Women Journalists, New Femininity, and Post-feminism in Urban China

By

Ye Jin

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Abstract

In recent years, neoliberalism and post-feminism have become global discourses. After more than thirty years of policy reform in China, market-driven individualism and consumerist ideology have found a home there. This thesis foregrounds women journalists in order to study the associated emergence of a new femininity in urban China.

It suggests that the mediated new femininity is a crucial site of challenges, contests and struggles, and explores how the subjectivities of these journalists are produced and played out in the Chinese context of media, globalization and gender and identity construction. Three influential female journalists will be used as case studies in order to explore the different though overlapping dimensions of China’s new middle-class female subjectivity. Feminist discourse analysis and ethnographic approach were drawn on as main research methods in this thesis.

I suggest a term of ‘technologies of new femininity’, to describe the mechanisms deployed by government to speak about gender, as well as those employed by individual women to identify the self. I argue that there could be a ‘knowledgeable femininity’, as one potential feature of ‘alternative femininity’. I also suggest a ‘triangle contact zone’ where new femininity’s exploration could locate, in a destructive re-establishment sense.

The subjectivities of these examples of ‘new women’ in contemporary China are forged out of contradictory, entangled discourses and narrative tensions between female journalists’ mediated presentations (objects), and their identity constructions, practices and self-representations (subjects). The new femininity in China is not a fixed and stable concept, it does not have fixed definitions of who they are, the characteristics they possess, or of what kind of life they live—although they employ an agency that relates to all of these
matters. Rather, their identity formation is a fluid, chaotic, interrupted, self-contradictory, self-questioning, even self-subversive process. It is in this sense that female journalists can be understood as exemplifying the idea that the middle-class new woman in urban China has a split-self. It is a divide and tension that the Chinese party-state initiates and takes advantage of as technologies of global neoliberal governmentality. In this sense, post-feminism in China can be considered to offer an alternative to women that is beyond the binary of good and bad.

**Key Words**

Women Journalists, Post-feminism, Technologies of New Femininity, Global Neoliberal Governmentality, Alternative Femininity
Acknowledgements

It was almost the same scenario in my mind when I was writing the acknowledgements of my master dissertation in Beijing ten years ago. After one decade, having changed two jobs, moved around several places, it finally seems to get to the ‘dream’…

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Introduction

Mrs. Lan Yang is so perfect in her life and work. You know, she has her own career, a beloved husband, a lovely boy and girl.¹

For me, work is just work, and personal life is quite important. I am thinking to have another baby in the next one or two years. You know, it seems that everyone would like to have two children nowadays.²

I am considering to quit my job in the media, and like you, I want to go back to my home city and have a job, maybe in a university. My parents have been discussing it with me for a long time. For them, this job is too tired for a woman and it is time for me to have a baby.³

Those words are from women journalists when we were talking in the interviews conducted for this thesis. All of them work in television, an industry conventionally regarded as unstable, exhausting, 7/24 on duty, hard to marry or have a baby. On the contrary, a lecturer in the university, as who has been mentioned in the interview, is regarded as a respectable, flexible-time managing, easy to find a proper husband, and life-long job. Edwin L. Shuman, in Practical Journalism: A Complete Manual of the Best Newspaper Methods, one of the first textbooks for professional journalists, warns that ‘reportorial work rubs the bloom off a woman much more quickly than school-teaching or employment in a business office’, and ‘the paper takes all her time, all her

¹ It was from the interview of Da Jun that I conducted for this thesis, who works in the Sun Media (Lan Yang’s company), who is 30 years old. The interview was taken in her office room on 9th November 2015. Please see the records of interview and field notes in Appendices. Page 8.
² It was from the interview of Lan Gao that I conducted for this thesis, who works in China Central Television, who is 37 years old. The interview was taken in a meeting room on 26th February 2013. Please see the records of interview and field notes in Appendices. Page 13.
³ It was from the interview of Lin Chen that I conducted for this thesis, who works in Phoenix TV, and who is 32 years old. The interview was taken in a coffee room on 25th August 2013. Please see the records of interview and field notes in Appendices. Page 16.
strength, and robs her of almost all social life and of many feminine characteristics’ (1905: 148-162).

These participants were all born in the 1980s, and they only know about the feudal oppression on women through TV operas, since ‘equality and emancipation have become part of our everyday vocabulary’ (Genz 2009: 1). There are an increasing number of women thinking themselves as independent and autonomous ‘new women’, whereas the contradiction of accomplishing a ‘successful career’ and becoming a ‘good wife and mother’ keeps on rolling. Despite their complaints against the low salary, almost every female journalist I encountered in the fieldwork has more than one luxurious bag (any big brand you can imagine). Moreover, it becomes more and more convenient to get access to digital versions of international fashion magazines online. Consumer-oriented culture is a popular discourse in contemporary China.

I, as a feminist researcher, was also a woman journalist ten years ago. The similar working experience is helpful for me to start the project and focusing on this specific group. However, in this research, I would like to stand one step back, to examine critically how they explore new female subjectivity in this highly mediated society. In other words, the rationality of the researcher is highly stressed in this study. Certainly, the tension between the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ is also one of the interesting dynamics in this research and it will be discussed further in the methodology chapter.

In the global scale, the image of China is complex and even paradoxical. Contemporary China has been in the throes of ‘neoliberal restructuring’ (Nonini 2008: 145). In other words, Neoliberalism has grown into an important explanatory trope for China’s hybrid practices and discourses in the post-Tiananmen Square period. Within this framework, contemporary
professional women in urban China have been struggling for constructing a new feminine subject over the last three decades.

Nevertheless, the new feminine subject produced during this period is featured by contradiction and mobility. To be specific, in this mediated world, it represents itself as independent, freely choosing, self-responsible, self-disciplined and empowered, whereas it is still governed by pervasive, ideologically normative consumerism and neoliberalism. What's more, it has to contend with the specific Chinese context of digital social media. In brief, while these 'new women' in contemporary China 'seek to manipulate the market, as well as the cultural, and political forces for achieving self-representation, they paradoxically support the very same essentialised understanding' of femininity which is advocated by that market, party-state, neoliberal ideology and postfeminist subject (Ferry 2003: 660).

This thesis seeks to outline this subject by examining the cases of women journalists who have been striving for entry into the male-dominated sphere, getting recognised by the public, obtaining public influence, and constructing the presentation of their subjectivity in the workplace and in daily life through various media. In other words, this thesis will take Chinese women journalists as an example, and explore how women’s subjectivity is produced, reproduced, negotiated and played out in the Chinese context of hybrid media so as to investigate the new femininity in China. During this process, I will shed light on the hybrid discourses derived mainly from three types of 'spaces': texts of their published autobiographies, public interviews conducted by other media, and other programmes; social media platforms, mainly including blogs and microblogs (texts, audios and videos etc.); and the physical fields of three celebrity women journalists. These spaces are employed as analytical categories, with a clear recognition that spaces and practices can overlap with each other.
According to the cross-national data, there were an unprecedented number of women entering the news profession over the past 30 years around the world (Wang 2016: 489). Scholars have revealed a ‘gender switch’ within this industry (e.g. Sparks 1991, Zoonen 1998b and Wang 2016). Women journalists, as one of the modern professions for women, often gets compared with female politicians and female lawyers, both of which have long been regarded as male-dominated professions. They have become one of the main characters and subjects of interest in many fictions, films, and soap operas around the world: for example, *House of Cards* (Netflix 2013), *The Newsroom* (HBO 2012) and *Thank You for Smoking* (FOX 2006), etc. Almost all the women journalists in these mediated contexts are depicted as ambitious, independent, and eager for success. However, they are still described as standing by/behind, and even being manipulated by male characters. For example, Zoe Barnes (played by Kate Mara) in *House of Cards* becomes the mistress of Francis Underwood (a presidential candidate, played by Kevin Spacey) in order to get exclusive report sources. She is represented as an unscrupulous woman who finally pays the ultimate price of death. Moreover, in *The Newsroom*, Mackenzie MacHale (played by Emily Mortimer) also revolves around Will McAvoy (a star news anchor, played by Jeff Daniels) who used to be her boyfriend, even if she is the Executive Producer of the prime time news programme *News Night*. Their intimate relationship is depicted vividly in the series and always distracts attention from the news story itself. If I expand the definition of women journalists, Carrie Bradshaw, a freelance writer of a female topic column of a newspaper in the world-popular film- *Sex and the City*, is suitable for analysis. Her romantic life and its implication of gender issues have already been investigated by many feminist scholars (e.g. Evans and Riley 2013). Even though Elisabeth Donnelly (2015), a female journalist, once wrote an article titled ‘*Memo to Hollywood: Female Journalists Don’t Sleep with Their*
Subjects responding critically to the stereotyped representation of women journalists in the West, the most frequently clicked photo of a woman journalist is the sports woman journalist from Spanish Telecinco Television, Sara Carbonero, who was elected as ‘The Sexiest Woman Journalist’ in the world by *FHM* (*For Him Magazine, USA*). The sexualisation of journalism culture (Hanitzsch 2007: 369), or ‘feminised’ journalism (Gill 2007: 668), is considered as an arena in which neoliberal postfeminist feminine identities are engaged and negotiated, along with the consumer culture.

In recent years, both neoliberalism and post-feminism are stressed as global discourses. After more than 30 years of implementing the ‘reform and opening up policy’, China has become a safe harbour of the market-driven, individualistic and consumerist ideology. The party-state still has a powerful but discrete control over the media, especially over journalism: journalists are labelled ideologically as “the mouthpiece of the party” (Polumbaum 1994: 117). All of these elements make the situation of women journalists much more complicated. How do women journalists deal with the market-driven pressure entangled with the political correctness ideology? Since ‘feminised’ journalism is unavoidably emerging in this neoliberal China (which will be demonstrated in the following analysis chapters), what is its specific feature in China? More importantly, what role women journalists play in this process?

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6 Journalism culture is defined here as ‘a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful’ (Hanitzsch 2007: 369).

7 In 1980, the Chinese government under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping announced that China should open its door to the world, and ‘have a programme of economic reform’. David Harvey argues that ‘the construction of a particular kind of market economy that increasingly incorporates neoliberal elements interdigitated with authoritarian centralized control’ (2005: 12).

8 Polumbaum states that ‘Journalism’s primary role is to serve as an official mouthpiece, adhering unquestioningly to the Party line’ (1994: 117).
How do women journalists’ discursive practices and negotiations within professional workplaces (public and private) and family lives imply their exploration of self-identity in a sense of ‘new woman subjectivity’? Could women journalists be an illustration of middle-class urban women in China?

In a word, this thesis invites women journalists to participate in the whole dynamic, contingent, and even twisted prospect. The problematic situation in China is much more subtle, diverse and difficult to recognise and criticise. On the one hand, sexual topics are still not frequently and directly discussed on the mainstream media, especially in serious news. On the other hand, the generation born in the 1990s does not have a strong historical and affective attachment with this country’s past sufferings. They are more internet-friendly, holding a more open and comfortable attitude towards sex and body. Currently, they have become the main target audience of the state as well as the market. China is exposed to much more serious problems to some extent. Taking investigative journalism for example, it is regarded as the last piece of ‘Pure Land’, but it still has been penetrated by therapy news as well. This will be explored and analysed in the case study of Jing Chai, a woman journalist, in the chapter four.

In order to provide much stronger evidence for the argument of this thesis, it is necessary to introduce the situation of women journalists in China.

According to a national statistics survey held by GAPP (2015) - the General Administration of Press and Publication, 46.2% of journalists in China are women (Wang 2016: 489). However, ‘similar to other countries, women journalists in China are usually assigned to report so-called “soft news” with respect to topics of health, education, and culture, while their male peers hold

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9 Pure Land here means that investigative journalism is one of the most serious news reporting in news industry, therefore, it is less affected by commercials in China.

10 Tessa Mayes argues that nowadays ‘emotional indulgence and sentimentalism are replacing informative, facts-based news reporting’, which is called ‘therapy news’ (2000: 30).
most “hard news” concerning politics and economics’ (Wang 2016: 490).

Individual women journalists did not show up in the narratives of fiction as well as factual programmes until the late 1990s, with the commercialisation of the media. Only a few soap operas focus on contemporary women journalists. Taking Miss News (1999)\textsuperscript{11} for example, it regards the journalism profession and the news room as the background of the actress’s love life, which is hard to portray any impressive woman journalist character.

When I was searching for the keywords ‘women journalists’ on Baidu (the biggest searching engine in China) recently, the first couple of links were about the news that just happened on November 29\textsuperscript{th}, 2016.\textsuperscript{12} A 29-year-old female journalist jumped from a high building and died because her boyfriend had an affair and broke up with her. A bitter debate was ignited online. In addition to this city news, women journalists are usually described by words like ‘cute’, ‘sexy’, and even ‘pornographic’, especially when it comes to some sports women journalists in contemporary China. As an increasing number of international and national sports competitions have been held in China since the 2008 Olympic Games, sports women journalists become one of the top topics in the sports news reporting. They are represented as someone who wears short skirts, tight leggings, or low-cut T-shirts, ‘deliberately’ showing their sexual bodies to draw more attention from male viewers.

The ‘new woman’ in China is difficult to be interpreted, and my analysis intends to explore possible femininity constructions which go beyond the binary polarisation of those who appear optimistic about female self-expression and

\textsuperscript{11} See the link of this soap opera in China, which tells a story about a young girl (a female journalist), who finally get her happiness and success in her work and life. \url{http://tv.sohu.com/item/NDkwMzk=.html}

\textsuperscript{12} See the link of the news \url{https://news.qq.com/a/20161129/038827.htm}
mediated self-representation, and those who ‘interpret the same phenomena as merely old sexual stereotypes wrapped in a new, glossy postfeminist guise’ (Harvey and Gill 2011: 55). Meanwhile, it also opens up what seems natural about femininity and gendered identity to consider alternatives in an age of anxiety and uncertainty. In other words, this thesis is devoted to exploring and finding new ways of understanding new femininity and post-feminism beyond the good/bad binary in China, thus providing a contested space for globalised ‘Chinese Neoliberalism’ (Harvey 2005: 2).

In the end, this thesis is not intended to give a fixed, stable, one-size-fits-all definition of ‘new femininity’ or ‘new female subjectivity’ in contemporary China. Actually, the context is not a unified or universally applicable entity/agency any more, as it was in the 1950s. Currently, individual exhausted struggles and hopeless explorations have become a commonplace actually and virtually in this neoliberal, fluid, fragmented society, where almost all the traditional moralities and ideologies are smashed roughly in unexpected ways. As a consequence, Chinese people have no belief in ‘grand theories’ any more. It is against this background, women journalists are analysed in this thesis so as to highlight individual particularity.

The three influential women journalists as case studies in this thesis give three different dimensions (which are frequently overlapped with each other, but written separately to make the narrative more clear) to the construction and exploration of new women’s subjectivity. It also could be taken as an analytical gateway to understand the largely social and cultural context of gender politics in China, especially in the age when China makes great efforts to negotiate an alternative narration of modernity.

