

Chinese Modern Girl: Professional Women in China,  
1900s-1940s.

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## **Declaration**

This work has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

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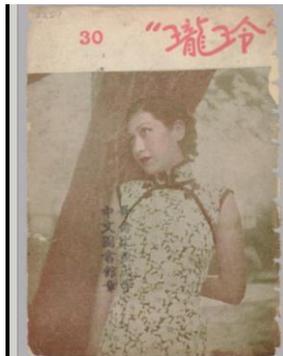


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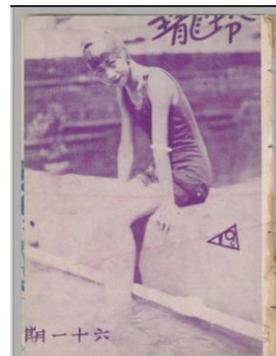


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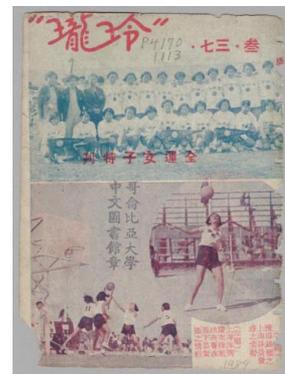


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**特別徵文 我的職業生活**

1. 文題：以現有職業者之女子為限。  
 2. 文體：用白話文，敘述性，但須有詳實之事實。  
 3. 篇幅：以一千五百字為限。  
 4. 截稿：民國三十三年四月十五日止。  
 5. 酬報：錄取者每篇最少酬金五元，如特別優異者，每人則本誌半年（自六月號起）已定有本誌者，請聲明定至第幾期為止，當即照辦。  
 6. 附則：本誌除在每季末刊外，尚有原稿寄還，原稿請附姓名、地址、郵票、信封、原稿不寄還，本誌則須有存查備查。

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**病人的慰安者**

當做我的職業生活

nurse

林修亭

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江素涵

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**從磨折中逃出的自由生活**

hosiery weaver

英

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**doctor**

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## Abstract

Chinese Modern Girl : Professional Women in China, 1900s-1940s.

From the early 20th century to the middle of the 20th century, China as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society during this period, its social life had changed a lots. Girl's education as one of the parts of changing, had revolutions and new developments. With these changing, the role of women and female's status in society also had a big change. Since the system of education for women was gradually perfected, it giving opportunities for women to live independence and their living space was also expended. In this circumstance professional women were born, and women had more opportunities to come into the public, to play a new role in family and society, and became Chinese modern girls.

There are four chapters in my paper, in the beginning I will introduce the reason, significance, background and research gap of this topic. Through analyzing different historical researchers' ideas on Chinese modern girl to reflect the situation and achievements of it, and via examining the changing of social role of women to demonstrate the development of women's role recognition. And in analytical method, it uses the literature research and qualitative research method. In the first chapter, it mainly discusses the development of girl's education. This part will examine the aim for women's education and conclude some articles from mass media in early twentieth century, to learn how the concept of women's role in society changed. In the second chapter, it will focus on the development of professional women. How girls became a worker, what kind of vocations that was for women, and how this new identity influenced the gender relationship and promoted the modernizing life in China. In the third chapter, this part expounds the modern girl's image in the magazine, and how it effected women's modern life in reality. In the last chapter, it is to conclude

how women changed their status and living space in family and society, by improving their literature level and expanding their working space to show us the process of being modern girl.

Chinese modern girl as the opposite of the traditional feminine during Publican period, its development was not just for the transformation of Chinese female's status in family and society, but also reflected the way of Chinese modern life.

**Key Words: Modern girl; Professional women; Girl's education; Republican China.**

## Introduction

In the middle of the 19th century, China's door was opened due to the defeat of the Opium War, which made Chinese scholars, reformers and government reflected on the differences between China and Western countries and the reasons for China's backwardness. While they were learning skills from western advanced technologies to resisted invasion, they also focused on the education of Chinese women, believing that the lack of education of women was one of the important reasons for the decline of the country.<sup>1</sup> At this point, female education began to spread and develop in China. In 1900, the eight-Power allied forces invaded China, and China was forced to sign the Xinchou Treaty in 1901, which completely reduced China to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. In this period of the collision and integration of Chinese and Western culture and power, girls' education was also constantly developing and improving. In figure 1, the article in 1916 in Ladies Journal, one of teachers in normal school conceded that education enabled women to assume the responsibilities of family, society and even the country, laying the foundation for their independence. Also in 1923, a scholar emphasized again on women's education, stating that the weakness of the country stems from the low level of education of the people, of which women's education is the focus of attention. Only the educational concept of equality between men and women can promote the development of the country and develop into a civilized country, which is mentioned in the article of figure 2. Therefore, no matter the reformers or scholars in China at that time, they all expressed their views on women's education. Women's independence was not only a matter of women's individual, but also a matter of national survival. Thus, women's education was necessary for China's modernization at that time.

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<sup>1</sup> Liang Qichao. "Lun Nü Xue" In Yin Bing Shi Wen Ji, [Yin Bingshi Collected Works.] ( Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2015), 37-44.



Figure 1. The article from Ladies Journal 10 (1916) : 60. The teacher called Yan Lin, she wrote about her views on girls' education, emphasizing the importance of girls' education for women as individuals and for the nation, and also explaining the importance of the content of the girls' education curriculum.



Figure 2. The article from Ladies Journal 8 (1923): 22. In this article on Education Reform written by K.D, stressed the importance of equality between men and women in education, and the importance of education for all if a country was to become a civilized nation.

As more and more girls went from home to school, the identity and role of women in the whole Chinese society began to have more possibilities. Women were not only to become virtuous mothers and good wives, but also their education gradually guided them to realize their dream of independence and became modern girls to go to society, enter the public's vision, and became one of the parts of China's modernization development.

In early twentieth century in China, modern girl's image could be seen in many mass medias. It used the image of modern girl to open the commercial market, and influenced the way of people's life style. As figure 3 to 5 show that the medical, cosmetic, and wine industries' advertisements in Yue Fen Pai. The trend of modern girl images has not only brought commercial development, but also brought in-depth thinking about the new role of women.

