—48 copies

The research specifically focused on the newspapers that were published during the period January to June in 1995 and 2015.

The author analyzed the similarities and differences on the female news change through the collection and analysis of two countries' printing newspapers and explore the related reasons.

Chapter 2 Literature review

Western scholars began to pay attention to media and gender issues in the 1970s and 1980s, and then it became an important subject of Western feminist research. Gaye Tuchman, an American scholar along with

other editors published *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, laid the foundation for the study of female communication. This book also marked that the feminist research had become a branch of communication field. After more than 30 years of development, feminist media research has gradually become a prominent subject, showing a more diversified developing trend.

2.1 In terms of China

Feminism is a kind of Western social thought. Until 1994, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women would be held on the eve of our country, journalism research about women and media got into the research area, that is to say, after 1990s, the Chinese mainland news communication began to study feminism.

The article "Hong Kong residents in the evaluation of women's image in advertising" written by two professors taught at City University of Hong Kong- Ma Li'an, Cui Yiyun was published in *Journalism and Communication Studies* in 1994. This article is not only the first female research in China, but also the first professional thesis of female and media research (Yu Ying, 2010). Two scholars used the questionnaire and they concluded that the general Hong Kong residents' criticism of Asian women's iconic and dependent role in advertising is moderate. *News and Communication Research* magazine published a group of feminist research article in 1995. There are three articles from Indian and Malaysian feminists, including the *Women, the dominant structure in the development and development of change* and a Bangkok Declaration on the Promotion of Women's Rights (Yu Ying, 2010). The articles of these foreign feminists depict the media and women of their country

China scholars discuss gender differences in media use and women's human rights. Yang Ruiming (1993) holds the view that the use of mass media on contemporary women's social awareness, values and the

development of women's self-consciousness, has an important and profound impact. *Media and Gender*, written by Bu Wei was the first systematic book of media and gender monograph in mainland China. This monograph included gender discrimination, women's consciousness, gender and communication, feminist perspectives, covering almost all aspects of media and women's research.

2.2 In terms of South Africa

A Gender and Media Baseline Study, a joint study of the Media Institute of Southern Africa and Gender Links, a Southern African non-governmental organization, found that men dominated the media in Southern Africa.

After investigating the papers, the author found most people focused on the analysis of domestic newspapers. They emphasized the famous politician's appearance in the newspaper, for example, *Representation of black, young, women politicians in South African online news media: a case study of Lindiwe Mazibuko* by Maphuti Mabothakga Manny. At the same time, they also investigated that whether the employment rate of women in the media area met the requirements of SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, such as *Media representation of South Africa's female politicians: The case of the Mail & Guardian – 2010 to 2011* by Millie Mayiziveyi Phiri. They preferred to do research on race, especially aimed at black people, for instance, *South African tabloid newspapers' representation of black celebrities: A social constructionism perspective* by Emmanuel Mogoboya Matsebatlela.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the different perspectives from the two different countries. We can conclude they have something in common, such as emphasis on women's portraits in the newspaper and women's image. While China and South Africa have different national conditions. Therefore, they have

different perspective.

Chapter 3 Analysis of women's news from various fields

For the definition of female news, opinions differ. In general, this paper's understanding of female news is as follows:

Firstly, some words like “women”, “female” and “feminism” appear in any area of social life news reports. Secondly, the theme of women-related news are related to women's interests, such as child care, housework, domestic violence and so on. Thirdly, the feminist perspective of the news, that any appeared feminist views and female NGO news.

By collecting the news from selected two newspapers, findings are as follows:

3.1 Related numbers of total news and female news

Table 3.1 The related data

	China 1995	China 2015	SA 1995	SA2015
Total	909	1075	2026	1387
Female news	138	55	67	101

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015	
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M
Main Story Topics. Newspaper, Television, Radio										
Science & Health	27	73	21	79	22	78	32	68	35	65
Social & Legal	19	81	21	79	28	72	30	70	28	72
Crime & Violence	21	79	18	82	22	78	24	76	28	72
Celebrity, Arts & Sport	24	76	23	77	28	72	26	74	23	77
Economy	10	90	18	82	20	80	20	80	21	79
Politics & Government	7	93	12	88	14	86	19	81	16	84
Function in Story										
Personal Experience	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	31	69	36	64	38	62
Popular Opinion					34	66	44	56	37	63
Eye Witness					30	70	29	71	30	70
Subject					23	77	23	77	26	74
Spokesperson					14	86	19	81	20	80
Expert					17	83	20	80	19	81
% Portrayed as Victim										
	29	10	19	7	19	8	18	8	16	8
% Portrayed as Survivor										
			21	4	4	8	6	3	8	3
% Identified by Family Status										
	n/a	n/a	25	11	23	16	26	17	30	23
% in Newspaper Photographs										
	n/a	n/a	33	35	50	50	52	50	61	61