Lan Yang once worked for China Central Television and became a nationally famous anchor and journalist. After she acquired a master degree in the U.S.A, she came back to China, and established a media company with her husband.
Gradually transforming from a woman journalist to a cultural entrepreneur, she is self-represented as a liberal feminist, taking the responsibility of speaking for other women, and at the same time becoming a model for young women. However, her ‘commercial femininity’ firmly reinstates the patriarchy hegemony in China, which will be analysed further in the third chapter.

Jing Chai is self-constructed as a serious professional journalist who excels self-reflection (in her writings) and always produces investigative news reports. However, she is presented and popularised by the national-media as an ‘affective woman’ journalist and a ‘swordswoman’. Her multiple discursive practices blur the boundary of drama/news, affective expression/rational reporting, presentation/self-representation, and subjectivity/objectivity.

As a woman without conventionally beautiful appearance, Luwei Lüqiu is constructed as a 'Rose in the War',\(^\text{13}\) since she was the only Chinese woman journalist entering the frontline in the 2000s. Even though she has been engaging with reporting many pivotal international and national public affairs since then, her mediated-image is still based on that past moment. Among these three women journalists in this thesis, only Luwei Lüqiu keeps reporting and commenting on political issues on her social media. In addition, she likes to discuss with audiences and netizens online. Luwei Lüqiu builds her ‘alternative femininity’ interdiscursively through tough, incisive professional language, her mediated image presentation and self-representation, and her continuous de-gendered practice.

The urban middle class women in China, being the focus of this thesis, are one

\(^\text{13}\) It is a metaphor for Luwei Lüqiu, because she was the first Chinese woman journalist who entered Baghdad at the start of the Iraq War, and also the only Chinese woman journalist who went to Afghanistan three time for reporting. See one of the links http://eladies.sina.com.cn/qg/2011/0217/2230105293.shtml
of the most anxious and despairing groups in Chinese society, with strong eagerness to be ‘happy’, and ‘having it all’ (Lazar 2006: 505). What is the relationship between mediated-presentation (by others in various media) and self-representation in hybrid texts (autobiographies, the blog/microblog, etc.) for the three women journalists as well as these urban middle class women? With the right to speak on at least one public platform, these women have much more complicated subjectivity exploration, which is entangled with postfeminism and neoliberalism. Although a lot of discussions on such contradictory, fluid, and never stopping situation have been made in Western countries, it emerges and develops in an increasingly brutal way in the fully mediated China, leaving more space for examination and interrogation.

Inspired by Foucault's 'technologies of self', this thesis employs a genealogical approach to further explore the new femininity in China from the perspective of power/knowledge, subjectivity and embodiment (1997: 223-253). As Foucault argues in his examination of ‘subjectivity and truth’, the ‘technique of self’ is ‘the procedures, which suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge’ (1997: 87). The pursuit of new femininity and new female subjects is a process of 'knowing oneself'. Meanwhile, the pursuit is also the key governmentality deployed by party-state in contemporary China to negotiate with the consumer culture, market, neoliberalism and post-feminism, for the purpose of achieving the individual 'Chinese dream' as well as the unified renaissance ambition, which will be illustrated in the following analysis chapters.

Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender* (2004) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) are not only a foundation and starting point of this thesis, but also the core of the fluid 'conclusion' at the end of this thesis. Butler states that since ‘gender is an
ongoing shift and contextual phenomenon, [it] does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations' (1990: 11). In the case of women's subjectivity in this utterly mediated world, ‘the self’ as a female subject, ‘neither precedes nor follows the process of gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves’ (Butler 1993: 7). In other words, it is the ‘un-inhabitability’ that ‘constitutes the defining limit of the subject’s domain’ (Butler 1993: 3). Therefore, Butler (1993) advocates to regulate the order of ‘insideness’ and ‘outsideness’. In the case of this thesis, it is the time to rearticulate the meanings and use ‘insideness’ and ‘outsideness’ to expand the possibilities of the so called ‘new femininity’.

In the preface of *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler expounds how she starts her gender research, after finding herself at the crossroads of some people’s lives, as a participant in the specific life pages of others. She keeps on wondering whether she can link the different sides of her objects’ lives together, which resonates with the intention of this thesis to explore feminism in China. Instead of taking the people in her research as rigid, indifferent objects, she pays attention to those who could be felt and touched in people’s daily life. It is also what this thesis attempts to engage with.

Those women journalists in the research work in CCTV, Phoenix TV, Sun Media, and so on. While holding beautiful dreams, they are struggling in their own lives and stuck into real life in this constantly transforming, fluid, uncertain and risky society. Many of them try to find their ways in the midst of a significant social thought movement for self-recognition and ‘neo-gender equality’ (or post-feminism in a Western context). They chew and enjoy the

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14 Judith Butler (1990) explains her position in the book, and how she gets inspiration of it. She lived in a lesbian and gay community on the east coast of the United States for fourteen years, and there she knows the attempt of those people to find their ways in the midst of a significant movement for sexual recognition and freedom.
exhilaration of self-indulgence in the consumer culture but at the same time swallow the frustration of ‘middle-class’ crisis in contemporary China (career dilemma, haze predicament, etc).

Many feminist media scholars have expressed their lack of certainty about the target of critiques. Gonick argues that ‘system of structural order and symbolic pattern might move, bend and dissolve’ (2003: 17). Thus, this thesis is in an effort to make sense of this picture of flux and transformation in the fast-paced market-driven contemporary China, thus to expand space for ‘difference, struggle, confusion and emergence’ (Gonick 2003: 17).

The first chapter will depict the entanglement of Chinese neoliberalism, postfeminism, market-driven commercialization, and individualism, and their convergence as a particular challenge for the contemporary party-state. Afterwards, the key themes such as femininity and postfeminism will be reviewed to provide the global context of this thesis. What’s more, a brief review of earlier researches on women journalists, gender and the media in China, will demonstrate the historical context for contemporary study of female subjectivity.

The second chapter will explain the methodology of the research. As an interdisciplinary study, this thesis critically develops Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis and puts forward ‘Feminist Discourse Analysis’. In Foucault’s theory, discursive practices are neither simply logical nor linguistic. Conversely, ‘each of them presupposes a play of prescriptions that govern exclusions and selections’ (1997: 11). Furthermore, discursive practices tend to ‘take shapes in technical ensembles, in institutions, in behavioural schemes, in types of transmission and dissemination, and in pedagogical forms that both impose and maintain them’ (Foucault 1997: 12). Therefore, the second chapter will demonstrate ‘Feminist Discourse Analysis’, which based on the further development of Foucault’s ideas of discourse analysis (1971), Norman
Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (1992, 1995) and Michelle M. Lazar’s feminist critical discourse analysis (2005, 2007). In addition, the chapter will explain why the ethnographic approach, participant observation and semi-structure interview are employed as important supplementary methods in the research, and how the qualitative data is collected.

The third chapter is focused on Lan Yang’s interdiscursive ‘commercial femininity’ (one dimension of ‘Chinese new femininity’) - its construction across different texts, genres and media. Particularly, her strategic employment of ‘Happiness’ (xingfu) and ‘perfect’ (wanmei), as successful resources and knowledge creates a hybrid feminist solution, which highlights the social and economic conflicts. Additionally, Lan Yang’s commodified authenticity on social media and her commercial advertisements will also be analysed critically in the chapter.

With Jing Chai’s quick rise to stardom as a breakthrough point, the fourth chapter will carry out an in-depth investigation into ‘affective femininity’, and will examine how she applies different discursive practices and media strategies to self-representation, as well as the articulation and reproduction of certain myths of femininity. It is proposed that therapeutic news discourses have become her active practices to explore new space for feminine subjectivity. The contradictory between her self-representation and other types of mediated presentation will be stressed to explain the complexity of new female subjectivity.

The fifth chapter is the case study of Luwei Lüqiu, which will explore the potentiality of ‘alternative femininity’. Critically drawing on Rosi Braidotti’s ‘virtual femininity’ (2003), as well as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Angela McRobbie, and Luce Irigaray’s theories, the chapter will examine the complex process of Luwei Lüqiu’s self-identification. Moreover, ‘knowledgeable femininity’ will be proposed as one of the possibilities of alternative femininity.
Meanwhile, the ‘triangle contact zone’ will be illustrated as one potential space for exploration.

The last chapter does not provide a still, fixed, stable, all-have-settle-down conclusion, but rather encourages more researches on gender politics based on summarisation and outwards expansion of this thesis.
Chapter 1. Literature Review

Introduction

Starting from the introduction of a general social and cultural background where the subjects-women journalists live, this chapter is aimed to explain the complex entanglement of neoliberalism, individualism and postfeminism in contemporary China, as well as its influence on the self-identity construction and articulation of women in urban China, especially journalists in this case. In addition, it is to establish connections among the main theories and thinkers. There are three sections serving the objective of this chapter. In the first section, the distinctive feature of neoliberalism in China will be illustrated. In addition, it will demonstrate how the country tries to save socialism by embracing capitalism, especially after the accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). According to Wendy Brown, there is a paradox of neoliberalism as a global phenomenon, which is not only disunified and nonidentical with itself, but also changeable temporally and geographically (2015: 48). As thus, David Harvey’s ‘Chinese Characteristics’ thoughts on neoliberalism are taken as a starting point of exploring the neoliberalism in China. Nevertheless, this section is not prepared to stick in the seemingly endless but significant and inspiring discussions about neoliberalism. On the contrary, neoliberalism in this thesis is understood as ‘a new art of government’ cited from the argument of Foucault (1979), and a normative order of reason that may develop into the governing rationality, of subject production (Brown 2015: 49). Subsequently, how neoliberal rationality constitutes consumer culture and constructs new feminine subjects in China will be examined in the following chapters.
Chapter 1. Literature Review

The second section will expound on the wide spread and acceptance of individualism in contemporary China. With the transformation from the collective ideology to an individualistic one in China in the past 40 years,15 pursuing individual interests, caring for self-identity, and ‘knowing oneself’ in Foucault’s words, become familiar and welcoming discourses of the young generation in China (1997: 66). Young people are educated and encouraged to be much more self-independent, self-responsible, and competitive in the market. Chinese women who were shackled by the feudal ethics of ‘the Three Obedience’16 and ‘the Four Virtues’,17 provide a unique case study of exploring self-identity in neoliberal time (Niu and Laidler 2015: 108).

The third section is the core of the literature review, which brings out key words of this thesis such as post-feminism, new femininity, gender and the media. With an increasing amount of foreign capital being invested into China, the country gradually integrates into the global system of consumer capitalism, which boosts the prevalence of female cultural products such as television programs, fashion magazines, and commercial advertisements, greatly drawing the attention of those aspiring, upwardly mobile women in China. Being taken as a transnational culture, post-feminism became one of the most concerned subjects by feminist cultural and media scholars in the last two decades (Dosekun 2015: 962). Several influential accounts of post-feminism will be critically discussed in this section in order to sketch a big picture of the theme or feature of post-feminism, and to locate this thesis’s argument. Afterwards, the attention will be devoted to the examination of femininity. Specifically, this thesis is to present how its definition has developed over time.

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15 In 1978, Deng Xiaoping led the economic reform in China, so as to address the difficulties of economic stagnation and potential political uncertainty after President Mao Zedong’s death in 1976 (Harvey 2005: 120).
16 ‘The Three Obedience’ means ‘to father and brother before marriage, to husband after marriage, and to sons if she was widowed’ (Niu and Laidler 2015: 108).
17 The ‘Four Virtues’ includes ‘fidelity, physical charm, good manners, and efficiency in needlework’ (Niu and Laidler 2015: 108).
and try to clarify the relationship among femininity, feminism and girlie, thus to predict the possibilities of ‘new femininity’ in the future. What’s more, given the global media-friendly and consumer-oriented features of both post-feminism and new femininity, it is necessary to carry out a critical review of previous research on Asia feminine culture, especially in China, thus to distinguish this thesis from other similar ones.

Among a large number of post-feminist cultural studies, few of them place emphasis on women journalists. Hence, the final section of the chapter will answer the following questions: How women journalists explore their identity through their writings as well as the hybrid-text and discourse articulation in the historical perspective? Are there any distinctive features of women journalists’ subjectivity construction in China? Does media reform in China have any effects on women journalists’ subjectivity construction and distribution? Do those previous studies on women journalists encourage any new thoughts on the topic?

1.1 Neoliberalism and Individualism in China

1.1.1 Neoliberalism
The desire for integration with the world is bound up with China’s efforts to enter the stage of modernization (Chen 2013: 561). In recent years, how to participate in the expanding global commodity culture has become most emphatically on the agenda (Chen 2012: 217). ‘Neoliberal ideas of consumerist agency and aspiration’ are imported along with western popular cultural products, such as fashion magazines, soap operas, and films and so on (Chen 2013: 557). Young women in China are enchanted with neoliberal rhetoric like empowerment, independence, and the universalized choice (Chen 2013: 561).
David Harvey, as one of the influential thinkers, comes up with the concept of neoliberalism ‘with Chinese characteristics’, which ‘increasingly incorporates neoliberal elements into authoritarian centralized control’ (2005: 120). In his work, he describes the market reform and economic development of China in the 1980s as an ‘unintended consequence of the neoliberal turn in the advanced capitalist world’, as well as ‘a conjunctural accident of world-historical significance’ (Harvey 2005: 120). He contends that neoliberalism like a significant ongoing self-development wave has swept from the advanced capitalist world to the less advanced one, and China coincidentally or even passively seized the opportunity and ‘registered the achievements’ (Harvey 2005: 121). However, it is undeniable that China is one of the world’s most dynamic regions, where the shattering and atomized embrace of neoliberalism is much more active even if it is experimental\textsuperscript{18}, and this also contributes to the fluidity and uncertainty in contemporary China. Meanwhile, it also partially explains why the issue is much more complex in the political, economic and culture sphere in China with respect to the entanglement with the Communist Party, the state and the market.

Different from David Harvey who presents neoliberalism as a general economic doctrine, and attempts to reconcile the Chinese socialist formation with feverish capitalist activities, Aihwa Ong (2006: 26), another important scholar focusing on neoliberalism in Asia, proposes that neoliberalism in Asia is actually a “neoliberal exception”, featured by a combination of calculative choices, blatant careerism, unbowed triumphalism, and ambiguous ethical outcomes. It is obvious that Ong’s approach is much more consistent with Foucault’s interpretation of neoliberalism, and it as a technology of governing, will be deployed critically in this thesis. Admittedly, the term ‘exception’

\textsuperscript{18} ‘One should grope the stones while crossing the river’, is cited from Deng Xiaoping when he talked about the economic reform in 1978.
underlines sovereign practices and subjectifying techniques, and deviates from the ‘normative order’ (Ong 2006: 12) which itself is not a ‘stable or unified object’ (Brown 2015: 45). Both the notion of ‘exception’ and the concept of ‘Chinese characteristic’ try to clarify the instinctive feature of neoliberalism in China.