“The modern girl is a global phenomenon.”<sup>2</sup> Modern girl has been explored and studied by many historians, mostly from the beauty, clothing, cosmetic and the other fashion product advertisements, and the image of female models and film actresses on mass media, like magazines, newspapers or posters, and from the perspective of commodity economic and media development to

<sup>2</sup> Alys Eve. “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation” In The Modern girl Around the World, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 1-24.

further the study of modern girl. Most of these studies focus on 1910s to 1940s. The research on Chinese modern girl is no exception.



Figure 3. Medical advertisement in 1929, from Hong Kong Heritage Museum. Collection Number: 2001.32.13. Collection name: Poster of Guangsheng Hong Co., LTD. From Hong Kong Memory.



Figure 4. Cosmetics advertisement in 1933, from Hong Kong Heritage Museum. Collection Number: 2001.32.13. Collection name: Poster of Guangsheng Hong Co., LTD. From Hong Kong Memory.



Figure 5. Wine advertisement in 1934, from Hong Kong Museum of History. Item No. : E1988.614. Title: The 1934 calendar of Yuanhe Company. From Hong Kong Memory.

Barlow through the analysis of the image of modern girls in the application of commodity advertising and its role to illustrate the value of the modern girl's image in society of Shanghai, during 1920s to 1930s.<sup>3</sup> Also in Shi Qianyin and Wang Xiaoyan's article, they examined the construction of different images of modern girls on trademarks, which is related to the development and change of social ideology, so as to show a new image of women in the commercial trend from 1912 to 1949.<sup>4</sup> With the development of mass media, the image of modern girls has been shown in more public places. Mass media often involve the commodification of symbolic forms and the

<sup>3</sup> Tani E. Barlow. "Buying In: Advertising and the Sexy Modern Girl Icon in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s" In *The Modern Girl Around the World*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 288-316.

<sup>4</sup> Shi Qianying, Wang Xiaoyan . "Minguo Shangbiao Zhong 'Xinnüxing' Xingxiang De Goujian Zhixu Yanjiu", [Research on the construction order of the image of 'new women' in the trademark of the Republic of China.] *Journal of West Leather* 42, no.22 (2020): 100-102.

extension of the sphere of influence of this image on society in time and space.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up, most studies on modern girls are more based on the image of modern girls in mass media, such as advertisements, posters, magazines. And they impact on China's social development and the development of commodity economy. In the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society of China, these modern girl images undoubtedly brought a new impact on the Chinese tradition, and also quietly changed the living space and conditions of Chinese women. But it can not deny that the girls who wearing the cosmetic and fashionable clothes, doing job in factories and office, from 1900s to 1940s, were also modern girl. It is impossible to ignore their contribution to Chinese modernity process. Miriam concede that “there are many ways to be modern”, she also admit that “the women workers of the 1920s and 1930s, ranging from the professional journalists to factory girls, they also can be called modern girls.”<sup>6</sup> In the process of cultural exchange and collision between China and the West, China obtained more and more advanced educational resources, began to reflect on the image of traditional women and the social status of women in the past, and decided to change and break through these traditions, seek women's liberation and seek more social rights, they were no longer just a passive party relying on men, so professional women developed in Chinese society. Through reading the research on modern girls, there are relatively few studies on modern women among professional women. But these living professional women are also influencing the development of the image of modern women. Therefore, this paper will fill this research gape, and do more research on it.

## Methodology

The essay will through analyzing the primary sources that were produced in historical context,

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<sup>5</sup> Wang Sumei. “Introduction” In *The East Asian Modern Girl*, (Leiden; BRILL, 2021), xiv–9.

<sup>6</sup> Miriam silverberg. “After the Grand Tour: The Modern Girl, the New Woman, and the Colonial Maiden” In *Modern Girl Around World*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 354-361.

like Ladies Journal and Linglong magazine, by analyzing some articles and covers in the magazines, to understand the image characteristics of modern girls, women's professional education as well as the types of professional women in the past, and analyze the relationship between professional women and modern girls at that time. Since most of the primary information of professional women and modern girls in the Republic of China came from articles in magazines and newspapers, or some letters published on them, so this article takes Literature Research Method as the methodology.

## **1. Girl's education and its modernization**

With the defeat of the confrontation with western countries, Colonialism and Western culture entered China together, which brought great changes to Chinese society and made China a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Chinese reformers and scholars brought up many ideas and took many actions, they tried to save China, taking back China's domain and sovereignty. Girl's education as one of the parts of national salvation movement, its change and development had a great significant for Chinese development.

### **1.1 Preparing to be a “producer”**

In the late Qing Dynasty, women's education has been attached great importance by many intellectuals. The lower level of girls' literature was one of the main reasons of China's backwardness. Liang Qichao, one of the reformers of China, he brought up the importance of girl's education. He reckoned that Chinese women who lacked education were unable to educate their newborns well, and also made them were only a “consumer”, none of them were “producer”<sup>7</sup> He

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<sup>7</sup> Liang Qichao. “Lun Nü Xue”, In Yin Bing Shi Wen Ji [Yin Bingshi Collected Works.], (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2015), 37-44.

used such statement to emphasize how important of girl's education, and connecting girl's education with national salvation movement, and such idea also challenged the traditional concept of women, like untalented women are virtuous. Around 1900s, there were some articles talking about the education of girl in Shun Pao, they supported to promote women's education and build more girl schools, so that women could gain more knowledge to take care of family well and educate children better.<sup>8</sup> So at the beginning of girl's education, most of intellectuals supported the idea of "Qiangguo Baozhong", which was to educate women and teach them how to educate the next generation, and to produce a high-quality elites for saving China and the future development of the country. They still focused on the women's function and role inside of the family. And through publicity, women's education gradually attracted the attention of the public and the government.

## **1.2 The development of educational goals for girls**

The boom in girls' education had been driven by the joint efforts of Western missionaries and Chinese reformers and scholars who supported girls education. The first girl's school was actually established by western missionaries; it was still limited by the Qing government, but after the Opium War, China signed a series of unequal treaties with Western countries. At this time, China was forced by Western powers to open more treaty ports, and Western missionaries had more opportunities to enter China and fewer restrictions. In 1907, the number of girl schools organized by missionaries was up to 428; there were over 10,000 girls attending school.<sup>9</sup> During this period, the main teaching content of missionary girl schools included Western religious knowledge, religious beliefs, and foreign languages, in addition to traditional Chinese women's education projects such as gardening, sewing, and other needlework content were also involved. The Bible and foreign

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<sup>8</sup> Shanghai Bookstore. "Shun Pao", Shanghai: Shenbao Hall (1872).