(http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/highlights/highlights_en.pdf)

From the Global Media Monitoring project 2015, we could know that whether in main story topics or story function, males always occupy a higher percentage than female on average. Although the participation of women is adding. The phenomenon that women are portrayed as victims, survivors and domestic role is still popular.

3.2 In case of South African newspaper

3.2.1 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Mail & Guardian* in 1995

Table 3.2.1 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Mail & Guardian* in 1995

	politic	family	economic	gender	earth
number	21	2	3	8	0
percentage	31.34%	2.99%	4.48%	11.94%	0
	military	education	law	religion	others
number	0	0	1	1	31
percentage	0	0	1.49%	1.49%	46.27%

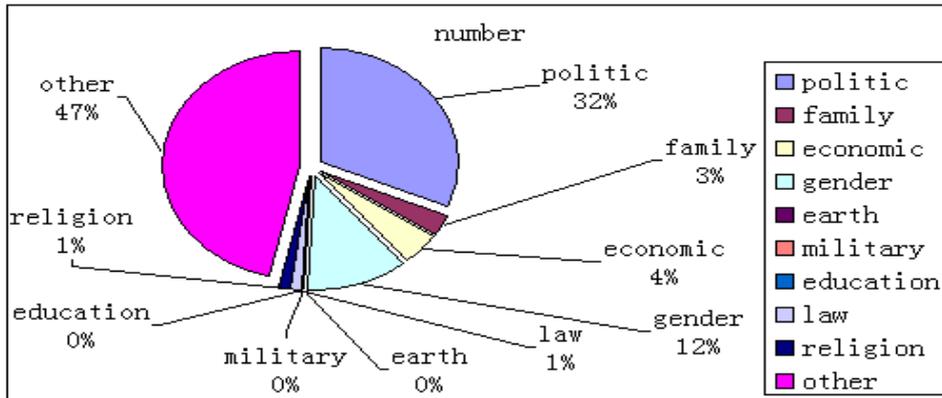


Figure 3.2.1 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Mail & Guardian* in 1995

(Notice: others mean something like entertainment, arts, book introduction and movies review and so on.)

From the above charts we can conclude that, in addition to literature works or entertainment descriptions, female news focused more on political, gender, economic and domestic fields.

(a) In case of political field, ‘Winnie jumps into traditional leaders’ row’: political field covered 21 news in total and 9 of them were closely linked to Winnie Mandela. On the one hand, this is because she was in an obvious position in government. On the other hand, she had close relationship with Mandela, so what she said and did would affect a lot. In 1995, President Nelson Mandela expelled his estranged wife Winnie, from his government for insubordination because she sowed division and defied orders. He said: “Even heroes of the liberation struggle are not beyond discipline.”

(b) In case of gender field, I will select several news topics as samples.

Firstly, ‘Rape and the feminist guru’: The woman had known she was a victim before

victim before, so from her perspective, she really wanted to do something to help others and especially looked

forward to changing the law. Secondly, ‘Putting gender back on to the gender’: It was a positive calling to put

gender on agenda, people increasingly realised the importance of gender problems. In the mean time, in order to achieve the goal, the female's united efforts were a must.

(c) In case of domestic life, 'Marriages that are made in hell': In India, the phenomenon that "Loving in-laws on a young bride, beat her and kill her. The police and her own family are unable to intervene" was extremely popular, especially to poor families. Family of groom took it as a way to increase their wealth. And the bride's family could not do anything. It was an obvious patriarchy results, female's life was not valuable. We can conclude that females' social status lagged far behind.

(d) In case of economy, 'Work. That's what the people need': This news showed that females raised their awareness of the environment and compared with the economic boom, they preferred the better environment. This was a huge progress.

The above statements showed the articles' attitudes towards the female reports, from most of the news articles, females were mostly described as negative politicians. And whether from the domestic life or public life, women still hold the image that they just thought about themselves, without others' help, they cannot lead a bright life. At the same time, they were subordinated to men, their lives were decided by husbands and a patriarchy society.