Officially, the neoliberal capitalist social formation is embellished with ‘market socialism’ in China (Zhao 2008: 3). However, neoliberalism is usually considered as an aggregation of ideas, underlying the discursive and non-discursive mechanisms, the general art of government, political rationality, and a whole constructivist project, which has permeated almost all institutions and every level of society in China (Brown 2005: 36). In other words, the ‘economization’ of neoliberalism has been witnessed in both political life and non-economic spheres and activities in contemporary China (Brown 2015: 17). As Foucault argues, ‘there is only one true and fundamental social policy: economic growth’ (1979: 90). It is easy to observe ‘pure competition’ in all realms of social life including companies, the infiltration of market-driven truths and calculations into the domain of politics, industrialization of education and medical treatment, the commodification of media and communication as well as other cultural forms. Accordingly, it becomes possible and necessary for social criteria of subjectivity to be recalculated, economic action to be remoralized, and spaces in relation to market-driven choices to be redefined (Ong 2006: 5).

What’s more, as Foucault argues, knowledge/power has been made by neoliberal governmentality as an agent of human life’s transformation (1978: 102). It also leads up to the reorganization of the relationships among the governing, the self-governed, political spaces and the cultural domain in this uncertainly contingent, ambiguous China. Woman and media culture, for example, is one of the sites the power interplay.
1.1.2 Self Identity, Individualism, and the Entrepreneurial Female Self

According to Anthony Giddens, the self is an ongoing reflective project. He argue that it is the reconstructive efforts she or he has made which decides what and how the individual becomes (Giddens 1991). Moreover, Amy Shields Dobson also argues that ‘the collapse of industrialization in the West, the rise of globalization and the breakdown of cultural traditions’ all have profoundly affected the notions of self and identity (2011: 107). In addition, ‘a type of supermarket identity’ is proposed by Anthony Elliott, which refers to an aggregation of scratches, stochastic desires, chance meetings, the momentary and the adventitious (2011: 465). The unpredictable feature is the main concern of scholars who are devoted to the research of self and identity.

With regard to cultural studies, however, another approach is much more prevalent and widely used. After analysing the text of *Alcibiades I*, Foucault dug out the two meanings of self. The latter conveys ‘the notion of identity’, and has become the most popular topic in modern society. It points out a basic question of one’s life ‘what is the plateau on which I shall find my identity?’ (Foucault 1988: 25). The West has a long history of ‘care of oneself’, which is usually taken as an experience and a technique elaborating and transforming the experience (Foucault 1997: 88). Stuart Hall’s critiquing further develops Foucault’s idea which has also inspired this thesis. He argues that

I use ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourse, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. (1996: 5-6)
By contrast, traditional Chinese philosophical thought tends to pay little attention to the division between the ego and the non-ego. As a result, the consciousness of the self was not inducted into the significant ‘truth games’ in the history, at least not in the same way as the West. The divided-self concept, put forward by Liang Qichao, one of the enlightenment leaders of modern China in the 1910s, was diffusely accepted by China including Communists and further developed after 1949 (Kleinman et al. 2011: 89). Therefore, the individual's identity in China was defined by the socialistic class and collective work unit, and it was connected closely with family and kinship networks in the Mao and post-Mao era. At that time, pursuing self-interest, expressing individual desires publicly, and focusing on self-development rather than collective interests were either restrained or stigmatized as improper and even immoral.

After 1978, institutions in China experienced a serious of changes caused by the market-oriented reform. Under the influence of the ‘individualized personal responsibility system’ (Harvey 2005: 32), individuals were forced to possess property, which in turn released the potential of individuals and altered subjectivity (Zhang 2014: 38). At the same time, the widely distributed notions of market competition and social mobility not only broke down the fixed moral meaning of life, but also emancipate self-presentation art which was previously regarded to be obstructive for human nature, and encourage the exploration of the deep ‘desiring self’ (Rofel 2007: 26).

While Colin Gordon (2014) clarifies the neoliberal subject by identifying it as a living style, Nikolas Rose points up that individuals have the really active pursuit of ‘enterprise themselves’ and they are inclined to maximize their quality of life through acts of choice (Rose 1998: 356). In this political discourse, the self is autonomous, self-responsible, personal fulfillment-pursuing subjective being. In other words, the authority of traditional morality does not function as the guide of the self, and conversely, ‘experts of
subjectivity’ play an essential role in finding effective techniques to improve ‘quality of life’ (Rose 1998: 151). Interestingly, this ‘presupposition’ becomes increasingly disruptive in the ‘deep China’ which is defined by Arthur Kleinman as ‘the perceptual, emotional, and moral experience of the contemporary Chinese’ (Kleinman et al. 2011: 3). The aspiration to construct enterprise culture within the modernization process, or the initiation of creating ‘desiring China’ (Halberstam et al. 2007: 2), also underpinned and legitimated the political activities in the last three decades of China. Subsequently, the “enterprising self” became a commonly shared language especially after the 1990s when consumption culture started to prevail in China.

In China, an increasing number of young people especially those who were born after the 1980s (the first generation under the one-child policy) grew up with the enterprise rhetoric, and they were encouraged to have personality with calculating subjectivity, shoulder more responsibilities, accept the risks of their own choices, and strive for self-fulfillment as early as possible. Moreover, they are regarded as ‘the only hope’ in a nuclear family. It is common for the family to invest all the wealth and property in the only child. Compared with their parents, they have more time and chances to ‘talk to themselves’ and think about ‘relations with oneself’ as well as with others, or in Foucault’s idea, the ‘technology of self’ (1997). Undoubtedly, this change is inseparable from the urbanization, neoliberalization, commodification and enterprisation in China. In this sense, the one-child policy strengthens neoliberal individualism.

What’s more, those young people are encouraged to consciously internalize efficiency, competitiveness, and use self-regulatory vocabulary, while struggling over personal and collective interests, self-freedom and patriotism, traditional Confucian morality and western individualistic consumerism. Women, in particular, are regarded as the prerogative subjects of social transformation, and the emergence of the entrepreneurial female self in neoliberal China is the main subject examined in this thesis.
1.2 Global Post-feminism and the New Femininity

1.2.1 Post-feminism

In order to make sense of the ongoing transforming of the notion of femininity and locate post-feminism as a critical concept in the global context, it is necessary to brief review some academic literature and pivotal interpretations of post-feminism and third wave feminism, although to specify or clarify the relationship between them is not the main purpose of this thesis.

As Patricia Lewis argues, it is not easy to understand the complexity of post-feminism, due to ‘the slippage between third wave feminism and post-feminism’ in the texts (2014: 1848). The third wave feminism is featured by ‘girl’ culture or the girlie, which is defined by ‘third wavers’ as ‘a sexier brand of feminism’ (Lewis 2014: 1849). Through summarizing the ‘tactical approach’ used by the third wavers to address the problems raised in the second wave, R. Claire Snyder sheds light on the features of the third wave (2008: 175). First, it foregrounds personal narratives responding to the falling part of the category of ‘women’ as a unity; second, ‘multivocality’ and fragmentation are enfolded; third, it resists grand narratives for feminism, and focuses on poststructuralist orientation (Snyder 2008).

Contemporary scholars are inclined to employ post-feminism as a ‘useful critical tool’ rather than a ‘purely theoretical conception’, because it is ‘insufficient and inadequate’ (Lewis 2014: 1855). Those scholars found the notion of post-feminism quite inclusive. Some of them take it as ‘an historical shift after second-wave feminist activism’ (Gill 2007: 23) or a backlash against feminism (Faludi 1991), while others like Angela McRobbie, put forward a rather influential argument which defines post-feminism as a ‘double
entanglement’ of a ‘doing’ and ‘undoing’ of feminism (2004b). In addition, Rosalind Gill inventively articulates that post-feminism ‘should be conceived of as a sensibility’ instead of a link to any ‘culturally specific historical moment’ (2007: 148), which lays a foundation for the commencement of this thesis. In a word, postfeminism is a critical analytical term concerning empirical regularities or patterns in contemporary cultural life, featured by the emphasis on individualism, with the choice and agency as dominant modes of accounting (Gill 2016: 613)

1.2.2 Femininity

When it comes to the definition of femininity, it is hard to get an explicit and satisfactory one, despite the effort of feminist scholars over the decades. It is too slippery to be pinned down, but people cannot help trying constantly (Holland 2004: 2). One of the discussions is targeted at what are the features of femininity and how they engage with feminism. Some point up the contradiction between femininity and feminism. For example, Stephanie Genz takes the ‘binary distinctions between feminism and femininity’ as the starting point for her analysis of ‘singleton’ women in the West (2010: 98). In addition, through the discourse analysis of several feminist identified women in the UK, Sarah Riley and Christina Scharff confirm an ideological dilemma of ‘feminism versus femininity’ (2013: 211). However, McRobbie clearly states that the old binary opposition between feminism and femininity is no longer an accurate explanatory and analytic category of women’s complex situation (1993: 420).

1.2.2.1 Femininity in the Second Wave Feminism

According to Mimi Schippers and Erin Grayson Sapp, femininity in the second wave feminist perspective is featured by ‘the embodiment of patriarchal domination and oppression’ (2012: 28). Similarly, Catharine MacKinnon also argues that femininity is fixed and ‘male-dominant’ (1989: 130). In other words,
it lays stress on the submissive and subordinative status of women through ideological indoctrination, which therefore should be rejected.

Girlie girls are inclined to position ‘femininity’ at the center of the agency, confidence, and resistance rather than in opposition to feminism (Gillis and Munford 2004: 176). Femininity, in girlie feminism, is regarded as a path to female empowerment. A new woman in girlie rhetoric is ‘self-assured and comfortable with her femininity and her sexual difference’ (Genz 2010: 106).

Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (2005) carry out a further analysis of ‘Girlie’ within the intersection of feminism and feminine culture. They contend that the girlie is neither exclusive to young age, nor passively restrained by patriarchy when it is related to ‘barbie dolls, makeup, fashion magazines and high heels’ (Baumgardner and Richards 2005: 21). As indicated by the two scholars, ‘Girlhood, is more a state of being than an age’ (Baumgardner and Richards 2005: 61). Girlie girls are not only knowledgeable about how to be sexy, but also ‘smart’ enough to know themselves and take advantage of feminine symbols actively as power to ‘work for them’. However, instead of employing explicit and more feminist-friendly words like ‘choice’ or ‘empowerment’, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards put emphasis on the conclusion that being a ‘girl is good’ (2005: 35). In other words, it is unnecessary for girls to abandon feminine accouterments, such as miniskirts, to qualify their feminist identities. There is no different between ‘Barbies and eye shadow’, and ‘combat boot and sports’ (Baumgardner and Richards 2005: 87). This statement itself is a kind of resistance.

In the attempt to understand these girlie theorists among the third-wave feminists, some questions need to be further clarified. For example, is the ‘girlie’ totally the same as femininity? If not, what is the relationship between these two terms? First, the two terms are mobilized frequently by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards. Second, they indicate the dilemma of being
feminists and still ‘feeling the need to wear high heels’, which explicitly establishes the dichotomy/conflict between feminists and girlies (Baumgardner and Richards 2005: 86). However, girlie feminists claim that feminine things, like knitting, painting nails, etc., are not exclusive to women, but rather as valid as ‘boy things’. Then, does the dichotomy still has its existing foundation? Last but not least, they argue that girls nowadays have no knowledge of being a feminist, or the ‘feminist phantom’ is one of the features of third wavers (Baumgardner and Richards 2005: 66).

It is no exaggeration to say that the girlie becomes one of ‘the best examples of what differentiates third-wave feminists from second-wave feminists’ (Baumgardner and Richards 2005: 63). While providing a powerful endorsement for feminist movements and acts, it simultaneously appeals to people not to excessively focus on women’s body practices such as wearing miniskirts, which manifests girlie theorists’ proposition in the feminism continuum. However, the theoretical framework of this proposition seems weak to explain the complexity of feminism and femininity within culture. All in all, there is still room for exploring the nature of ‘new femininity’.

1.2.2.2 New Femininity in the Post-feminist Discourse

The turning point in the feminist study appeared in the 1990s. According to McRobbie, it marks the emerging politics of post-feminist inquiry (2004: 256). During this period, scholars’ ‘interests’ shifted from ‘centralized power blocks’ (the state, law) to ‘dispersed sites’ (talk, discourse), under Foucault’s influence. The body and the subject then inevitably became the main interests (McRobbie 2004: 256).

Around the millennium, the hybrid media produced the particularly contradictory and ambivalent ‘new femininity’ which then became complex and challenging subjectivity in post feminism popular culture. This was a major site
where women engage in their own production of self. Different feminists from different cultural backgrounds have given an exact definition of the ‘new’ in contemporary femininity, as well as the agency through which it is embodied, the objective it targets at, and the object it is compared with. As Janet Lee comments, ‘the term “new woman” seems to reappear with nearly every generation’ (1998: 16). From the independence in the late nineteenth century to the empowerment of the present, the evolving female version, as subjectivity represented on media, attracts numerous women to repudiate the ‘old’ self and run for the ‘new femininity’. It, according to Lee, becomes ‘a recurrent sales technique’ of identity politics to promote the image of the female self (1998: 16).

Genz explains the precariousness and equivocation of postfeminist feminine, through the reviews of ‘do-me feminist’, ‘prowoman pseudo-feminist’ and ‘a feminine Girlie feminist’ (2010: 98). Among them, ‘successful’ femininity is one of the pervasive postfeminist popular culture discourses in the couple of years. Taking young women in the West as its main target as well as subjectified ‘unruly’ agency, this postfeminist femininity points up that independence, freedom, groomed attraction and sex appeal are their own pleasure, desire and choice. McRobbie pungently points out its much more complicated essence as a ‘double entanglement’, which comprises ‘neo-conservative values’ and the ‘processes of liberalization’ (2004: 255). With the penetration of popular culture in the highly mediated daily life, commercial advertisements, films and fashion magazines turn out to be the sites for a ‘whole repertoire’ of new meanings (McRobbie 2004: 255). Consequently, the self-consciously new post feminine subjectivity becomes visible in hybrid discourses. McRobbie takes the performance of supermodel Claudia Schiffer in a TV advertisement as an example, and stresses that it was Claudia’s autonomous choice out of her own enjoyment when she took off her clothes and walked to her new
Citroen car (2004: 258). Therefore, there is no necessity to be strongly opposed to this kind of representation any more, like what the second-wave feminist would do. In this sense, McRobbie points out that feminism has been considered out of date by many scholars (2004: 259). However, the fantasy that women are able to make free choices within the ‘more comfortable zone’ (McRobbie 2004: 258), which actually is a more ‘ugly’ truth, and an example of ‘gender training’ of hierarchies under ‘governmental and commercial forces’ (McRobbie 2008: 534).

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Several instructive arguments in one of Gill’s groundbreaking works about the redefinition of modern femininity also inspire the writings of ‘new femininity’ in this thesis. For example, she indicates that it is problematic when women’s autonomous choices are entangled with postfeminist and neoliberal discourses, since they, as entrepreneurial individuals, are required to take full responsibility for these choices (2008: 435). Meanwhile, Gill also admits that

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19 See the link of the advertisement http://v.youku.com/v_shw/id_XNDE2ODYwMjg=.html?debug=flv
she cannot examine the new text, such as advertisements, after accepting the notion of ‘objectification’ as a critically analytic concept of representation in visual culture for decades (2008: 436). Therefore, she lays stress on the shift from objectification to sexual subjectification (2008: 436). In advertisements, for example, women make the choice to ‘please themselves’ rather than seeking the approval of men, and buying a product is actually one way of purchasing a mark of one’s own individuality, showing her empowerment (2008: 437). In addition, she points out pungently that women may be exposed to the ‘double perniciousness’ of the ‘modernized neoliberal version of femininity’, and *postfeminist sensibility* physically and mentally (2008: 438).