<sup>9</sup> Ren, Chunyan. "Chuanjiaoshi Yu Zhongguo Jindai Nüzi Jiaoyu", Journal of Religious Studies, no. 4 (2007): 217-220.

languages are listed as the main subjects.<sup>10</sup> In 1912, the New Republic education system approved the inclusion of domestic lessons in the girls' education curriculum.<sup>11</sup> The curriculum for Chinese girls still focused on domesticity, and women's roles were still stuck in motherhood; they were still expected to be good mothers and virtuous wives.

In September 1915, *Xin Qin Nian Magazine*, also called *La Jeunesse*, was founded by Chen Duxiu in Shanghai, and the concept of gender equality started to spread through this magazine. It came up with the idea of equality in education. It mentioned that the development of a country's civilization was determined by the literary level of its people. Women make up about half of the population; hence, education for women must be prioritized.<sup>12</sup> It explicitly proposed that men and women had the same right to education, that women's education should be equal to men's, that women who lacked education or had restrictions on their education were born out of contempt for women, and that equality of men and women in education is the equity of educational personality. In May 1919, Ms. Deng Chunlan wrote to CAI Yuanpei, hoping to let girls have the opportunity to study at the university. In August of the same year, CAI Yuanpei wrote back that as long as the girls can pass the exam, they can enter the university.<sup>13</sup> So in 1920, nine women passed the exam to enter the university audit. Deng Chunlan is one of the female students. Since then, more and more universities have lifted the ban on women, girls' education had been further developed, and the concept of gender equality in education had been popularized in Chinese society. The popularization and development of female education have brought about structural changes in the

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<sup>10</sup> Yang Wei. "Zhongguo Jindai Nüzi Jiaoyu Fazhang Guocheng Jianxi", [A Brief analysis of the development process of women's education in modern China.] *Journal of Historical Science*, no. 4 (1998): 110-112.

<sup>11</sup> Bailey Paul. "Modernising Conservatism in Early Twentieth Century China: The discourse and practice of women's education", *European journal of East Asian studies* 3, no. 2 (2004): 217-241.

<sup>12</sup> Zhang Xiaoli. "Xin Qinnian De Nüquan Sixiang Jiqi Yingxiang", [Feminist thought in New Youth and its Influence.] *Journal of Historical Science*, no. 4(1998): 110-112.

<sup>13</sup> Jia Qian Jun. "Wusi Yundong Shiqi Nüzi Jiaoyu Biange", [The Reform of women's Education during the May Fourth Movement.] *China National Exhibition*, no. 11 (2015): 106-107.

social status of men and women.

In the Ladies Journal, it also discussed the girl's education. Some articles pointed out that girls had to have the ability to make their own lives and then to make contributions to society just like figure 6, and they stressed that girls' education was the base of women's independence. It also referred to the problems with the curriculum of a girl's education which was not applicable to social life in figure 7. From these articles in mass media, it showed that girls' education was no longer only focused on women's domestic lives but also on their independent lives, like supporting them to learn some skills and find a job to feed themselves.



Figure 6. The article on the left on in Ladies Journal 1 (1915): 49, called "The theory of women's occupation benefiting society", it tells the importance of Chinese women to have a independent work, and how women's work benefit the society.

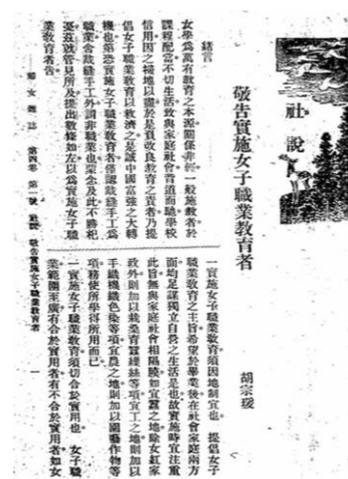


Figure 7. The article from Ladies Journal 1 (1918): 13, this article called "Notice to the implementation of female vocational educators" mainly advocates the practicability of women's vocational education and thinks that women's vocational education should be adapted to local conditions.

With the transformation of girl's educational goals, more and more women realized the oppression brought by the old traditional rites in the past, and feminism gradually developed in such an environment. With the change in girl's educational goals, more and more women realized the oppression brought by the old traditional etiquette in the past, and the educational concept of gender equality gradually rose in such an environment. Feminism also gained unprecedented development during this period.

### 1.3 Girl's professional education

In one of the articles written by Xie Wenyaoyao in the Nü Duo Journal in 1918, he deemed that

female education was the primary task of women's professional development; girl's education included vocational education, family education, school education, and social education.<sup>14</sup> Before the May Fourth Movement, some journals already had some articles talking about girl's professional education and equal gender education. These articles have laid a certain public opinion foundation for women's career development and female independence, and women have a deeper understanding that receiving education and having a career are helpful to women's development in China's society.

In the early 20th century, there were some special professional girl's schools, this is an embodiment of the development and modernization of education, and one of the important processes to help women transform their traditional identities into modern women. In 1910s, Girls' schools run by foreign missionaries promoted the development of women's professional education to a certain extent. Girls' schools run by foreign missionaries no longer admitted poor girls free of charge, and the academic system was improved. These girls' schools began to charge fees, which gave the children of rich families more opportunities to receive education. These girls are well fed and clothed, and the impact of their education is naturally greater than that of lower-class women.<sup>15</sup> This has also accelerated the development of women's independent consciousness, enabling women to jump away from the traditional definition of women in the past. Within the influence and help of Western culture, they have further promoted women's liberation. China's earliest modern women's vocational school, Shanghai Women's Sericulture School, was established in 1904. In addition, from 1904 to 1919, there were women's normal schools, medical schools, and even women's sports, art,

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<sup>14</sup> Xie Wenyao. "Shishu Nüzi Zhi Zhiye Yihe Wei Zuiyao," [Try to describe what is most important in a woman's profession] *Nü Duo* 7, no.4 (1918): 49-50.