3.2.2 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Mail & Guardian* in 2015

Table 3.2.2 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Mail & Guardian* in 2015

	politic	family	economic	gender	earth
number	24	2	10	16	2

percentage	23.76%	1.98%	9.90%	15.84%	1.98%
	military	education	law	religion	other
number	5	3	9	0	30
percentage	4.95%	2.97%	8.91%	0.00%	29.70%

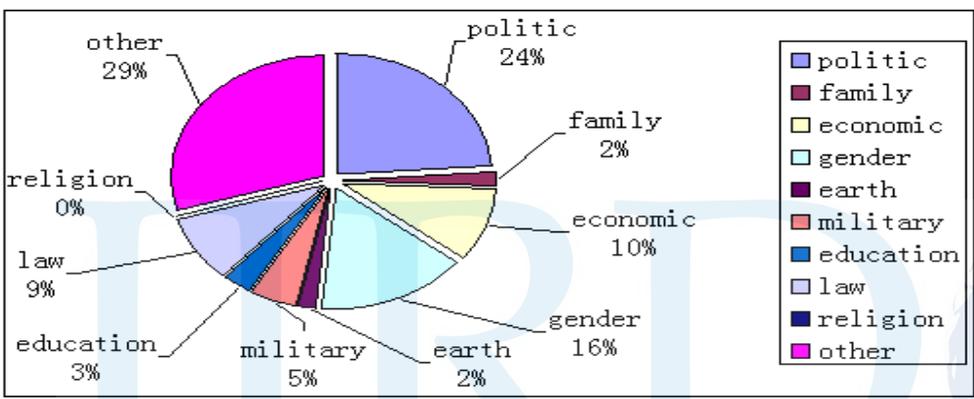


Figure 3.2.2 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Mail & Guardian* in 2015

From the above charts, we can conclude that, in addition to literary works or entertainment behavior descriptions, female news focused more on political, gender, economic and law fields. It showed similar trend as in 1995.

(a) In case of political field, 'Zille must go, DA needs new blood': It can be seen that the promotion of female politicians is mainly detrimental to its propaganda aspects. Although the DA party admitted the efforts of Zile, they still insisted that she had to go, she stayed in that position too long. This led to others feeling upset.

(b) In case of gender field, 'The ANC Women's League says it is dismantling patriarchy in SA': The African National Congress Women's League is the women's wing of the African National Congress (ANC). It was

founded in 1931 as the Bantu Women's League. In 1960 the organization was banned along with the ANC forcing its central leaders underground; It was unbanned in 1990 when the ANC was likewise unbanned. This meant that Women's League is playing an increasingly important role. Women need to have their own organizations and speak for themselves, only in this way could they really dismantle patriarchy.

(c) In the case of economics, 'Firstly, Vast varsity pay gap exposed': It was obvious, because of the gender, males had more advantages over women in job hunting. Because almost all the people have the traditional view that men are natural leaders, so they deserve more salary. It has been a true gender injustice for a long time. The salary gap is so wide that it cannot be crossed. Gender injustices are rooted deeply in the economic area.

In addition, newspapers mainly promote women as victims or vulnerable people, providing less positive image for female. The examples are as follows:

(d) In terms of law, 'My father raped me for eight years': The girl was raped by her own father over a period of eight years. She bore him two children during that time and no adult intervened or helped her, not even relatives who knew what was happening. Eventually she mustered the courage to report her plight to the police and the man was charged.

3.2.3 The changes involved in women propaganda in *Mail & Guardian*

By the comparison, we can see that politics, gender, economic and law are the most important topics that news gathers. The perception of females has turned from a negative light to a fairer image. Female politicians had more power than before and gradually realised that women's organizations could play a crucial role. However, the gap in job hunting is huge as a result of the deep gender injustice rooted in the economic sphere.