However, it needs to point out that most of the analyses that those scholars have made, focus on popular cultural products, such as commercial advertisements, chick lit, soup dramas and so on. More objects should be included such as news reports, serious documentaries, etc., I argue, which will also be developed further in the following analysing chapters.

Instead of simply repeating the arguments and analyses of those influential post feminists, the above review actually intends to point out that femininity is not conservative or radical, traditional or modern, or ‘naturally’ opposite to feminism, or to be the ‘other’ of feminism (McRobbie 1993: 422). I argue, it is a ‘cube’ open to incoming and outgoing elements. Thus, there are challenges and disputes constantly emerging from the inside. In other words, it is a ‘process’ through which women ‘become specific sorts of women’ (Lovelock 2017: 676). The complexity of new femininity’s ‘negotiation, mediation, resistance and articulation’ and how it becomes ‘a part of us’ is quite interesting for me (Hall 1993: 6). The unfixty and diffuseness of femininity in its meanings and practices carve out space for potential interpretation. In cultural studies, it is a whole repertoire of analytic language employed by feminist scholars to explore and examine a variety of shifts in research.
1.2.3 Not Just for the West

More than 20 years ago, McRobbie was concerned about youth culture and mass media, because of her fifteen years old girl, and the implication of emerging complicated social changes (1993: 406). She then proposed that it was the time when the unfixing situation has emerged within girls in British. What femininity really means was in greater degree of fluidity (1993: 408). In contemporary China, I argue, the degree of uncertainty is much larger for women. As McRobbie argues, females have been ‘unhinged from their traditional gender position while the gender and class destiny of their male counterparts has remained more stable’ (1993: 408).20

Despite the realization that post feminism is not merely applicable to the West and white women, the majority of relevant literature still focuses on the Western world. Young, heterosexual, and conventionally attractive middle-class women are taken as the normative subject and the most evident representative by post feminism (McRobbie 2009, Tasker and Negra 2007). Currently, an increasing number of feminists begin to explore the potentiality and negotiation of post feminism in the Non-Western world. Among them, Michelle M. Lazar (2006) examines the advertisement in Singapore and suggests that popular post feminism is a global discourse. In addition, she is concerned about the ‘articulation of power femininity’ through ‘international media corporations’ (2006: 506). Lazar particularly investigates how a ‘modern global sisterhood of women’ erases the difference (a white model), the ‘accommodation of difference’ (especially in Asia), and bridges the difference (pan-Asian models) by means of advertisements. However, her research does not explain explicitly how the construction of female subjectivity in Asian countries is effected by those dynamics.

20 Masculinity has started to become loose actually, but since it is not the topic of this thesis, no further exploration is made.
Louise Edwards in her research on Chinese feminism and transnationalism argues that the feminist activity in East Asia is ‘naturally global and inherently international’ (2010: 53). However, her further illustration of the naturalness and inherency of feminism in China is short of evidence. Additionally, Eva Chen reviews the chick lit in China and finds that ‘the global chick lit propagates the idea of a neoliberal, global sisterhood of chic, empowered, consumerist and individualistically minded women who find freedom through consumption’ (2012: 214). Furthermore, it reiterates the unequal power relation through an explicit awareness of ‘distance’ from the Western model (2012: 224). Nevertheless, the study is much more like a Chinese empirical version of western theory. In spite of its significance, there is still room for more critical analyses.

Moreover, Olga Fedorenko’s study is also focused on East Asia. She examines some racist advertising campaigns in South Korea, and points out that women’s claim for gender equality is actually a ‘hypocritical excuse for masking their acquiescence to the existing gender ideologies’ (2014: 487). In this way, they might get a successful career.

In addition, McRobbie, as one of the few scholars with interests in this subject in the Western context, puts forward the concept of the ‘global girl’ to understand the post-feminist femininity within the neo-global capitalism. As she writes,

> The global girl like her western counterpart the career girl, is independent, hard working, motivated, ambitious, and able to enjoy at least some of the rewards of the feminine consumer culture which in turn becomes a defining feature of her citizenship and identity. (2007: 733–734)

Therefore, these aspirant ‘global girls’ are ‘invited to’ read the international
editions of fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, and watch the global chick lit such as *Du Lala* in China, a story about a girl who is enthusiastic about ‘belonging to a kind of global femininity’, but still cannot share full citizenship (McRobbie 2009: 88). In this sense, they become the ‘ideal’ type of labor for Western states and global companies, because they do not ‘threaten the West by migration and uncontrolled fertility’ (McRobbie 2009: 89).

Based on the critical analysis of McRobbie’s ‘global girl’ as well as the works of other feminist cultural scholars, Simidele Dosekun proposes a transnational approach to post feminism. She reconceptualizes it as *transnational culture* in a more critical sense (2015: 961). To be specific, Dosekun not only criticises the ‘ignoring and obscuring’ of women’s plurality in the global South within the post feminist rhetoric of ‘girl power’ in the global North, but also outlines the value of ‘sufficiently imagined, theorized and researched’ post feminism in the non-Western world (2015: 972). This critique of McRobbie’s ‘global girl’ is convincing, since it implies McRobbie’s tendency to define women from the third world countries, as passive, ‘tame, derivative’, waiting for being invited (Dosekun 2015: 963). I argue that the ‘global girl’ as a typology is problematic, which mainly focusing on the tension between the black and white women. What’s more, contemporary women in China are more active in embracing consume-led discourse, and aspiring to be members of the international market. Therefore, this thesis provides a critical research on new femininity in China through the illustration of women journalists’ discursive practices, to highlight the difference between non-Western women and Western ones.

Within critical post feminist analytical framework, this thesis attaches importance to the foregrounding of interventions, thus making a contribution to the development of alternative post feminist discourses in China through multi-new femininity construction and representation.

1.2.4 New Femininity in China
Not many feminist scholars are devoted to the research on the competing construction of femininity in China. Among those, some pay attention to reviewing the ongoing transformation of femininity, and attempt to provide a historically corresponding context in contemporary China (e.g. Croll 2011, Song 2016). Others explore the potential interpretation of ‘new femininity’ in postfeminism and neoliberalism China, through the embodiment of multiple femininities on various female subjects (e.g. Glasser 1997, Ferry 2003, Thornham and Feng 2010). Similar to their western counterparts, these scholars tend to lay emphasis on popular culture such as film, women magazines, advertisements, and TV and so on.

Genz argues that ‘femininity appears as a complex, multi-layered puzzle that is dynamic in its capacity to change and absorb cultural messages without being amnesiac and forgetful about previous versions of femininity’ (2009: 8). Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a short review of ‘femininity’ in the historical context in China, which can offer reference to the analysis in the following chapters.

In feudal China, femininity was rooted in the worship of female chastity and feminine virtue within female subjugation (Theiss 2002: 49). In the early days of socialism, women were called upon to take the duty of holding up ‘half the sky’ and to participate in the development of the country (Song 2016: 110). The woman who engaged in agriculture, commerce or industry was given a specific name-the ‘iron girl’, because of a labor shortage (Song 2016: 110). At that time, there was no clear biological distinction between genders, and women were considered to be ‘androgynized’ (Evans 1997: 134). The society ‘erased all signs of individual female sexuality’ of women (Chen 2012: 217). According to the literature of ‘neoliberalism’ mentioned above, since 1978, China has begun to carry out its ‘Open Policy’. The localizing neoliberalism and economic development became the foremost mission at any cost. The
embracing of market capitalism and consumerism, though the interference from the state and the party kept suppressing its power, hastened the emergence of femininity among those well-educated and professional women with individualistic aspirations.

The femininity embodied in Eva Chen’s review of *Shanghai Baby*, an example of global chick lit, as mentioned before in this thesis, is quite similar to her Western counterparts. It describes how ‘an active, self-sufficient, free from traditional cultural or familiar pressure’ young woman, is eager to participate ‘in a Western-style market economy’ (Chen 2012: 219).

Sue Thornham and Pengpeng Feng (2010) also explore the ‘saturation of Chinese cultural space with Western presence’ (Schein 1994: 148) by analysing fashion magazines. They give a description of femininity which is ‘impossible’ to be inhabited or ‘uninhabitable’ (Skeggs 1997: 102). Through the interview with young women in Zhongshan University in Guangzhou (a big city in the South of China), they try to differentiate femininity from the definition by their Western counterparts. However, it still repetitively emphasizes the Western hegemonic version with ‘white, western (ised) faces, and tall, thin western (ised) bodies’ (Thornham and Feng 2010: 203). Moreover, when analysing the advertisements of Japanese products, the two scholars do not articulate how these advertisements might relate and respond to post-feminism, even though they emphasize the specific ‘Eastern’ or Chinese distinctiveness.

The research on femininity in contemporary China reveals the complexity of its construction and representation within the post-feminism context. Is there any potential ‘new femininity’ in contemporary China? No answer can be obtained from the past literature, but this thesis will fill in this gap. In the face of various and even violent shifts in the gender relation and its hybrid text representations, how to approach the ‘new femininity’ in the sense of this thesis? The method
employed in this thesis is to examine a number of specific examples and abstract the most significant elements. A total of three cases studies are carried out, each of which will give insight to some features of the problematic ‘new femininity’ and media culture in urban China.

1.3 Gender, the Media and the Women Journalists

1.3.1 Gender and the Media
The representation of gender in the media is a highly examined topic and project in this increasingly mediated world. With the phenomenally rapid change in media technologies, content production, local and global distribution, and the conflicting construction of gender and self-represented subjectivity in the media have drawn the attention of many scholars. The extraordinary contradiction of construction, negotiation and distribution of gender in contemporary media are the most interesting topic for media scholars. As what has been discussed in previous sections, feminist analyses of the media attempt to ‘understand how images and cultural constructions are connected to patterns of inequality, domination and oppression’ (Gill 2007: 17). Germaine Greer (1999) criticizes the less feminist feature of contemporary popular culture, whereas David Gauntlett is quite optimistic that, media nowadays is influenced more and more by feminism, and feisty, successful ‘girl power’ icons have kicked pathetic housewife out of the box (2002: 247). Gender and the media is an attempt to make sense of a big picture of flux and transformation (Gill 2007: 11).

There are many more phenomena which interest feminist scholars working on media study. For instance, nowadays women are accustomed to reading fashion magazines, digesting the latest fashionable information from Paris, Milan, Tokyo and Shanghai, and admiring the fit body models selected by editors. They enjoy ‘girl power’ -through purchasing luxurious bags online by
their own ‘choice’, and posting new bag pictures and overly manipulated selfies on social media sites to present their ‘cool’ life styles. This has become a new modern female subject. However, with the recent boom in online live broadcasting in China, there is an increase in the re-sexualization of women’s bodies in the public sphere. The majority of broadcasters are girls. In order to gain viewers and make money, they objectify themselves willingly before the ‘male-gaze’ by eating, chatting, dancing, and even sleeping in front of the camera (Mulvey 1975: 12). It seems that feminist ideas, mediated-constructed subjectivity and self-represented new femininity ‘have become a kind of common sense’ (Gill 2007: 10) across the world, yet they are repudiated in such an extraordinarily contradictory and bitter way (Gill 2007: 10).

Reading through the multitude of studies examining the media’s influence on woman subjectivity, it is well understood that media images not only embody the ideas of gender, women subjectivity and new femininity, but also shape these ideas as an active agent (Gonsoulin 2010: 1159). While Teresa de Lauretis (1987) puts forward ‘technologies of gender’, Gill also argues that post-structuralism has more impact on feminist media studies (2007: 33). Female subjectivity within the post-structuralism framework, has more split, fragmented and contradictory feature (Gill 2007: 12).

1.3.2 News Media Reform in China
In order to understand how ‘new femininity’ is deployed as technologies by the government to explore the alternative modernity, and by individual woman (journalist) to investigate self-identity in neoliberalism China, this section will briefly discuss the studies of the news media reform. This section of literature review is to provide some basic background information and analyses of the news media/journalism reform recently issued in China, for building a broad context for the three women journalists’ exploration of new female subjectivity.
Zhao Yuezhi is one of the scholars who has made influential research on news reform in China. She explains how the economic transformation has influenced the media reform (2008). After Deng Xiaoping’s supporting speech in Shenzhen in 1992, the neoliberal-oriented economic reform was carried out in education, housing, health care and other public services in contemporary China, and now it has expanded to the communication sector. From the first introduction of advertising in broadcasting in 1979 to the “cultural system reform” in 2003, the culture industry had already become the expected leading economic growth point for local governments, as well as a promising competitive national entity in the global market. The broad definition of the ‘culture industry’ provided wider development space for both the domestic private media sector and transnational capital to jointly construct the “advanced socialist culture” in China (Zhao 2008: 122). However, as Hugo de Burgh argues in his study of Chinese journalism, the Party-state cut off the preferential tax treatments and subsidies for the media sector, which pushed media organizations to earn their own profit in the market (2003: 68). Even for news media, they were exposed to the pressure of audience ratings. As concerned by Bourdieu, Western television battled for ratings and chased after the audience, which was quite similar to that of the news department in CCTV (1996: 56). The program refusing to insert entertainment contents was always at risk in such a consumerist world. In all, as Wang Haiyan argues, ‘the economic basis of the media has been transformed from a system based on state subsidies to one based on advertisement subsidies’ (2016: 491). Wang also identifies three constraining mechanism of women journalists after the news reform, which are ‘women-unfriendly job contracts and salary systems, weak women’s associations and trade unions, and the prevalence of a sexist newsroom culture’ (2016: 489). Wang’s research has provided different approach for examining the relationship of news reform and women journalists, although it is not directly connected with femininity.
There is one more theme covered by many scholars, which is journalism professionalism. In China, journalists have to carry a dual mission in their job. On the one hand, they associate ‘values’ from the West with news in daily practice, whereas it is marked as the progressive ‘intensification of commodification’ (Zhao 2008: 78). On the other hand, journalists take it as a ‘weapon’ to assert journalistic autonomy and challenge the Communist’s definition of news. It will be analysed further in Jing Chai’s and Luwei Lüqiu’s cases, both of them are struggling with ‘journalism professionalism’, which is imported from the West. Whether it is a feminizing ‘journalism professionalism’, how it is related to new femininity, will be discussed more in the following two analysing chapters.