<sup>15</sup> Zhang, Xueling, Fu Qiang. "Jiaohui Nüxue Yu Jindai Zhiye Nüxing De Xingqi", [Missionary Girls' Education and the Rise of Modern Professional Women.] *Journal of Jiangsu University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)* 5, no. 3 (2005): 41-44.

and political science schools, and the development of women's vocational education had gained momentum, and they were mostly concentrated in the coastal areas of the main treaty ports.<sup>16</sup> Judging from the development of girl's vocational schools, Chinese society demanded that women become useful people for society and the country, and influenced by Western culture and ideas, girl's education encouraged women to be more independent and confident. Therefore, the social image of women had also changed; they were beginning to move toward a more advanced society, and those women with bounded feet who once lived in the boudoir are quietly disappearing.

## **2. Being professional women**

With the development of the world industrial revolution, the invasion of western countries has also brought new social productivity to China. With the growth of women's vocational education and the development of industrialization, women also joined Chinese social production. In the past, women were confined to their homes and had little chance of working outdoors. Because of the development of girls' education, they have more opportunities to emerge in society. Women's social responsibilities are no longer confined to families, and they are beginning to explore the outside world, driving the transition of traditional Chinese society to modern society.

### **2.1 The types of girl's profession during the Republic of China**

Chinese girls are in transition. As we all know, the traditional status of women is generally low, especially for young girls, but with the development of female education and the promotion of social opinion, girls are beginning to be required to get rid of their family positioning and assume social responsibilities. At the beginning of modern industry in China, most of the productivity came

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<sup>16</sup> Gao Bo, Zhuang Yaling. "Ershi Shiji Chu Zhongguo Nüzi Zhiye Xuexiao Leixing", [The types of vocational schools for Girls in China in the early twentieth century.] *Journal of Shijiazhuang University of Applied Technology* 17, no. 1 (2005): 32-34.

from men, and it was not until the late 19th century that factories began to recruit women.<sup>17</sup> The number of female factory workers was quite large in early republican China. Take Tianjin factories as example, in the winter of 1927, the Shanghai Young Women's Christian Association conducted a survey of 36 factories in Tianjin, 36 factories had more than 10,000 female workers in total.<sup>18</sup> In addition to Tianjin, the number of factory female workers in Shanghai and other provinces are also very large, especially for Shanghai, it's factory female workers even appeared earlier than Tianjin. From this, it can be concluded that the number of female factory workers in China at that time was quite large. In Ladies Journal, there is also a mention of the types of professional women in the early republic of China. In 1915, most of works for women were about factory girls, waiters, servants, and prostitutes.<sup>19</sup> These professional women were not highly educated, and their jobs are not well paid, some would be discriminated and despised, some were even forced to work in factories. Ono mentioned in her book that some of girls were sold by their parents to factory owners as labor for daily living expenses, and some parents were unwilling to let the family labor force go out, so those employers would use the high salary and good treatment to trick their daughters to work in factories in Shanghai.<sup>20</sup> This kind of girl is actually still working for the family, bound to the family, and has no free choice to obtain an independent life, but the moment they leave the house, they are no longer just “consumers” in the family, but “producers” with the same labor capacity as men. Some of girls worked in tea-house as a “nū zhao dai”, these girls wore high-heeled

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<sup>17</sup> Xue Wenyan. “Minchu Dushi Nüxing Xingxiang Ji Diwei De Queli—Yi 1921 Nian ‘Shen Bao’ Nüxing Weilì”, [The Establishment of urban women's image and social status in the early Republic of China: A case study of the 1921 female advertisement in Shenbao.] *Yinshan Academic Journal (Social Science Edition)* 21, no. 5 (2008): 25-28.

<sup>18</sup> Liu Mingkui. “Zhongguo Gongren Jieji Lishi Zhuangkuang” [Historical Situation of Chinese Working class.] Beijing: Party School Press of the CPC Central Committee (1985): 224.

<sup>19</sup> Bai Yun. “Nüzi Zhiye Tan”, [Women's career talk] In *Ladies Journal* 9, (1915): 30.

<sup>20</sup> Ono Kazuko. “Chinese women in Century of Revolution 1850-1950”, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1989).

shoes, put on makeup, they interacted intimately with customers and getting tips from customers.<sup>21</sup> In *Linglong* magazine, it also had article mentioned about “nū zhao dai”, they were metaphorized as living signboard to attract more consumers in barbershops, western restaurants, and bookstores. These kinds of girls embodied modernity because of their modern appearance, but at the same time, there was also a lot of public opinion that the work they did was low and undignified. Their image showed up in magazines and advertisements and made the image of modern Chinese girls more concrete. In early Republican China, the work for girls were mainly concentrated in the handicraft, textile and service industries, although they didn't have been well educated, they were pioneers of the professional women.

The types of profession available to women have also evolved with the modernization and Westernization of China. The popularization of vocational education, the skills and knowledge that women could learn also increased, so the range of women's occupations also expanded. From 1920s to 1930s, women could take jobs like teachers, bank clerks, lawyers, reporters, nurses, accounts, editors, and so on, although the number of it was small.<sup>22</sup> The variety of occupations for women has increased, meanwhile, some positions that used to belong to men also started to recruit women. In the 1930s, there were only 29 female lawyers in Shanghai, with a higher social status and a better life than ordinary professional women.<sup>23</sup> Lawyers were mostly men at the time, women were able to participate in the work of lawyers, which is enough to show that the division of labor between men and women in society and in the family began to have a substantial change, that was, women could also participate in the work that used to belong to men. In addition, jobs as bank clerks and

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<sup>21</sup> Angelina Chin. “Bound to emancipate”, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2013), 101.

<sup>22</sup> Jiang Wenjun. “Bailing Liren: Jindai Shanghai De Nūzhiyuan”, [White-collar Beauty: Female Employees in Modern Shanghai.] *Historical Review*, no. 3 (2011): 31-40.