3.3 In case of Chinese newspaper

3.3.1 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Southern weekly* in 1995

Table 3.3.1 Fields involved in women propaganda in *Southern Weekly* in 1995

	politic	family	economic	gender	earth
number	6	32	4	5	0
percentage	4.35%	23.19%	2.90%	3.62%	0.00%
	military	education	law	religion	other
number	1	0	16	0	74
percentage	0.72%	0.00%	11.59%	0.00%	53.62%

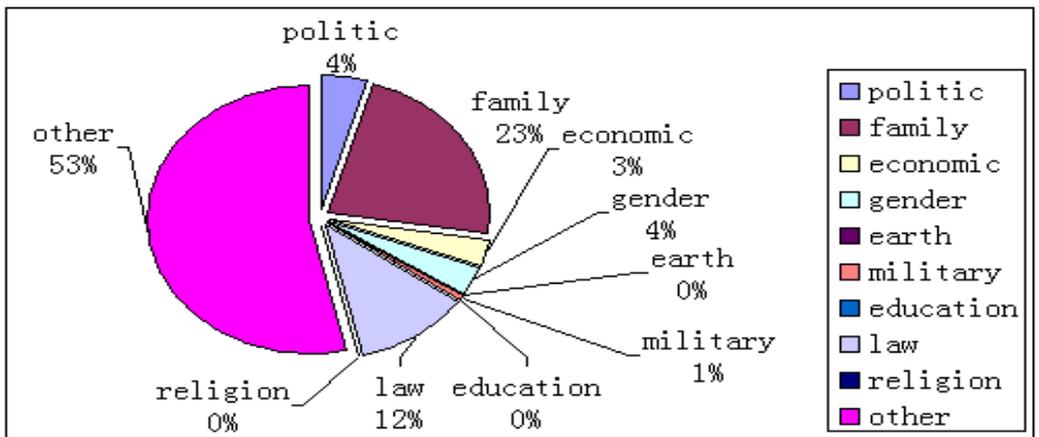


Figure 3.3.1 Fields involved in women propaganda in *Southern Weekly* in 1995

From the above charts, we can conclude that except for the entertainment part, Chinese newspapers paid more

attention to the women's domestic role, law and politics.

(a) In case of domestic field, 'After losing the son': The related news was about the principle of how to deal with domestic problems, communicate with family members, and discussed how to raise children. The newspaper spoke about a mother who was desperate to find her lost son, expressing the mother's bravery and the police's efforts.

(b) In case of law, the related news is about a criminal's mother and a female criminal's new life. A legal dispute between a family and a countryside doctor. In this field, the women almost just had negative images, they were usually regarded as mistresses of a civil servant. It is obvious that this newspaper focused more on the woman's disadvantage.

(c) In case of political field. There was 6 news articles in total, 4 of them were about the foreign female politicians. When it comes to the foreign content, it focused more on the negative image of the female, for example "The bad relationship between Margaret Thatcher and her son", "Anti - abortion extremists deepen the divisions of the United States". When involving the domestic news, it spoke highly of the politician "A serious lady, a serious minister", the newspaper article spoke highly of her contributions and quality.

(d) In case of gender, 5 news in total were related to this topic. It mainly paid more attention to curing HIV, homosexuality, and domestic violence. It was a good fact that this newspaper put gender on its agenda.

From the above statements, we can conclude that when it comes to law or male government members in China, reporters preferred to put female in a disadvantaged place to some degree, they guided readers to male officials' side in the emotional balance. Influenced by this culture, most people will think that men are innocent victims, while women are evil lures.

3.3.2 The fields involved in women propaganda in Southern weekly in 2015

Table 3.3.2 The fields involved in women propaganda in *Southern weekly* in 2015

	politic	family	economic	gender	earth
number	8	10	7	4	2
percentage	14.25%	18.18%	12.73%	7.27%	3.64%
	military	education	law	religion	other
number	2	1	4	0	17
percentage	3.64%	1.82%	7.27%	0.00%	30.91%

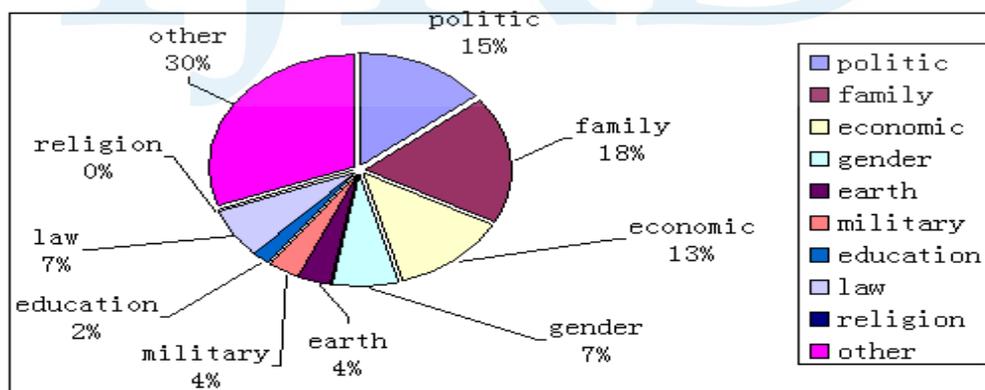


Figure 3.3.2 The fields involved in women propaganda in Southern weekly in 2015

We can conclude that a similar trend stood in 1995 and 2015. Family, politics and economy were main fields for new propaganda.