In the middle of the 1990s, the news department of CCTV launched the inner reform by creating a series of new public affairs programs, such as Focus Interviews (Jiaodian Fangtan) aiming at addressing issues of public concern and promoting social justice (Zhao 2008: 316); Oriental Horizon(Dongfang Shikong), the first morning news show in China; and News Probe (Xinwen Diaochao), an investigative news program inspired by the 60 Minutes from U.S.A. Even if the reform did not work out as an alternative model, (for maintaining Party-state authority), many scholars argue, that the “crack” brought by commercial advertising and the pressure to meet the mass audience’s needs expanded the space for factual reporting and non-political discourses (e.g. Polumbaum 1990a, Lee 2003, Pan and Lu 2003). All these reforms have influenced women journalists who work in China. As Wang argues, on the one hand, more women journalists are hired for reporting ‘soft’ news, on the other hand, ‘female journalists who concentrate on reporting “soft” news are dismissed as less competent media professionals and are more likely to be relegated to lower newsroom positions’ (2016: 493). This

21 News in Communist’s definition is to serve for propaganda, rather than providing information (Pan and Lu 2003: 232).
ambivalence has also emerged in the three women journalists' workplace, especially for Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu's. How it will affect the new femininity exploration will be analysed in the following chapters.

1.3.3 The Female Journalist and Feminine Subjectivity

Previous research about women journalists has found the disappointing fact of gender-inequality in the newsroom (Wang 2016: 500). Although it is a commonplace that women journalists presented as writers and reporters of news, they are still identified as ‘others’. In particular in television where spectacle counts, it is an overt attitude or action to lay emphasis on the decorative value and even the sexualization of women journalists (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 1). Journalists’ professional ideology such as policies of news organizations, decision-makers’ (mainly male) attitudes, etc., primarily contributes to the gender segregation (Gill 2007: 155). However, Gill’s study does not give a recommendation for changing or negotiating with this ideology. Through an empirical study, Volz and Lee (2013) explore the professional recognition of women journalists through the award system in political science. They contend that female Pulitzer Prize Winners are more likely to have ‘metropolitan upbringing, the journalism major, and a graduate degree’ as a ‘compensation model’ to ‘overcome the gender disadvantage in competing for recognition’ (Volz and Lee 2013: 248). Nevertheless, there are still some drawbacks in this study. It does not give an analysis of male counterparts and provide much more inspiring discoveries.

In addition, many other scholars are inclined to analyze women journalists’ particular characteristics based on their news outputs and further support women journalists’ efforts for identity construction. Some scholars focus on the specific category of women journalists in a specific country. For example, Lucie Schoch examines the ‘feminine’ writing of Swiss sports journalists from a
‘human’ perspective which is regarded as a subversive strategy that women journalists employ to differ from male colleagues (2013: 708). Schoch goes on to find that this strategy or practice in fact maintains the existing gender order in sports journalism (2013: 710). Some of the researchers investigate three types of ‘new girl writing’ and ‘trend stories’ in a general sense, by focusing on the ways in which female columnists create a new major change in journalism (e.g. Faludi 1991). Moreover, other scholars tend to engage in the gender-differentiated statistical analyses of newsroom culture, news agendas, news values and sources, professional norms and ethical judgments (e.g. Ross and Carter 2011, Beam and Cicco 2010). In a word, none of them takes a cultural study approach, nor examines the entanglement between postfeminism and neoliberalism.

Feminist scholars have already made a major contribution to research concerning women journalists (e.g. Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004, Lutes 2006, Mangun 2011). They not only built an analytical foundation and comparative system for the critical analysis of contemporary subjects through a historical overview of women journalists, but also contextualized women’s contemporary positions in the profession with historical sources (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 1). According to their findings, women’s entry into the modern workplace including journalism did not ‘pave the way for their emancipation’ (Franks 2014: 12). There was only a small band of female journalists including ‘Nellie Bly in the US, Frances Power Cobbe, and Alice Meynell’ writing for the English press at the turn of the twentieth century etc., who managed to negotiate considerable hurdles and multiple obstacles in the early days of mass media, and the participation of women in the journalistic workplace was a painfully slow process (Franks 2014: 15). As mentioned frequently in these studies, the glass ceiling continues to limit women’s promotion to key decision-making positions (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 1). Women journalists themselves become the objects of news and the
public gaze (mainly from males). In addition, it, as a spectacle, is also seized by feminist scholars (e.g. Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004).

The majority of previous studies focus on the sphere of journalism, and they take gender inequality in journalism as a pre-existing truth within a male-oriented ideology. They grow out of the patriarchal enlightenment dichotomy, when testifying to their presupposed conclusions in different contexts. Therefore, this thesis will conduct analyses within cultural study to fill in this gap.

In addition to the examples mentioned above, another three studies need to be presented individually, since they manage to bring new angles of analysing women journalists.

Mangun in her qualitative study analyses the discussions about female journalists in American magazines, and finds three narratives frequently overlapped—didactic, cautionary, and celebratory (2011: 66). Mangun further explores how these narratives may affect the way women view their careers and relationships with male and female colleagues (2011: 68). She argues that these complex, paradoxical, confusing narratives are mainly from women journalists who have managed to enter into the newsroom (2011: 69). They know what skills and abilities are needed to break into the profession and employ this knowledge as appealing advice (2011: 70). These narratives advocate the cultivation of manlike traits whilst retaining and even emphasizing the ideal of true womanhood in 1900s' style—purity, piety, domesticity and submissiveness, in order to encourage—or discourage—white women to pursue a career in journalism in 1800s and early 1900s (2011: 67). In addition, the discipline and scrutiny from internal women journalist predecessors who act as experts and enjoy discourse power (which is not explicitly pointed out by Mangun), need to be further accounted for and directly criticised.
Barker-Plummer’s study in 2010 also provides an analytical review of the literature on the interactive, reflexive, strategic communication among women journalists (2010: 146). She questions the ‘public construction of the second and third wave feminism’ (2010: 146). Barker-Plummer’s work explores the complicated dynamics of the mediation, meaning, agent and discourse. Women journalists, called as the ‘insider history’ of feminism, are of great significance for the dialogue of news and the second-wave feminism (Barker-Plummer 2010: 190). However, the previous research, according to Barker-Plummer, often skips over the mediated feminism, which is exactly the focus of this thesis. Moreover, while covering the third wave feminism, Barker-Plummer puts much focus on the analysis of news media’s selective reporting strategies such as highlighting and labeling the third wavers as ‘lipstick feminists,’ or ‘feminism lite’ (2010: 188). It may constrain public understanding of the third wave feminism. As indicated by Sowards and Renegar, this kind of treatment may be related to the way that the third wavers enact their politics through humor, popular culture, and appropriation and so on (2006: 60). Post-feminism, according to Barker-Plummer, is mediated/presented as a new discursive formation, exemplified by the ‘opting out’ trend through the media (2010: 156). Based on this trend, it is apparent that educated and professional women ‘opting out of the workplace to take care of children and households’ is their own ‘choice’ (2010: 191). Actually, as she explains, it is these women’s ambivalence when making the choice and ‘structural constraints that prevent them from making a real choice’ (2010: 178). In other words, post-feminism, individualization, and neoliberalism interdiscursively negotiate and practice within the ‘opting out’ news discourse.

Women journalists, in this part of the analysis, are not explicitly highlighted as an independent subject of the study. After all, this historic review is not aimed at clarifying feminine subjectivity through women journalists’ discursive negotiation and practice in news reports about feminism. Instead, the open,
contingent, and strategic dialogue or communicative approach that Barker-Plummer takes will be taken into account by this thesis.

Chambers, Steiner and Fleming (2004: 190) provide a more specific analysis of post-feminist journalism in the United States and Britain. They attach importance to feminine individualism and consumerism so as to investigate their implications for women journalists, readers and audiences. Their critique of ‘confessional journalism’ and ‘therapy news’ provide a western corresponding context for this thesis. They emphasize that these types of news are characterized by an intense but depoliticized exploration of emotion, which might hurt the objectivity and impartiality of news. Their research is quite productive and inspiring, which echoes with my study. However, even if Chambers, Steiner and Fleming (2004: 201) have sharply pointed up the shift to ‘soft’ journalism in a new way, I argue, women journalists are still objectified as ‘being given the opportunity to…’ and as ‘being exploited’ in the end.

In China, where this thesis is located, most researchers are only interested in early modern women journalists. In these historical scholars’ writings, women journalists in China from 1890s to 1920s, during which China was in the process of turning into a modern country, were depicted as pioneers in the struggle for emancipation, public participation, and national modernization (e.g. Beahan 1975, Volz and Lee 2013 and Ma 2005). There is a long history of women’s writings in China. Journal of Women’s Studies (Nüxuebao), the first Chinese women’s magazine was founded in Shanghai in 1989 by 18 women scholars (Volz and Lee 2013: 248). By 1912, there were about ‘20 newspapers and periodicals with female editors in Shanghai, Beijing and other major cities in China’ (Volz and Lee 2013: 248). Journalism was not only a profession but also a means by which these women living in the last decade of the Qing dynasty (roughly from 1898 to 1926) entered into the public sphere (Volz and Lee 2013: 249). During this period, modernization was on the top of this feudatory and decadent nation’s agenda. ‘With great anxiety as well as many
possibilities’, women in that turbulent age, explored how to be ‘new women’ in this emerging modern China and strode forward for their emancipation (Volz and Lee 2013: 248). Journalism, traditionally taken as a male-dominated field, became one of the breaking-through realms to enter (Ma 2005: 57).

Several historical scholars attach great importance to The May Fourth Movement, happened on May 4, 1919, when ‘students in Beijing protested against imperialist aggression and the signing of the Sino Japanese unjust treaty by the warlord government’ (Ma 2005: 56). With hindsight, this movement triggered the introduction of ‘Western ideas and the iconoclastic attack on traditional Chinese culture such as Confucianism, veneration of the past, authoritarianism, social hierarchy, the patriarchal family, and classical literature’ (Ma 2005: 57). Therefore, it was not by accident that women at that time were encouraged to assert their individuality and pursue self-fulfillment, which was also the most important topic in women press writings during the May Forth Movement (Ma 2005: 60). Topics of ‘Marriage, education, family relations and woman’s legal rights’ were employed by May Fourth women journalists to ‘frame discussions about society, patriarchy and power within Chinese society’ (Ma 2005: 57). It could be seen that these women learned from their western counterparts when establishing rhetoric and writing strategies (Ma 2005: 61).

More to the point, the interplay between women journalists’ press writings and social practice challenged the assumption about women, and ‘broke through the traditional boundary that had been excluding women from public realms’ (Volz and Lee 2013: 250). Admittedly, it is still controversial that to what extent their pursuits ‘cultivated new gender relations and social norms’, or even managed to construct ‘modern Chinese womanhood and May Fourth Feminism’ (Ma 2005: 58). However women journalists have undeniably opened the door to explore individual woman’s identities, and ‘created their own space by asserting a female perspective on a number of issues, criticizing
patriarchal expressions’ and acting a ‘guiding hand’ for the public (Ma 2005: 58).

It is worth mentioning that only a few scholars show specific interests in Chinese women journalists. Some of them focus on the life and work experience of women journalists in history, especially in the Chinese enlightenment period from 1915-1923 (e.g. Ma 2005, Volz and Lee 2013 and Song 2016). Others examine the construction of woman’s images and narrative patterns in women journalists’ writings and broadcasting. Providing a historical context for women journalists’ public engagement, the authors listed above answer the questions such as: what historical factors in China led women to enter journalism? What type of women found their way into journalism? Did they share some similarities in the social class, educational background, previous career or even personality pattern? The latter explains how they frame ‘new woman’ identity through various narratives.

**Conclusion**

The above brief historical review of literature on women journalists and the construction of ‘new women’ – socially active women with independent careers and political dignity – in print media in early modern China, is not intended to bring this thesis into a historical research category. Instead, it is aimed at mapping the historically close relationship between Chinese women journalists’ media practice and nationalism. To be specific, in the context that gender discourses and nationalism were constituted within and through each other, women journalists were depicted as proper historical agents of social transformation. The historically ideological and moral heritage makes it possible for the contemporary China to employ gender as a convenient discourse – the technology of governmentality - to sidestep, soften, and even trivialize tough social problems during commercialization. Nowadays, women journalists are often taken as cultural references to contemporary middle-class
female identity rather than political subjects. For the cause of this change, detailed explanation will be presented in the following chapters. In addition, the tension and dynamics between women journalists’ writings and multi-media discourses will be examined further, thus depicting how neo-liberal new Chinese womanhood is debated, contested and revised.

It is worth noticing that there are some other critical materials produced by contemporary women journalists, which along with their own autobiographies or semi-autobiographical fictions are also meaningful for the subject of this thesis. Some women journalists are self-represented as rational, professional, independent figures. Taking Oriana Fallaci (an Italian journalist, author and political interviewer) for example, she in her book *Interview With History* (1977), recalls her interviews with many world political leaders from the 1960s to 1980s, including Indira Gandhi, Deng Xiaoping and Golda Meir etc. Fallaci’s coverage of wars and revolutions makes her famous worldwide, and her book has been introduced to many countries, especially to journalism school students. She has become a model for young women students/journalists. Moreover, Lan Yang, Jing Chai, and Luwei Lüqiu, as three objects of the case study in this thesis, have also published autobiographies or semi-autobiographies. What do these women journalists make of self-representation through their writings? How could the tension between the self-representation and public-image be negotiated in relation to self-identify?

All of these contradictory, entangled, and even twisted discourses as well as the narrative tensions between women journalists’ mediated presentations (objects), and identity construction practices and self-representations (subjects), constitute the ‘new women subjectivity’ in contemporary China. However, this ‘new women’s subjectivity’ is not a fixed definition of who they are, how they look like, or what kind of life they live. Instead, it is a chaotic, interrupted, self-questioning, and even self-subversive fluid process. Therefore, women journalists could represent middle-class women in urban China, and
become one of the most self-destructive, and self-split examples of ‘new women’. Moreover, given the fact that the Party-state initiates and takes advantage of the tension as a technology of governmentality in global neoliberalist China, post-feminism in China can be regarded as an alternative beyond good/bad binary. All of those will be further developed in the following chapters.
Chapter 2. Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will explain the interdisciplinary methodological approach used in this thesis. The main three analyzing chapters following the methodology chapter are constructed based on thematic structures, which explain the different dimensions and possibilities of new femininity in contemporary China. The themes were extracted and concluded from these analyses, through an interdisciplinary approach, which are illustrated as follows.

2.1 Feminist Discourse Analysis

In this thesis, I propose the ‘Feminist Discourse Analysis’ as a different research approach to provide more possibilities for exploring new femininity, female subject in neoliberal and postfeminist China. The approach will be clarified through a critical discussion of the discourse analysis in Foucault’s framework (1971), the critical discourse analysis asserted by Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995), and the feminist critical discourse analysis implemented by Michelle M. Lazar (2005, 2007). Meanwhile, how this approach is employed in this thesis will be elaborated in detail. The following section is not aimed at illustrating and describing what the feminist discourse analysis should be, but rather how it could be within the context of a gender research.

2.1.1 Discourse Analysis

The method of this thesis starts from discourse analysis, within a Foucauldian-informed poststructuralist framework. The three female
journalists in the case study have been ‘conceptualized drawing on a set of (multiple, contradictory, and culturally specific) discourses to make sense of their world’ (Riley, Evans and Mackiewicz 2016: 100). From the perspective of the ‘political utility and critical capacity of Foucault’s notion of discourse’, the three female journalists’ discursive practices in multi-texts will be examined in order to explore the ‘alternative femininity’ and new female subject in contemporary neoliberal China (Hook 2001: 522). As Stuart Hall argues, ‘identities are the result of a successful articulation or ‘chaining’ of the subject into the flow of the discourse’ (Hall 1996: 6).