<sup>23</sup> Ju Ren. “Tongxun: Shanghai Zhiye Funü Shenghuo Gaikuang (Shang)”, [Newsletter: Shanghai Career Women's Life Overview (Part 1) Nü Sheng 3, no.12 (1935): 7.

accountants were popular with women during that period. The average female accountant worked five to six hours a day and earned 30 to 70 or 80 yuan a month in Shanghai.<sup>24</sup> For bank clerks, the minimum wage was the salary of an intern, about 10 to 20 yuan, and the salary for a regular employee was at least 40 yuan.<sup>25</sup> For women at the time, the wages for both types of work were considerable. At that time, these professional women created an economic foundation for their own independent life. What's more, in 1920s, there appeared a number of female elites in the Shanghai banking industry who became senior managers, serving as chairman and general manager.<sup>26</sup> They also changed the relationship between men and women in Chinese society, promoting the process of gender equality in workplace and becoming modern girls. Even though they didn't realize that their way of making a living was changing the social roles of women in China, it made a certain contribution to women's independence and liberation.

## 2.2 The modern look of professional women

When we talk about modern girls, we always think of those who dressed fashionably and made up showily, in the image on magazines or advertisements. In China, Shanghai Modeng Xiaojie is the most representative existence. By the 1930s, the Modern Girl look—painted face, bobbed or permed hair, stylish qipao, high-heeled shoes—had become so popular among women from a wide range of social backgrounds, including professional women, prostitutes, young wives from the upper and middle classes, and high school and college students. It had become both a necessary and a passport to opportunity.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the modern appearance of girls could use to change the

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<sup>24</sup> Gan Peishi. "Shanghai NüZI De Zhiye Shenghuo--Kuajiyuan", [Shanghai women's professional life - accountant] in Nü Peng You 10, (1933): 6.

<sup>25</sup> Qian. "Huoyue Za Shiyejie De Nüzhanishi", [Women Warriors active in business - Proceedings of the Symposium] In Funü Shenghuo 1, no.2 (1935): 128-133.

<sup>26</sup> Wu Hongjing. "Zhichang Liren", [Workplace beauty.] (Shanghai: Shanghai Culture Publishing House, 2006), 55.

<sup>27</sup> Madeleine Y. Dong. "Who is afraid of Chinese Modern Girl" In The modern Girl Around the World, (Durham:

social status. Through buying modern style clothes, to dress themselves up and look more modern was a fashion trend pursued by Chinese women at that time, then for those who have their own occupations, and could afford the expenses brought by these dresses, it was a way to break through the class. If their vague appearance of class leads them to marry people of high society, it is not difficult to achieve class crossing. Dong also pointed out that working women who have uniformly look from their hair style to their fashion tastes.<sup>28</sup> This also shows that most of the professional women's dress is still relatively modern, and the appearance of these professional women is relatively easy to distinguish from traditional women. The look of professional women is also a symbol of a modern girl; it may not come from copying magazines models; it may come from the other women who lived around this group of professional women. When such a trend becomes fashionable, it will gain many followers, not just a specific group.

Professional women are modern girls. In *Modern girls on the go*, it also agrees that the modern girl is equivalent to the young professional woman of the 1920s-1930s.<sup>29</sup> Just like Miriam conceded that “there are many ways to be modern.”<sup>30</sup> One article in *Linglong Magazine* in 1931, figure 8 described a women who worked in company, dressed sleeveless cloth, polished her nails, did make-up, spent lots of time to care about her appearance. And here has another article from figure 9 discussed that professional women spent too much money to buy clothes, it suggested women to learn more about sewing skills, so that they could change the style of clothes by themselves and no need to spend money; And lady He Shufang in figure 10 she even thought that

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Duke University Press, 2008), 149-219.

<sup>28</sup> Madeleine Y. Dong. “Who is afraid of Chinese Modern Girl?” In *The modern Girl Around the World*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 149-219.

<sup>29</sup> Alisa Freedman, Laura Miller, and Christine R. Yano. “YOU GO, GIRL! Cultural Meanings of Gender, Mobility, and Labor “ In *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan*, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1-16.

<sup>30</sup> Miriam Silverberg. “After the Grand Tour in *The Modern Girl Around the World*”, In *The modern Girl Around the World*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 354-361.

some beautifully dressed shop girls were not good professional women, their flattery and attentive service to men were looked down on, and even affected other women to become a professional woman.



Figure 8. From Ling Long Magazine 6, (1931): 187, the article called "What kind of woman are you".



Figure 9. From Ling Long Magazine 8, (1931): 257, the article called "Women and sewing".



Figure 10. From Ling Long Magazine 15, (1931): 507, the article called "shop girl".

Women who received the payment from their work also paid attention to their outfits and makeup, they used their wage to buy cosmetic, dress, shoes to make herself be modern. Whether their profession is noble or not, they were all professional women. And Chinese society at the time saw the appearance of modern girl as a threat. Though some had attempted to undermine these girls by comparing them to traditional good women, the idea of the modern girl has continued to grow. This went even further against what was traditionally expected of women, women were not docile anymore.

### 3. Chinese Modern Girl in mass media

The development of Chinese modern girl is driven by the conflict between nationalism and colonialism. In the modern print publications at that time, the image of modern girl was a new

phenomenon that combined the two cultures of China and the West. Most modern girls were depicted in the mass media with short or curly hair, Qipao and high heels, and beautiful makeup on their faces. They were often combined with advertisements for different products or on the cover of a magazine, which affected the lives of people and also promoted the development of the women's emancipation movement.

### **3.1 The application of modern girl's image in different advertisements**

During 1910s, most of the commodity advertisements basically only had pictures of products and text with instructions, and rarely used female images. Until 1920, with the gradual stability of national political and economic development, advertising culture had a great development. At this time, the development of female education and career became more and more mature, the social status of women also continued to improve, and a new female image was gradually established in the process of China's modernization. The image of modern girls was already a popular trend at that time, they were integrated into commodity advertisements, and were seen by more people in magazines, newspapers and periodicals.