(a) In case of domestic field, 'The society trapped the women limited in domestic role. In order to keep a

complete family for children, do not divorce. The news promoted the idea that doing housework and looking after children are women's duty, they are supposed to be gentle. (b) In case of politic field, 'Director of Anhui Province Food and Drug Administration— An interview about Xu Hengqiu': This is a positive model for the women. "Strong woman" has always been the conversation topic. This is a good phenomenon, because the public gradually realise that females can take the same, or more, responsibilities as males in the process of social development.

(c) In case of economic field 'The women behind of Jack Ma', it talked about women liked to shop online, causing a boom of online economy. They also talked about some excellent female entrepreneurs, who become big successes in economics by their own efforts. It was a good focus on females, because women could not rely on males any more, they can make a living by themselves, they are in the way to independence.

(d) In case of gender, there was 4 news in total about gender, the topic was similar to that of 1995. Domestic violence, HIV infection appeared again, however a new point that was introduced was ecological feminism. Its advocates say that a paternalistic/capitalistic society has led to a harmful split between nature and culture.

From the above news, we can conclude that some positive images appeared compared with the news in 1995 in China. The public raised awareness of the gender development, they also focused more on the progress of women.

3.3.3 The changes involved in women's propaganda in *Southern weekly*

By the comparison, we can see that family, politics, gender and economics are important areas that news focuses on. The perception of females have turned from a negative image into a fairer image gradually. And compared with other fields, their sight into gender problems was also limited.

3.4 The differences and similarities about the propaganda of female between the two newspapers.

Comparing the propaganda of women in the four periods, we can conclude that politics, economics, family and law were the main news resources. What's more, the two newspapers both gave attention to the gender issue. To some degree, government and the public had raised the awareness of gender injustice.

When it comes to the propaganda of women, especially aimed at female politicians, *Mail & Guardian* preferred to show a negative discourse, it tended to talk about disadvantaged situations which were about corruption, wrong decisions, accountability, showing an image that female government members were not so qualified to stay in a certain position to public in the newspaper of 1995. When talking about the news of 2015, the articles held a view that some female politicians and gender activists endeavored to motivate people to focus on gender justice, they put in more effort in solving energy and land issues. Negative images still existed, but it was not mainstream or only discursive expression any more. By contrast, its counterpart held the different perspective. Chinese newspapers tended to give attention to the excellent and efficient female leaders, however when they revealed the male's disgraceful conduct, they would talk about female lover of leader, saying the women always played the role of temptation.

Next, when they talked about the economy, they both paid attention to the gender injustice of females especially pregnant women. At the same time, South African newspapers would consider black female's situation, so their news was more complicated than its counterpart. Chinese newspaper preferred to introduce some female entrepreneurs as models, which meant that women also could be independent.

Then when it comes to the domestic life, *Mail & Guardian* would speak about the marriage and domestic violence, and this kind of news occupied a small part in the propaganda, it just referred little between the family and children. While in *Southern Weekly*, it preferred to relate marriage with children closely, almost

most of the news will involve children rearing,

Meanwhile, when talking about aspects of law, rape, abortion and human rights were main themes in the *Mail & Guardian*, it was a reflection on current South Africa issues. In the meantime, abortion issues were also a focus in *Southern Weekly*, however this was only covered partly in the news. The people living in South Africa put emphasis on the human rights, which was rarely mentioned in China.

In a nutshell, the two newspapers had something in common, their description of females are both limited to the domestic role and reproductive rights. Women suffered from losing job if they were pregnant. There is no doubt that in the past, the image of women in newspapers had three characteristics: oneness, materialization and objectification. Oneness reflected in the news reports was that female news appeared less frequent, especially in science, technology, teaching and other professional fields. Materialization and objectification meant female images were created from male's perspective, women became aesthetic objects and decorations for the men. Living under the discourse of male hegemony, women were gradually out of the mainstream discourse system and became an object for men's watching.