According to Foucault, ‘the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures’ in every society (1971: 8). He also asserts that ‘what is throughout the discourse, is a system of exclusion (historical, modifiable, institutionally constraining) in the process of development (1971: 10). Therefore, the analysis in this thesis is not just focused on the writing, saying or self-presentation of women journalists per se, although they are important, but also devoted to the discursive rules, procedures and categories, all of which are deemed as ‘a constituent part of discourse’ (Young 1981: 48). Following Foucault’s understanding, this thesis, however, is not intended to define the discourse as ‘a system of statements that construct...an object’, but rather is targeted at the exercise of power linked to the discursive practices of women journalists (Hook 2001: 531). As Hook asserts, the power in language links to, and stems from, the external, material and tactical forms of power (2001: 530). Similarly, Butler also argues that ‘discourse itself must be understood as complex and convergent chains in which “effects” are vectors of power’ (1993: 139).

This thesis focuses on the self-representation of women journalists who enter the political/media/journalism discourses as their recognized agency. Three influential women journalists are taken as examples of middle-class women in China, to analyze how they express and construct new women’s identity and
femininity, as well as the manner in which they relate to the socio-cultural perception of gender within their discursive practice. Therefore, the analysis of selection, exclusion and domination of discourses employed by women journalists plays a pivotal role in examining the social-cultural system and its power reproduced and redistributed by these discourses (Young 1981). In other words, the discursive practice of the three women journalists is neither only ‘one-sided individualistic emphasis upon the rhetorical strategies of speaker’, nor individual creation (Fairclough 1992: 25). It is both the ‘instrument and result of power’ in this thesis (Hook 2001: 540).

2.1.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Based on the understanding of discourse analysis in post-structuralist social theory, Norman Fairclough argues that, ‘discourse analysis can be understood as an attempt to show systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices’ (1995: 17). Fairclough also proposes a dialectical relationship between discourse and the social order (1992: 23). In other words, critical discourse analysis provides ‘a considered theorization of the relationship between social practices and discourse structures, and a wide range of tools and strategies for details analyses of contextualized uses of language in texts and talk’ (Lazar 2007: 144).

Compared with Fairclough’s identification of the ‘critical’ in his discourse analysis, his expansion of the discourse from language to visual media texts is much more inspiring for this thesis, which is consistent with the previous argument that ‘critical capacity’ is already within Foucault’s notion of discourses.

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22 Fairclough asserted that, ‘calling the approach “critical” is a recognition that our social practice in general and our use of language in particular are bound up with causes and effects which we may not be at all aware of under normal conditions (Bourdieu 1977)’ (1995: 54).
Following Fairclough’s idea, both spoken and written languages are analysed in this thesis, based on a variety of approaches to women journalists’ self-representations in the mediated society. It is considered that ‘a transcription of a broadcast is a text as well as a newspaper article’ (Fairclough 1995: 17). What’s more, as indicated by the three women journalists’ multiple media practices and the development of digital media, television news, advertising, blog and micro-blog posts, etc., become one of the main texts in this thesis, including visual image (photography, film, video, diagrams etc.), sound (effect) and non-verbal communication (e.g. gestures, eye-contacting, and body-language) (Fairclough 1995: 54).

At this point, I will introduce Michelle M. Lazar’s Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, as another important method of interdisciplinary analysis that has inspired the methods in this thesis. Proposed by Michelle M. Lazar (2005, 2007), Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis is widely used for analysing post feminism across the globe. The method is a further critical development of Fairclough’s analytic approach of Critical Discourse Analysis. Based on Fairclough’s methodology, Lazar highlights, ‘[creating] critical awareness and [developing] feminist strategies for resistance and change’ (Lazar 2007: 145).

I was agreed with Lazar’s explicit feminist label in employing critical discourse analysis. Admittedly, critical discourse analysis provides an impetus for the research on female subjects (Van and Teun 1991: 1), but it is worthy of attention that the use of feminist discourse analysis in this thesis is not just designed to add ‘feminist’ into ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’, or cite from feminist scholars, but rather to ‘establish a distinctly feminist politics of articulation’ (Lazar 2007: 143). It is ‘to theorize and analyse from a critical feminist perspective of the particularly insidious and oppressive nature of gender as an omni-relevant category in most social practices’ (Lazar 2005: 3).
With the three women journalists as the case study, this thesis also places emphasis on the ‘complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining a (hierarchically) gendered social order’, to explore ‘new femininity’ and female subjects in contemporary China (Lazar 2007: 141). Especially in the commercial mediated society nowadays, ‘issues of gender, power and ideology have become increasingly complex and subtle’ (Lazar 2005: 1). Therefore, as an empirical study, the project addresses the intricacies of various discursive structures and strategies in the different texts and discourses of women journalists. To be specific, the research examines the complex and subtle ways that ‘social assumption and power relations are discursively produced, negotiated and challenged’ in gender politics (Lazar 2005: 2). The analytic framework and category comprises choices of words, lexis, sentences and utterances, the multimodal analysis of image and sound, interactions between discourses, etc.

As I have argued above, critical capacity is already inherent to Foucault’s notion of discourse, as he argues, that discourse must be conceived as ‘a violence that we do to things, or at all events, as a practice we impose upon them; it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity’ (1971: 22). I propose ‘Feminist Discourse Analysis’ instead of directly applying ‘Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis’ in this thesis. In order to conform to social negotiation, new femininity is reconstructed, recycled, and renewed in the communication and distribution process. The subject itself is produced in the discourse. It is important to foreground the discursive practices of women journalists in multiple texts, as their approach of pursuing truth/knowledge, and interrogating the power behind the discursive formation. To make it much clearer, Foucault’s concept of discourse formation is therefore operationalized and understood as systematic, socio-historically contingent signification practice for textual analysis (1971: 22). First, it is used to analyze how meanings constitute a particular discourse across texts, and
their (multi) semiotic expression through languages and visual images, non
verbal language, etc. (Lazar 2005, 2007). Second, this thesis examines the
meaning of configurations comprised of elements of other discourses from
other fields, such as interviews and participant observation in the three women
journalists’ workplace conducted for this thesis. This process is also termed by

2.1.3 Feminist Discourse Analysis of Autobiography

According to Foucault’s statement in *What is an Author*, there are more
possibilities between the author and discursive practices, which inspires the
feminist discourse analysis of autobiography in this thesis (1977a). I do not
completely agree with his intention to abolish the category of ‘author’, and
assertion that the author is ‘the unifying principle in a particular group of
writings or statements, lying at the origins of their significance, as the seat of
their coherence’ (Foucault 1971: 14). Still, Foucault admits that what the
author writes and does not write, all these ‘interplay of differences is
prescribed by the author-function’ (1971: 14). Therefore, Foucault’s proposal
for exploring possible subjects within the text, instead of only putting emphasis
on the ‘author-generate-discourse’ is meaningful in the investigation of new
female subjects through autobiographical writing in this thesis (1971: 15). As
Bev Skeggs argues, knowledge and interpretation are accessible through the
‘the discourses and representations available to us’ (1995: 17).

In autobiography, writing plays a mediate role between the ‘self’ and ‘life’, and
autobiography itself is an effort to recapture the self. This thesis takes three
women journalists as the case study, providing three possible dimensions of
‘new femininity’ and the new female subject in contemporary China. As Skeggs
argues, women’s experience is a vital resource for creating knowledge for
women (1995: 17). This thesis is devoted to exploring women journalists’
presentation of their female selves in the ‘ordinary social encounter’, or in other
words, in ‘autobiographical practices’ (Cosslett, Lury and Summerfield 2000: 7). More than a body of texts writing accomplished by women, autobiography equals to performance to some extent in Butler’s (1990) argument, and it is neither simply externally required or internally generated (Cosslett, Lury and Summerfield 2000: 10). In the autobiographies of those three women journalists, the writing becomes a process of exploring the dynamic nature of subjectivity. These autobiographies will be analysed in the following three chapters.23

**Lan Yang**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lan Yang</td>
<td><em>Streaming in the Wind</em></td>
<td>December 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Yang and Bing Zhu</td>
<td><em>Let me Ask You</em></td>
<td>April 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Yang and Bing Zhu</td>
<td><em>The Happiness Project</em></td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Yang</td>
<td><em>Still in Love</em></td>
<td>January 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking the first-person narration, the four autobiographies listed above depict different stages of Lan Yang’s life. The feminist discourse analysis of autobiography is not aimed at revealing whether it tells the ‘truth’ of ‘life’, but rather investigating the tension and even contradiction between Lan Yang’s self-represented as a ‘new woman’ and her actual presence as the agency of ‘commercial femininity’ in neoliberal China through various discursive practices.

**Jing Chai**

23 The time scale of autobiographies selection is from their first publication to 2018, the completion time for this thesis.
This autobiography of Jing Chai presents a series of stories in her career as well as in her personal life. In addition, it covers some people Jing Chai interviewed in the past reports, and her reflection on the interviews and the lives of these people. It is customary to regard the discourse as a site of struggle within post-structuralism, and thus this part of analysis will focus on how the therapeutic and trauma writing deployed by Jing Chai contributes to her self-identity and 'new femininity' exploration as a struggle for alternatives.

**Luwei Lüqiu**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luwei Lüqiu</td>
<td><em>I Am Already on the Way</em></td>
<td>September 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwei Lüqiu</td>
<td><em>Bias</em></td>
<td>January 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwei Lüqiu</td>
<td><em>Battlefield Journey in Libya</em></td>
<td>September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwei Lüqiu</td>
<td><em>Rose in the Journey</em></td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Luwei Lüqiu’s autobiographies also cover both her professional life and personal life, among which *I Am Already on the Way* and *Battlefield Journey in Libya* recount her experience of the war in the form of a diary. The articulation of 'self' and 'life', as well as her own reflection on gender have been analysed in the case study part as important discursive practices.

### 2.1.4 Feminist Discourse Analysis of Additional Texts

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24 This is the only autobiography Jing Chai has written and published until now.
In addition to the discourse analysis of three women journalists’ autobiographies, a multimodal view of discourse is employed in this thesis, which as Lazar argues, plays a vital role in ‘a holistic feminist critique of discursive constructions of gender’ (2005: 5). The discursive practices of the three women journalists show the workings of power, and therefore will be analysed explicitly in the following part.

2.1.4.1 Visual Image and Other Non-verbal Language

In a visually mediated society, visual representation becomes increasingly influential in shaping people’s interpretation of the world. ‘Representation’ here is understood as a way of ‘articulating and contributing to the social processes’ (Chaplin 1994: 1). As Evans notes, the ‘analysis of visual representation has long been one of the defining features of feminist and gender studies’ (2015: 474). The photographic images of Lan Yang, Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu are employed as one of the main self-representing tools and practices in multiple media, such as the covers of books, visual images in news reporting, documentary, advertising, etc. Based on the analysis of visual images, this thesis examines the power behind decision-making strategies by which certain femininity are deemed appropriate.

Moreover, this thesis also places emphasis on the analysis of body and appearance, as one of the dimensions of image, since ‘we live in an age of proliferating human bodies, both literally and figuratively’ (Casper and Moore 2009: 1). In the research of gender and feminism, body and appearance is interpreted as ‘social cues about love, beauty, status and identity’ of women. Therefore, examining the body and appearance of women journalists is beneficial for the critical examination of its social-cultural construction within social orders. In other words, this thesis explores ‘how patterns of dominance and submission along lines of gender, age and physiological normativity’ working through agent of body/appearance (Casper and Moore 2009: 1-2).
Why some forms of body/appearance are highlighted by those women journalists as ‘perfect/good/appropriate’, while others are not; and whether is it possible to define ‘new femininity’ and new female subject beyond body/appearance matrix, in the chapter of Luwei Lüqiu, in the name of ‘alternative femininity’.

There are three types of visual image included analysis that follows:

The first type is the photographic images of the three women journalists in their autobiographies, strongly supplementing the discourse analysis of writings in a cross-referencing way, such as the covers of their autobiographies.

The second type refers to the images and the non-verbal body-language in their videos, including those in the documentary, news programme, commercial advertising genres. Specifically, it covers the images of Lan Yang in her commercial advertising, images of Jing Chai in her news programmes and documentaries, as well as images of Luwei Lüqiu in her news reporting in the frontline of the war.

The third type denotes the images on the social media accounts of the three women journalists, especially on Lan Yang’s.25 Within this digital-image-saturated society, Lan Yang is also self-represented visually through images in photos and online broadcasting, to exhibit her ‘new female subject’.

2.1.4.2 Social Media Texts

Many scholars such as Amy Shields Dobson suggest that the text on social media can be viewed as a kind of ‘identity performance’ (2015: 9). All the three female journalists, Lan Yang, Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu, have social media

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25 Other two women journalists post very few photos online, especially Jing Chai, who never post any image on her blog.
accounts, which can be employed to analyse their exploration of new femininity and new female subjects in this thesis.

The three analysis chapters of women journalists are constructed based on the thematic structure. The following section will explain how those themes come into being and how the texts have been selected from social media.

At first, some pre-analysis of the texts on their autobiographies and social media was conducted by perusing all the autobiographies mentioned above and looking through the social media texts of the three female journalists, within the post-feminism and gender research framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Platform (Sina(^{26}))</th>
<th>Time Scale(^{27})</th>
<th>Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lan Yang</td>
<td>Micro-blog(^{28})</td>
<td>23th September 2009-9(^{th}) April 2018</td>
<td>8013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jing Chai</td>
<td>Blog(^{29})</td>
<td>27th February 2006-1(^{st}) May 2014</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwei Lüqiu</td>
<td>Micro-blog(^{30})</td>
<td>21(^{st}) August 2009-9(^{th}) April 2018</td>
<td>14784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then, several themes were extracted from the pre-analysis of those discourses. For instance, ‘powerful femininity’, ‘beauty/appearance’, ‘having it

\(^{26}\) One of the biggest social media platforms in China, and it is the only place where all the three women journalists in the case study sign up.

\(^{27}\) The time scale of data on social media for analysis in this thesis, is from their first registration to 9\(^{th}\) April 2018, one month before the re-submission of this thesis.

\(^{28}\) Lan Yang’s micro-blog
See https://weibo.com/anglan?topnav=1&wvr=6&topsug=1&is_all=1

\(^{29}\) Jing Chai only has the blog and stopped updating it on 1\(^{st}\) May 2014.
See http://blog.sina.com.cn/chjguancha

\(^{30}\) Luwi Lüqiu’s micro-blog
See https://weibo.com/luqiuluwei?isall=1#feedtop
all’, etc., emerged in Lan Yang’s case; ‘affective femininity’, ‘authentic femininity’, ‘self-writing’ etc., in Jing Chai’s case; and ‘political femininity’, ‘alternative femininity’, ‘war reporting’, etc., in Luwei Lüqiu’s case.