The modern girl image has widely used in advertising. In late 1919, the image of the modern girl was mostly used in the advertisements of some female products, such as perfume, cosmetics, and clothing. After 1920, advertisements using the image of modern girls broke through the field of women's products, and spread the image of traditional women to people through advertising, such as cars, books, and cigarettes in *Shun Pao*.<sup>31</sup> Above are maternal and child products and health care publicity in *Ladies Journal*, you can also see the image of modern girls from figure 11 to 13, in

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<sup>31</sup> Xue Wenyan. "Minchu Dushi Nüxing Xingxiang Ji Diwei De Queli—Yi 1921 Nian 'Shen Bao' Nüxing Weili", [The Establishment of urban women's image and social status in the early Republic of China: A case study of the 1921 female advertisement in Shenbao.] *Yinshan Academic Journal (Social Science Edition)* 21, no. 5 (2008): 25-28.



Figure 11. From Ladies Journal 2 (1930):  
15, it is description of medicine used to  
treat menstruation.



Figure 12. From Ladies Journal 2 (1930):  
20, it is description of medicine for  
children and a medicine for hemorrhoids.



Figure 13. From Ladies Journal 2 (1931):  
3, it is description of health care  
product.

During this period, in order to promote women to break the old concept and pursue a new life, the creators of advertising also began to add new elements to the image of modern girls.

These advertising images are not only showing products, but also the communication carrier of the image of modern girls.<sup>32</sup> What's more, in the advertisements of this period, there are a large number of advertisements showing women's sports, such as swimming, skating, rowing, ball games, and other sports, which were quickly accepted by urban women. During 1920s to 1930s, Yue Fen Pai advertisement had also included different images of modern girls in advertisements, such as female broadcasters and singers, as well as skating, riding horses and motorbikes girls.<sup>33</sup> The sport of golf was advertised both in Shun Pao and the Republic of China Daily.<sup>34</sup> Advertisements not

<sup>32</sup> Liu Weina. “‘Funü Za Zhi’ (1915—1931) Tuxiang Zhong Minguo Nüxing Fengmao Yanjiu”, [Ladies Journal (1915-1931) images of women in the Republic of China] Publishing Research, No. 10, (2018): 108-111.

<sup>33</sup> Qian Jun. “Yuefenpai Guanggao De Nüxing Xingxiang Chuangzuo Celüe”, [The creation strategy of female image in the advertising picture of the Lunar Calendar of the Republic of China.] Theory Research, No. 2 (2015): 124-125.

<sup>34</sup> Huang Yutao, Zhou Qiuguang. “Minguo Shiqi De Guanggao Dui Funü Jiefang Yundong De Tuijin”, [The

only use the modern girl's image to guide consumption, but also let the public see the development and change of women's new social status, so that people have more space to imagine women's new and more social roles, which leads the public to abandon the traditional female image under the Confucian etiquette.

The development of advertising and the increase of women's purchasing power also fully prove that “ the spread of modernization cannot be separated from the combination of consumerism and material culture.”<sup>35</sup> From the number of female product advertisements in *Linglong* magazine,<sup>36</sup> it can also be known that women at that time had ability to consume, in addition to those wealthy married women, daughters of rich families, and there are also some people who will be affected by these female product advertisements to consume, that is professional women. The application of the modern girl image in advertising can be said to be the development of women's modernization consciousness, and it can also be a display of the modernization of Chinese social life. The use of the image of modern girls in furniture advertising is to publicize people to have a modern style of home, the use in car advertising is to promote modern travel methods, and the same, the advertising of maternal and child products is to promote scientific and modern feeding methods. Needless to say, women's commodity products, such as cosmetics, beauty products, popular clothing, they are also in the same way to show the modern aspects of women, leading people to have modern life. When these things are labeled as modern, more consumers will naturally follow the trend to buy these products that can make them modern.

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promotion of women's liberation movement by advertisement in the period of Republic of China.] *Seeker*, No.5 (2009): 224-225.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Sumei. “Mass Media and Modern Girl In 1930s Colonial Taiwan” In *East Asian Modern Girl*, (Leiden; BRILL, 2021), 10-27.

<sup>36</sup> Hong Changhui, Wang Zhimin. “ ‘Linglong’ Zazhi Guanggao Dingwei Celue Yu Nüxing Xingxian Goujian”, [Linglong Magazine's advertising targeting strategy and female image construction.] *Culture & Communication* 4, No. 6 (2015): 46-50.

### 3.2 Different forms of modern girls in Magazine

At the beginning of the 20th century, the concept of equality between men and women in China was further consolidated and developed in the education and career development of Chinese women. As a communication medium, mass media presents more new female images in front of the public. Except the images of modern girls in advertisements, the magazine's covers of female and the illustrations of female images in magazines also affect the public's aesthetic perception to a large extent. The Western female image has helped China shape the image of the modern Chinese girl. The clothes, hairstyles, careers, love lives, family relationships, and lifestyles of modern girls should all be seen as contact zones for cross-cultural women.<sup>37</sup> In Linglong's covers from 1931 to 1937, it can be seen that most of the female models had some Western elements.



Figure 14. The cover from Ling long no. 1 (1931)



Figure 15. The cover from Ling long no. 42 (1932)



Figure 16. The cover from Ling long no. 122 (1933)



Figure 17. The cover from Ling long no. 131 (1934)



Figure 18. The cover from Ling long no. 207 (1935)



Figure 19. The cover from Ling long no. 248 (1936)



Figure 20. The cover from Ling long no. 273 (1937)

<sup>37</sup> Wang Sumei, "Conclusion" In East Asian Modern Girl, (Leiden; BRILL, 2021), 196-201.

According to the above 7 covers from figure 14 to 20, all of them are covers of *Linglong*, it can be summarized that some common features of these cover girls are short hair or curly hair or short curly hair, wearing Westernized dress, and basically red lips. Just like Chen and Sun's idea: western colonialism, capitalism and Chinese tradition and feudalism jointly created the frame of modern girl's image.<sup>38</sup> In fact, their modeling was a combination of the culture of China and the West, adding some westernized things into Chinese clothing, which was an important element constituting the image of modern girls at that time. It can be seen that women from foot binding to unbind their foot, to wear western high heels, Western ideas have a very significant influence on Chinese women, whether from the body, or from the appearance of dress. They show the sexy and attractive side of women in front of the camera and spread it to the public through magazines. Obviously, these female images are different from traditional female images. Under the propaganda of mass media, these female images are constantly challenging the traditional status of women. In addition, some covers also showed another possibility of female beauty.