Chapter 4 Origins and reasons of the changes on female images

There is no doubt that female images in the newspaper are closely related to the development and situation of the country. When talking about the changes of the female images, origins and reasons differ.

Firstly, they have different paths. When it comes to China, China's political practice is "national feminism", that means feminist movement is launched inside China and get the country's support and response. This is a top-down movement that protects women's equal rights, formulated by male-dominated political leaders. However, China has never formed a large-scale feminist movement that shakes the patriarchal consciousness

and no authoritative discussion about femininity and feminine consciousness was discussed in the public sphere. Compared with China, South Africa has a different path. According to Shireen (2006), in the early part of the twentieth century women mobilized around a wide range of issues. By the 1950s, these struggles had been subsumed and homogenized within nationalist narrative. Then some feminists belonging to different organizations wanted to make an alliance to speak for women. Gradually they obtained the rights to participate in politics, and strive for other rights. It was an obvious difference from China.

Secondly, all Chinese women suffered a lot from traditional culture in the past. For thousands of years in history, women had been in a depressed, neglected secondary status in China. The feudal society left the mainstream social ideology of "strong male and weak female", "Three Obediences and Four Virtues" and formed a feudal cultural tradition dominated by male power in the progressive development of society. Because of the long-term influence of the traditional culture, people's social prejudice against women gradually formed a collective unconscious state, this resulted in the distortion of the female image. For South Africa, because of its complicated situation, black women suffered more than any person. They were oppressed by the "triple oppression"- which is race, class and gender. Due to extreme levels of inequality, problems such as HIV Aids and rape became abundant in South Africa. In the meantime, as there are still thriving traditional tribes within South Africa there is also conflict between traditional life and modernity. In South African president Jacob Zuma's trial, he was accused of having raped an HIV infected lady which was illegal according to South Africa's constitution, while it was legal in the Zulu's culture .

It is this traditional concept that allows us to "see" women in the framework of male discourse, giving women a variety of stereotyped roles rather than describing women in equal perspectives, which inevitably lead to gender discrimination. .

When talking about the reasons about the fact that female images changed in the newspaper, the following

reasons cannot be ignored. Firstly, the development of a knowledge economy, science and technology affected the renewal of the concept of women's consciousness which began to return. Furthermore, the rapid development of education, provided them the chance to change their social status. It can be said that the degree of education decides female knowledge, ability, and the level of social participation enthusiasm. Gradually, women's subjective consciousness of gender equality is enhanced.

Secondly, laws are gradually improving.

For example, "Marriage Law", "Labor Law", and "Maternal and Child Protection Law" and other laws listen to the public voice to make efforts in China. At the same time, considering women's own physiological conditions, China also promulgated the "Women's Rights Protection Law", and other regulations.(Hu Huangqing, 2010). In South Africa, the Human Rights Bill duplicates the Commission on Gender Equality Act (1996), the Skills Development Act (1998), the Employment Equity Act (1998) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000) were also enacted to promote the female status.

Thirdly, men working to promote gender equality

Most men have embraced the emancipation of women as part and parcel of their own emancipation from oppression from oppressive societal expectations of how 'men' behave or what they ideally should be. And there is growing opposition to men who engage in or promote abusive practices in the name of culture. (Dean & Mbuyiselo, 2006). After the democratic elections in 1994, President Mandela represented a "new" masculinity. His public representation challenged much of the violent and authoritarian behaviors and attitudes associated with apartheid's white male politicians (Robert & Rachel, 2012).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

From the Chinese point of view, the proportion of Chinese newspapers reported on women in 1995 was larger, and the proportion of women's news coverage in 2015 was lower than that in South Africa. But what cannot be ignored is that since the 1980s, China started having a special newspaper for women - "China Women's News". It belongs to the National Women's Federation sponsored by the country. It is a thoughtful, social and comprehensive female newspaper. What's more, Media Monitor for Women Network was founded in 1996. That is to say, China has the specialized organization to promote the gender equality.

From the South African point, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) revealed that women just make up only 23% of news sources in the country's media (MMA 2010). If women are slightly more than half the population in South African then a figure of 23% representation means that the media is one of the institutions still responsible for maintaining the imbalance in perceptions in society such as "it is a man's world".

By analysing the newspapers, we can conclude that in the past 20 years, the female images in the printing newspaper turned into more positive expression from negative images. At the same time, the different regimes and different backgrounds made the two countries have different developing level on the female images. Because I just elected the two years instead of the whole period, so it has a disadvantage to some degree.

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