In the third stage, in order to highlight each dimension in three cases studies, I excluded the writing texts on Lan Yang’s micro-blog while putting more emphasis on her images and videos. In addition, different from the other two women journalists, Lan Yang posts a large number of photos and videos closely linked to her personal life on her microblog, indicating Lan Yang’s self-branding as a cultural entrepreneur, something that will be analysed further in the third chapter. Jing Chai, however, posts no photos at all on her blog, and her writings on the blog also resonate with her autobiography, strongly verifying her ‘affective femininity’. Her posts are analysed for extracting more accurate themes regarding the new femininity exploration. As for Luwei Lüqiu, except for ‘alternative femininity’, there are two more key words in her case study after pre-analysis, due to her specific background, which is also linking closely to the main theme in this thesis. ‘Hong Kong’ and ‘female’ are used to search on Luwei Lüqiu’s micro-blog. The discourse practices of micro-blogging have been analysed in the examination of ‘alternative femininity’.

2.1.4.3 Interviews

There are two types of interviews that are analysed in the following cases study. One are those I conducted by myself in the workplace of three women journalists, with other female journalists, who works with the three figures. The details of those interviews conducted for this thesis will be explained in detail in the next section.

31 The number of posts about Hong Kong is 1007, and about ‘female’ (Nvxing) is 130.
As the three figures in journalism in China, Lan Yang, Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu enjoy rich opportunities for being interviewed by other media. Those discourse practices, as one genre of mediated self-presentation in the public, provide supplemental and cross-referencing data for this thesis. There are two sub-types of these interviews selected and included into the analysis dataset. One was mentioned in the three women journalists’ autobiographies and videos/programs/writings; the other was online searching through thematic words after pre-analysis mentioned above.

All in all, the feminist discourse analysis of autobiographies and other multiple texts provide a general research framework for the ethnographical approach deployed in this thesis. Moreover, the tension and even contradiction between the two discursive practices, strongly illustrate the complexity and difficulty of exploring ‘new femininity’ and new female subjects in contemporary China, which at the same time offers alternatives for Western-centric feminist theory.

### 2.2 Feminist Ethnography

Three women journalists have been chosen as case studies in this thesis, based on their individual and specific characteristics in the practice of profession, as well as their personalities and femininity within the gender research framework. During the process of pre-analysis and feminist discourse analysis of their autobiographies and other texts, I gradually realized that in order to examine further how women journalists’ explore new femininity and the new female subject, as well as the tension between women journalists’ mediated presentations (objects) and their self-representation (subjects) practices, it is important to go into the field of work of those women journalists to collect qualitative data. Skeggs argues that ‘ethnography provides interpretation and explanation by strategies of contextualization’ (Skeggs 1994: 76). In addition, it places emphasis on the subjective experiences and meanings of objects of observation. Therefore, it is more appropriate to take
knowledge inquiry as a powerfully supportive and complementary means in this thesis.

By now, there is still a lack of a stable, specific identification of feminist ethnography (Maynard 1994: 12). In this thesis, feminist ethnography is employed to ‘stress the importance of listening to, recording and understanding women’s descriptions and accounts’, in the field, which was explored mainly from a ‘male perspective’ (Maynard 1994: 12). Journalism and the newsroom, for example, are conventionally regarded as a male-dominated space, where women journalists are still fighting for breaking the glass ceiling (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004). Within post-structuralist thinking, ‘the very act of speaking about experience is to culturally and discursively constitute it’ (Foucault 1971: 27). The face-to-face observation of the three women journalists and the semi-structured interviews of other female journalists about their relationships and interactions, provide more possibilities of reaching a general proposition, in this case, the discourse practice of exploring new femininity and new female subjects in contemporary China (Shah 2017). Last but not least, in postfeminist China, gender inequality is routinely attributed to women’s self-choices and self-responsibilities, which will be illustrated in the following three main analysis chapters. Thus, it is important to examine their ‘choices’ and ‘abilities’ in their workplaces.

In short, what makes a study ‘feminist’ is not just ‘the method as such’, or the female identity of the researcher, but also ‘the framework within which they are located, and the particular ways in which they are deployed’(Kelly Burton and Regan 1994: 46). It is worth of noting that feminist ethnography deployed in this thesis is not ‘a mere translation of an experienced reality’ (Gonick 2003: 29), but intended to map how knowledge/truth is constituted. More importantly, it is bound to admit that the study of practice, the knowledge created and how to create that knowledge will always be controversial (Kelly Burton and Regan 1994: 47).
2.2.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation enables us to contribute to theory, and therefore should be ‘beyond the confines of any discipline’ (Shah 2017: 50). It can provide the meanings of human existence from the standpoint of insiders (Jorgensen 1989). My own previous experience as a female journalist before gave me more chances to get to the core place of the three women journalists figures. I was aware of the possible ethical issue of ever being one of the community. However, having left the news industry for more than ten years, a great development has been witnessed in journalism since. In other words, ‘we have been sufficiently estranged from them over the course of our lives’ (Shah 2017: 51). During this process, a critical thinking has been maintained, as a result I am neither taking everything for granted nor thinking as usual. In this research, I was predominantly a researcher inside, whose past experience was entangled to suggest an interpretative reading of the data (Rudge 1996: 148).

Furthermore, according to Peberdy, the relation to observation/participation has become ‘not so much, should I become involved’, but rather ‘what level and style of involvement and participation is appropriate, useful and acceptable in this particular situation’ (1993: 48)? In more post-structural words, ‘researchers also reflect critically upon the ways in which their own identity is constituted through the doing and telling of ethnography’ (Cairns 2013: 327). However, it doesn’t mean that, as a researcher, my personal history will be ‘included in the part of the process through which understanding and conclusion will be reached’, nor is it a personal or self-narrative research (Stanley 1993: 48). During the participant observation, I didn’t particularly self-observe, instead, I focused on observing the three figures as well as other female journalists. In this sense, this thesis is not an instant of self-observant research (Anderson 2006: 376).

Before the commencement of participant observation, a pre-fieldwork proposal was made based on the preview of discourse analysis and the literature review
of related works. It is a complementary approach in this thesis, which is partly involved in the ‘logic of verification’ (Jorgensen 1989:17). However, it was not intended to impose a priori assumptions or theories onto my field data. Conversely, this approach still opened up, expected and allowed concepts and categories to emerge from the data (Barney and Strauss 1967).

This study aims to examine how the discourse practices of women journalists become meaningful in the exploration of their new female subjectivity. Therefore, there were three main research questions proposed before the start of the fieldwork:

1. Is it possible to provide more discourse practices, accounts in qualitative details regarding women journalists’ new female subject exploration?

2. Are the themes emerging in the discourse analysis and literature review sufficient enough to describe/explain the different dimension of new femininity in contemporary China?

3. Is there more potential for exploring alternative femininity and new female subjects?

As mentioned above, the ‘logic of discovery’ was the focus of participant observation. A high level of reflexivity was held during this process, through revisiting and revising those questions, and constantly redefining the problems of study based on the data collected in the field. With participant observation, it is encouraging to ‘define concepts by providing elaborate qualitative descriptions of them’, and explore the cross-referencing demonstration of the final theme framework for each case study (Jorgensen 1989: 17).

The participant observation in this study was divided into three stages. I disclosed my researcher status to all three fields’ staffs. They still held the weekly meeting agenda, and the observation of the study was allowed. In
addition, this study was ‘granted ethical clearance to observe on the basis that I was there as a participant observer’ (Allan 2006: 401). After a period of participant observation and interviews, the data collected was analysed to understand the complexity of practices (Shah 2017).

The first stage was from January to February in 2013, in the news department of China Central Television Station in Beijing where Jing Chai worked. It was a big department including about hundreds of members. The fieldwork focused on the programme with which Jing Chai was involved in. I went to news department three or four days a week, and joined the activities and events Jing Chai and her team worked as many as possible. I didn’t join the production of their news reporting, since my main job was a participant observer inside rather than a female journalist. Jing Chai barely discussed her personal life with colleagues in the workplace. She was friendly with everyone in the office while keeping a distance at the same time. Within broad themes in mind, I was more interested in her ‘affective reporting’ in daily working, and whether she was authentically a women journalist with ‘affective femininity’.

However, I was aware that it was important that ‘at the outset of inquiry to remain open to the unexpected, even if I have previous experience in the setting’ (Jorgensen 1989: 82). Therefore, the participant observation placed emphasis on not only what they had said, but also what had been left unsaid and demonstrated only through actions. For instance, the section of ‘Womenliness as masquerade’ was derived from the observation of their meetings where Jing Chai discussed with her colleagues about their

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32 The news department is a highly mobile place, where people come and go frequently. The high working pressure and relatively low incoming situation make journalists one of the most unstable occupations in China as well as in the world.
33 Although I was agreed to attend most of the meetings and events in CCTV, still there was some meetings I couldn’t be involved, for instance, which connected with some policy announcing from the government.
34 I did have some casual discussion with Jing Chai and her colleagues about what the program could do, but it didn’t affect the final news products.
programme in the meeting room in CCTV. As time went by, I discovered that Jing Chai sometimes discussed some ‘conventional women topics’, such as the clothes they bought, with several close female colleagues. This was different from the discourse analysis in the text with respect to her self-presentation. Therefore, this period of observation ended with one subsection of ‘maternal figure under austerity’, which will be analysed further in Jing Chai’s case study.

The second stage was from July to August in 2013 in the news department of Phoenix TV, where Luwei Lüqiu worked. As an individual-funding commercial media company, Phoenix TV was characterised by its fast working pace, which would be analysed further in the fifth chapter on Luwei Lüqiu. I also went to the Phoenix TV as many times as possible, since Luwei Lüqiu had plenty of opportunities to go out for reporting. In order to ensure close observation on her and her teams, this intensity of visits was of necessity. However, some places were still not accessible due to the limits of the budget, or the lack of the authority of journalists. Luwei Lüqiu is a talkative and easy-going woman who would like to stay with colleagues. Nevertheless, she was too busy to have more casual talks. During the period of participant observation, Luwei Lüqiu was in the transition from a journalist to a female commentator, although she expressed her willingness to get rid of the tag of ‘Rose in the war’. The important analysis of professional beautifying was derived from the observation of Luwei Lüqiu’s discussion with her female colleagues and interviews with her female colleagues. It was unexpected before the commencement of the participant observation, since Luwei Lüqiu was always self-represented as a woman journalist with little care about appearance.

35 The analysis of this period of observation will be taken in the 4.3 of chapter 4.
36 Luwei Lüqi was the first Chinese woman journalist who went to the frontline, which will be analysed further in the fifth chapter.
The third stage of participant observation was from October to November in 2015 in Sun Media in Beijing, where Lan Yang worked. Lan Yang, at that time, had already transformed from a woman journalist into a cultural entrepreneur, her ideal occupation as she wrote in her autobiography. However, the transformation was important for this thesis, and could be regarded as a ‘treasure’ for further development in my thesis. It was exactly resonated with Skeggs’ argument that ‘the researcher should continually modify theories constructed from reading in the light of responses and observation of experiences’ (1994: 82). Lan Yang was quite busy with her daily schedule. A lot of places including her studio, her meeting room in the company, etc., were open to the participant observation. During this process, as an observer I didn’t interrupt any action or activity that Lan Yang undertook. The participant observation gave further insights into the contradiction between her daily working as a cultural entrepreneur with ‘commercial femininity’ and her self-representation as a feminist looking forward to becoming a ‘new woman’ (Skeggs 1994: 88). This will be analysed further in the next chapter.

It is critical to clarify that all the field notes were taken during and after sessions in the field. To be specific, these notes were jotted down during the observation, or the break, or shortly after leaving the field. Subsequently, they were recorded and transcribed. The observed object’s talking, non-verbal expression, action etc., in the field were recorded in details. The field note not only revealed the activities of participants, but also the reflection of the researcher, as Rudge argues (1996: 150). The objectivity of the researcher was attached with great importance during the fieldwork. My past experiences as a woman journalist especially brought an advantage at the very start, since

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37 Lan Yang’s company was a little difficult to get in and take research. It took some time to be authorised to enter as a researcher. The difficulty of entering also illustrates Lan Yang’s emphasis on her own image construction and distribution. She was more a cultural entrepreneur pursuing commercial femininity as her brand, which will be analysed further in the third chapter.

38 The brief field notes can be found in the Appendices of this thesis.
it was relatively easy to get used to their working setting, and know their ‘language’, which also explains why the fieldwork was not conducted for a long time. During the three stages of participant observation, I was able to maintain ‘productive-but-difficult tension between involvement and detachment’ (Shah 2017: 51). I did realize that I need to make some compromises and judgement about what to include and where and when to stop (Parry 2012: 37). As Deem and Brehony argue, objectivity and accountability should be regarded as the direction of researchers' efforts rather than a necessary achievement (1994: 160).

2.2.2 Semi-structured Interview

Speaking and communicating with another person is different from delivering and gathering a questionnaire, in which participants only need to provide yes/no, and answer some follow-up questions anonymously (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994: 36). Moreover, it is hard to ensure the sincerity of respondents when using the research method of questionnaires. Therefore, interviews are considered as a way of developing the inter-subjectivity and non-hierarchical relationship between female researchers and female participants (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994: 34). In this research, the interview was conducted with the purpose of gaining further information based on the discourse analysis of women journalists' texts and participant observation. During the participant observation and on-going feminist discourse analysis, it was found that the tension, entanglement and even contradiction between the mediated presentation (objects) and self-representation (subjects) of the three women journalists posed a huge effect on their identity construction. In addition, the semi-interviews of other women journalists who worked closely with the three figures, contributed to the further exploration of the tension. What’s more, both the interviewer and interviewees had the possibility of self-reflexibility during this process, due to the identity of the researcher as a woman, and a journalist in the past working experience.
I structured the interviews with open-ended questions, and semi-structured interviews facilitated the aim of the research in exploring their opinions of those three female journalists’ practices in subjectivity construction as well as their own. In addition, the tension and even the contradiction between participants and three figures’ discourses also provided strong data support for further analysis. For instance, Da Jun mentioned in Lan Yang’s company that some of her colleagues had to quit the job when they were pregnant, even though Lan Yang encouraged female staffs in her company to be a mother ‘at a proper time’ while keeping a good job. This is something will be analysed further in the third chapter.

Additionally, the semi-structured interview is more appropriate to encouraging ‘a wider range of discussion’ (Marshall 1994: 115). During the interview, I realized that the common professional background and similar age between those participants and the researcher ‘facilitated a greater responsiveness to the research’ and at the same time, avoided making the interviewees in a ‘relatively powerless position as respondents’ (Marshall 1994: 116).

The participants were selected based on their close relationships with the main figure of this research, as well as their willingness. The details of every participant and interview are listed in the following part. The names of those participants were pseudonyms by their own choices according to their requests. All the interviews were taken in their workplaces, including the meeting room, office room, and coffee room in their companies. These interviews lasted from thirty minutes to one and half hours. The interviews were recorded by recording pen, it was taken in Chinese, and then translated and transcribed into English by myself.