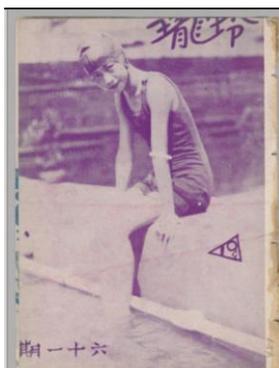


Figure 21. The cover from *Ling long* no. 61 (1932)



Figure 22. The cover from *Ling long* no. 144 (1933)

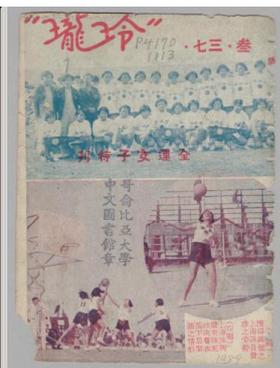


Figure 23. The cover from *Ling long* no. 117 (1933)



Figure 24. The cover from *Ling long* no. 123 (1933)

<sup>38</sup> Chen I-Fen, Sun Hsuihui. "The Framed female image" In *East Asian Modern Girl*, (Leiden; BRILL, 2021), 168-195.



Figure 25. The cover from  
Ling long no. 136 (1934)

Figure 26. The cover from  
Ling long no. 208 (1935)

Figure 27. The cover from  
Ling long no. 243 (1936)

Figure 28. The cover from  
Ling long no. 296 (1937)

According to the above eight Linglong covers from figure 21 to 28, from 1932 to 1937, the modern image of girls began to become more abundant. They were no longer just women in makeup and beautiful clothes, and their images began to take on other social meanings. Their activities and social identities began to become more extensive. They can attend to basketball or track competition, they can go swimming, they can be girl Scouts, they can be pilots. The image of the modern girl not only involves the style of clothing and makeup, but also symbolizes the new feminine values and power. These new images of women appearing in magazines gave people new fantasies. It also brings more possibilities for women's social roles. Perhaps women who dress beautifully, you can say they are still family-oriented, but when the female characters in magazines were no longer placed in domestic , but in public places, where women have not been seen before. This means that the female role is no longer like the past, and the new female personality has gradually become one of the symbols of Chinese modern girls with the expansion of women's dress, education and living space.

In short, through the analysis of the cover of Linglong magazine, although there are not many modern girl images in sports and professional categories, it is enough to show that the modern image of women is actually more changeable, and their forms of presentation are various.

### 3.3 Life of professional women

There are some articles about different kind of professional life of women were posted in magazine and showed in public. In 1924, Ladies Journal issued an advertisement to invite Chinese professional women to write an article about their professional life, on figure 29.

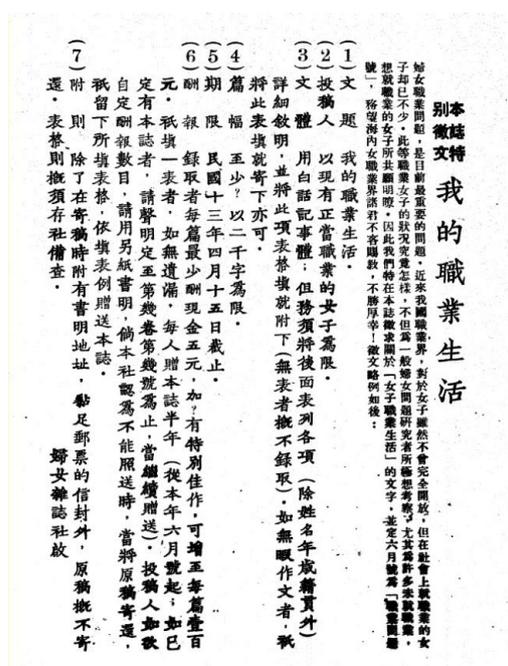


Figure 29. This is the advertisement from Ladies Journal 2 (1924): 3. This advertisement was mainly for soliciting personal experiences of professional women's life in society. The deadline was on April 15, 1924. Each article would be paid at least 5 yuan, up to 100 yuan for excellent articles. In addition, participants would receive a free Ladies Journal for half a year.

In order to allow the majority of women with legitimate careers to actively contribute, this promotion also has a detailed submission bonus, the amount of up to 100 yuan. The advertisement prompted many professional women to submit articles, and in June 1924, 26 articles on the lives of professional women were published in the magazine. The work life of teacher, including part-time teacher, accounted for half of the submissions, it also had hosiery weaver, factory supervisor, doctor, store clerk, nurse and journalist. Which are showing below, from figure 30 to 35.

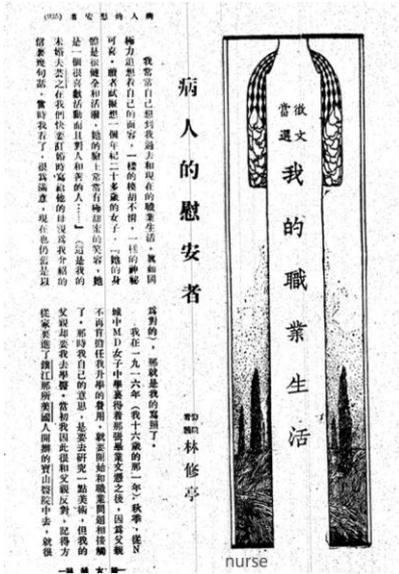


Figure 30. The article from Ladies Journal 6 (1924): 96. The professional life of nurse.



Figure 31. The article from Ladies Journal 6 (1924): 102. The professional life of teacher.



Figure 32. The article from Ladies Journal 6 (1924): 165. The professional life of journalist.

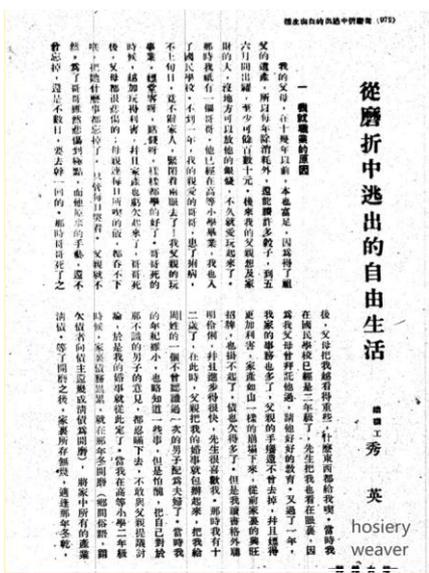


Figure 33. The article from Ladies Journal 6 (1924): 133. The professional life of hosiery weaver.

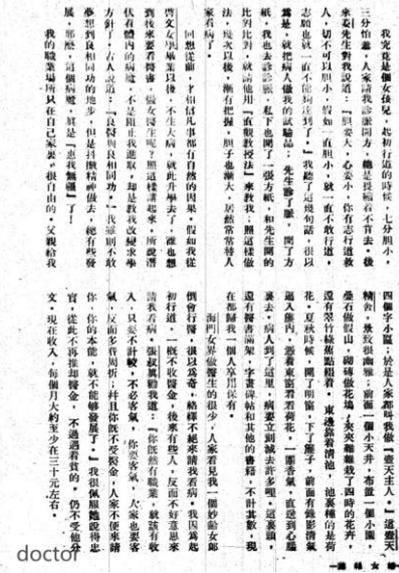


Figure 34. The article from Ladies Journal 6 (1924): 125. The professional life of doctor.

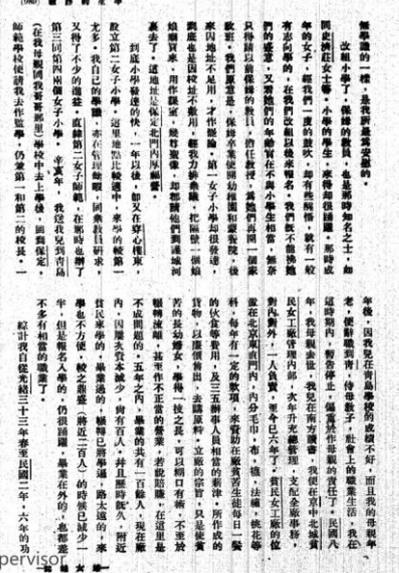


Figure 35. The article from Ladies Journal 6 (1924): 148. The professional life of factory supervisor.

From these articles written by professional women in Republic China, it shows that women's voices could be heard through the mass media at that time, whether it was a hard and sad life, or a happy and memorable life, or a responsible life for the society, it was a real occurrence in women's professions. They are not only telling their own story, but also telling the story of the times.

And for women of that time, these experiences also shaped the development of modern girls in their own way. The power of mass media is not only to share and disseminate clothing and products, but also to disseminate social values and women's values through the dissemination of experiences. The independence of women was put in front of the public, once again showing the public the new power of women. When a woman's change is no longer just in appearance, it further expands to the role of her society and family. At this time, as the carrier of Chinese traditional practice, women further promoted the disintegration of the patriarchal family. Women have experienced unprecedented changes in their bodies, minds, and social power. In any case, the development of modern girl and emancipation of women cannot be separated from the complementarity of women themselves and the mass media, and of course there are many other political and economic factors involved.

#### 4. Conclusion

The modern girl is the product of the development of the times, but also the product of the mutual influence of countries in the world. Her transformation from dress up to education to the role of women which speaks to the liberation of women.

Professional women can be seen as one of the ways of modern girl. The image of the modern girl influences the lives of Chinese women, creating new roles for them and giving them opportunities to fulfill their new identities in society. Among them, the development of professional women has made traditional Chinese women see more possibilities as women in this society. As Kathy believes, girls' wish to claim a public space for themselves is particularly mark of the role of the modern girl.<sup>39</sup> Professional women have proved with their social experiences that they are

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<sup>39</sup> Kathy Peiss. "Girls lean Back Everywhere" In *Modern Girl Around World*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 347-353.

indeed no longer just housewives tied to their families, they become teachers, bank clerks, journalists, etc. They enter public places to show the image of professional women to people, as a part of China's modernization process, they are not only a new expansion of female roles and identities, but also an expansion of their public life space.

Professional women, driven by education and mass media, had become one of the most representative images of modern girls, and it developed the modern girl. At the beginning of the 20th century, under the efforts of the missionaries, Chinese reformers and scholars, Chinese girls' education changed from family-centered education to women's vocational education. There are fewer and fewer limitations in female education. With the development of gender equality education, coeducational education has become more accepted by more people. From not being allowed into college, to being allowed to audit in college, the progress of women's education is not only reflected in the expansion of women's learning content, but also the expansion of women's space to enter different fields. With the help of education, girls break out of tradition, not only physically, but also mentally. They fight for their own independent personality, do not want to be controlled by the patriarchal system, a major change in thought is the foundation for a change in action. And also with the development of Western industrialization, China has also been included in the industrialization process, and the development of women's careers has officially created a new space for women's liberation. All these laid the foundation for women to become professional women and go to society, and also created a broader space for women's social life. From home to society, the movement of this space not only advocates a more modern way for women's life, but also further promotes women's self-independence consciousness.

The image of the modern girl also promotes the development of professional women. People

recognize modern girls, modern life, modern health, modern families and so on from the pictures on the mass media. They were seen and imitated by more people under the propaganda of the mass media such as magazines, advertisements and newspapers. It is because of the visualization of the image of modern girls that more people see the difference between modern girls and traditional girls. They have gradually become a fashion trend, attracting a large group of women to be modern girls, or dress up as modern girls. This is also one of the reasons why women break out of the family bondage and go to work in the society, because the articles on women's issues described in Ladies Journal also pointed out that some professional women spend most of their money on dressing up, even if their status is low, they can still buy the clothes advertised in the magazines through work. Cosmetics and other products that make them look modern.

The phenomenon of modern girls is inevitable. Professional women as one of the representatives of modern girls, they are influenced by the image of modern girls, and at the same time, they are a force to promote the development of modern girls. Modern girl is an expression of the gradual process of women constantly renewing their perception of themselves and breaking the old rules. The modern girl can't just be summed up as a woman with short curly hair, high heels and makeup, but a progressive model that struggles in the process of breaking and reshaping again and again.

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