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39 As women journalists, all participants were very busy, and they had pressure of the news deadline as well as increasingly high requirements on the quality of the news. It was not easy to ‘catch’ and keep them for a long time for interviews.
All the participants agreed to attend the interview, and they were varied in sampling with regard to their working, marriage, and maternal situations, which was importantly related to femininity. All of them were middle-class women, between 30 and 40 years old, living in urban China. Instead of only making a general conclusion from the data, the interview also aimed to provide a ‘vivid slice of life’ quality (Acker 2001: 160).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Working place</th>
<th>Interviewing time</th>
<th>Interviewing place</th>
<th>Marriage/ Maternal situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yunhuan Fan</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>22&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; February 2013</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>One boy</td>
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<td>One girl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lan Gao</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; February 2013</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>One child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lin Chen</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Phoenix TV</td>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; August 2013</td>
<td>Coffee room</td>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>No child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xiaojun Guan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Phoenix TV</td>
<td>29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; August 2013</td>
<td>Coffee room</td>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>No child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bing Zhu</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Sun Media</td>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; November 2015</td>
<td>Office room</td>
<td>Married,</td>
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<td>One child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Da Jun</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Sun Media</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; November 2015</td>
<td>Office room</td>
<td>Married,</td>
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<td>One child</td>
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All these interviews started from a question like, ‘how long have you worked here, and worked with Lan Yang/Jing Chai/Luwei Lüqiu?’ Such a question was
easy to answer for participants. Subsequently, it was followed with ‘what do you think of Lan Yang/Jing Chai/Luwei Lüqiu?’ as an open-ended question, which allowed participants to have more space to express their viewpoints. The main structure and questions of the interviews will be presented in the Appendices.

During the interviews, I was aware that every researcher ‘brings particular values and self-identities’ to the research, therefore, interview research could be regarded as ‘a learning process for both interviewers and for those are interviewed’ (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1994: 130). What’s more, I also realized that the process of interpretation is both creative and positive. We can not just read ‘meaning in interview texts’, but also ‘reading meaning into the texts’ (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1994: 130). Therefore, when coding and analyzing the data from the interviews, including images, non-verbal language, hints and meanings in the interview transcripts, I drew on ‘the interaction of two levels of conceptualization’: the meanings provided by those women journalists in the data, and my own field note which entailed the reflection of the interviews.

**Conclusion**

This chapter explains the interdisciplinary method employed in the research, and the process of its implementation. Further developed from Foucault, Feminist Discourse Analysis is taken as an approach to the exploration and examination of the new female subject in China within the post-structuralism framework. The ethnographic approach of participant observation and the semi-structural interview are also employed as supplementary methods for

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40 The main data of the interview which has been analysed in the three cases study will be put into the Appendices as the evidence of data collection.
gaining more data in detail. Those interdisciplinary approaches have turned out to be useful and successful in extracting important themes from the data.
Chapter 3. Lan Yang – Commercial Femininity

Introduction
This chapter aims to explore one dimension of the nature of emerging new feminine subjectivity, namely a new type of ‘good women’. By analysing a series of published autobiographies by Lan Yang, a female journalist and anchor in China, and her expertise with respect to ‘happiness’ within psychological, physical and body practices, the chapter will examine how she arms the contemporary middle-class urban woman with a ‘technologies of femininity’. Meanwhile, the chapter will investigate how Lan Yang’s self-representation and self-construction has actually put forward a contradictory model of this new feminine subject within mediated discourse, and how its came into being and changed the construction of feminine sexual subjectivity. By referring to Judith Butler’s work *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), as well as Angela McRobbie’s and other feminist scholars’ works, this chapter intends to interrogate the increasingly cruel heterosexual female culture in China.

Feminism is more of a formless, headless moment, residing in a whole world of texts, theories, events, books, films, art works, activities, interventions, campaigns, writings, slogans, ‘postings’, as well as in policies and changes to legislation and so on (McRobbie 2015: 16).

‘Technologies of femininity’, is inspired by the notion of a ‘technologies of sexiness’ in Gill (2007a) and Radner’s (1999) work. Radner firstly introduces the term and outlines that: ‘the task of the Single Girl is to embody

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41 The books analysed in this chapters, are her autobiographies, which are *Streaming in the wind Pinghai Linfeng*, published in 1996; *let me ask you (Yi Wen Yi Shijie)*, published in 2011; *The Happiness Project (Xingfu Yao Huida)*, published in 2013; *Still in Love (Shijie Henda Xinghao Youni)*, published in 2016.
heterosexuality through the disciplined use of makeup, clothing, exercise and cosmetic surgery, linking femininity, consumer culture and hetero-sexuality’ (Radner 1999: 15). Furthermore, Gill argues that:

For young women today in postfeminist cultures, the display of a certain kind of sexual knowledge, sexual practice and sexual agency has become normative - indeed, a ‘technology of sexiness’ has replaced ‘innocence’ and ‘virtue’ (Gill 2007a: 72).

Later, Adrienne Evans, Sarah Riley, and Avi Shankar (2010), further theoretically developed the concept of ‘technologies of sexiness’, by critically outlining Foucault’s concept of technologies of the self, and drawing on Butler’s notion of performativity, which not only expands the account of agency, but also underscores the technologically mediated consumer-oriented subjectivity (Evans, Riley and Shankar 2010: 118). In this chapter, the concept of ‘technologies of femininity’ will be further expounded so as to develop a more sophisticated understanding of women’s agency within the global context of (post) feminism.

This chapter will start with a short review of Lan Yang’s life and experiences, based on the examination of her self-representation in the autobiographies and interviews. Following the feminist discourse analysis will help to understand the role played by historical and contingent nature of women journalists’ discourses in the formation of the self (Broekhuizen and Evan 2016: 339). As mentioned in the methodology chapter, all three analysis chapters are formulated in the thematic structure. In this chapter, the analysis of Lan Yang’s autobiographies, interviews, other multi-media texts (on social media as well as in her commercial advertising), as well as the data collected from the semi-structured interviews conducted as part of this thesis with those women journalists who work with Lan Yang contribute to the outline of themes. These
different sets of data are also cross-referenced to field notes of the participant
observation conducted at Lan Yang’s company in 2015. The analysis of these
sets of data will show how in the case of Lan Yang contradictory and even
ambivalent discourses and narratives are used to construct self-identity in the
context of commercialism and postfeminism China.

3.1 Perfection

3.1.1 Top Girl
Lan Yang is one of the first nationally well-known female anchors of China
Central Television (CCTV) going back to the 1990s, when the individual female
anchor was for the first time presented and promoted as a brand of her own,
rather than being more or less a ‘nobody’ in a collective group. In her first
autobiography Streaming in the wind (Pinghai Linfeng), published in 1996, as
well as on several talk shows which she attended as a guest (Artist’s Life
2005), Lan Yang always depicts herself as a ‘Top Girl’ or ‘A List Girl’ when
growing up. Born in a typical intellectual and middle-class family in Beijing in
1968, she was nurtured into a ‘perfect’ child. Both of her parents are
professors in Beijing Foreign Studies University, one of the top universities in
China. As Lan Yang recalled, she had been strictly guided by her parents since
her childhood, performing as a really ‘hard-working’ good girl in school time
(Yang and Zhu 2013: 156).

42 Before the 1980s-the commercialization and marketization of the media in China, the
anchor/journalist, especially the female anchor/journalist was not grounded in the spotlight as
an individual person, but just a small spike in a big machine.
43 One of them is Artists’ Life (Yishu Rensheng) in CCTV, broadcast on 14th March, 2005.
See http://www.cctv.com/perormance/20050314/100340.shtml
44 It was two years after the Culture Revolution (1966-1976) in China. However, Lan Yang never
mentions this period of her life in any public speech or writings, which shows her de-politicalized
femininity, and will be analysed further in the following sections.
After she graduated from Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1990 and received a Bachelor’s degree in English Culture and Language, Lan Yang was recruited by CCTV as an anchor, although her dream was ‘to be a good journalist’ (Yang and Zhu 2011: 197). Nevertheless, this recruitment was not smooth at first, and Lan Yang almost missed the opportunity, because, as she stated in her own words, ‘I am not pretty enough’. As she recalled in her autobiography:

I asked the producer a question during the interview: ‘why does a female anchor have to be pretty, lovely, and considerate, as you always said? Why couldn’t she be an independent soul to express her own ideas and opinions?’ Since the program required a professional female image, maybe this question impressed the producer and I got the chance to move into the next round. After seven rounds of interviews, I finally got the job, which even now seems quite unbelievable. At that time, I was a totally ‘unprofessional’ student, but I was chosen to present in a program in such a golden time. (Yang and Zhu 2013: 35)

Lan Yang was regarded as the avant-garde of the modern/Western feminism by what can be seen in many ways as quasi-feminist discourses. In particular, after the World Conference on Women was held in China in 1995, gender issues became one of the central topics and agendas in the mainstream politics and media. Representing the image of ‘Top Girl’, Lan Yang was promoted and branded in diverse media platforms.

As a result, Lan Yang received a lot of audience’s recognition and attention,

45 In three case studies, I highlight the words or sentences of the discourse being analysed by putting them in italics.

46 Lan Yang was self-represented as a girl who did not obey the conventional rules, kept fighting for her own right, and finally got success.
owing to her smart style of conversation and quick feedback, as well as her broad view of the world. She was eager to (or in her own words: brave to) express her opinion as a young girl and to ‘be more than a vase in the program’, being ‘the stereotype that conventional female anchors should perform in a program’ (Yang and Zhu 2013: 52). The aspiring, independent, self-responsible rhetoric Lan Yang employs in her ‘look back’ narratives, is particularly appealing to those upwardly mobile young girls. Moreover, the ‘can do’ attitude phrased by Anita Harris (2004: 9), and the promise of ‘universalized choice and empowerment’ (Chen 2013: 561) also motivated young women to compete for the ‘top girl’ as Lan Yang did.

It is worthy to note that if Lan Yang had followed a more common and smooth route becoming a famous anchor in China Central Television, she probably would not have become such a ‘female spirit idol’ among young people in China. After joining CCTV for four years, Lan Yang resigned from this job and went abroad to study international media at Columbia University in the US starting again from the ground up in many ways. As she explains in her first book Streaming in the wind (Pinghai Linfeng), published in 1996:

If I stayed in the same program, surely I might be much more popular, but it seemed that I could even see what my life would be like in the next 30 years. This is definitely not my design of life. I would like to explore the new world. Since I was young, I desired to learn more about the media and journalism and be a producer rather than merely an anchor. Even if it was quite a hard and lonely journey, it was also a precious gift for me. (Yang 1996: 20)

Undoubtedly, she accomplished her dream - around 1996 after receiving her Master’s degree from Columbia University with all A-grades, she co-produced and acted as a journalist for a series of programs called Lan Yang’s View in the
which was broadcast on different Chinese provincial channels. Through these programs, Lan Yang established a close relationship with many celebrities and politicians. Subsequently, Lan Yang gained many opportunities to interview high-profile American professionals, such as Walter Cronkite, and Oprah Winfrey, which paved her way to a more international career. These years of experience also contributed to the establishment of Lan Yang’s main interests and career direction for the next 10 years—a one on one interview program under her own name, *Lan Yang One On One*.48

This spirit of self-well-planning, self-monitoring, and the search for ceaseless individual improvement has in many ways become the merit of contemporary young women (McRobbie 2009). In addition, it can be seen as a ‘fashionable’ discourse for modern Chinese girls who are encouraged to explore more entrepreneurial and self-responsible subjectivity (Brown 2005: 3). With the abolition of the government-arranged employment system in 1996,49 young women were given more ‘freedom’ in their career choices, yet, it also meant that they had to more ‘actively be engaged into the production of the self’, and ‘become harsh judges of themselves’ (McRobbie 2009: 60). Countless news reports point out that China has the biggest population in the world, and every year, there are more graduates joining into the job-hunting ‘army’.50 As a result, young women have increasingly become more anxious as they are aware that

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47 In the first episode, Lan Yang interviewed a famous American Chinese musician Fei Xiang, *Kris in Broadway*. See https://www.bilibili.com/video/av595577/

48 The episodes of this talk show which took place from 2010-2018 can be found here See http://v.sogou.com/tvshow/or3hg2dpo5ptembyg44dmoij2hxmbpnxypgryw4.html

49 Before 1996, every graduate would be assigned a job by the government, which was also called the ‘iron rice bowl’ (*Tie fanwan*). Usually, one could stay in the same workplace for their entire life. With the development of the market economy, this policy was abolished.

50 One report from 2018 shows that there will be 8 million graduates, and both the government and the graduates will be under great pressure. See http://finance.ifeng.coma/20180312/16021921_0.shtml
it has become much more difficult for women to find a proper job. In response, they are expected to stay in the ‘A list’ from their childhood onwards. To borrow from Deleuze’s definition of ‘luminosity’, young girls need to be glorious even if it just exists as ‘a flash, sparkle or shimmer’ (1986: 52).

3.1.2 ‘Having it all’

During the field work and interviews conducted for this thesis, one of the most frequently heard comments related to Lan Yang was how ‘she is a perfect model for women, all that every woman dreams of’. In addition to having a good family background, an ‘A plus’ school record, a seemingly plain sailing high-level career, a good balance of family and working, she also keeps a close relationship with many of the high-profile figures who are or could be her interviewees, which renders her career as successful. Depicted in an almost cinematic narrative of ‘having it all’, it is in line with one of the dimensions of McRobbie’s observation on how the notion of ‘perfection’ has entered into the ‘common currency of contemporary femininity’, however in a more complicated way in China (McRobbie 2015: 4). The following section will analyse how Lan Yang has self-constructed as a ‘having it all’ woman who promotes the technology of ‘having it all’, to open up ‘women’s imagination to the possibilities of building a new femininity/identity that expresses their desires and self-realization’ (Kim 2011: 151).

3.1.2.1 Find a Proper Husband

Lan Yang never conceals her admiration for her husband Zheng Wu. From a family of diplomats, Zheng Wu lived in Europe independently for many years and has built his own career in the United States (Yang 1996: 93). Lan Yang

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51 One significant reason is that women are conventionally acknowledged to ‘shoulder more of the housework and child-rearing responsibility’, which will affect their working time and quality (Hooper 1984: 326).

52 Those comments are from two participants in this project: Bing Zhu, Da Jun, both of whom work with Yang La. Please see the field notes in Appendices. Page. 9-10
published her latest autobiography *Still in Love (Shijie Henda Xinghao Youni)* in Jan 2016, as a gift for their 20th marriage anniversary. Lan Yang invited a close friend of theirs, a professor from Fudan University, and a male anchor, Changjian Jiang to write the preface to the book. When it comes to their 20 years marriage, Jiang writes that ‘Zheng Wu is always her safe harbor, and his arm is strong enough to embrace her in the last 20 years, no matter how independent Lan Yang claims to be’ (2016: 4). Jiang defines Lan Yang’s husband as a ‘man who is so smart to conquer such a brilliant woman’ (2016: 5). It is a big irony that even after two thousand years in China, women are still regarded as rewards for masculine power. The publishing of these words indicates that Lan Yang accepts Jiang’s view however. In other words, while Lan Yang is self-identified as an independent modern woman, striving for women rights and freedom, she still holds on tightly to the feudal doctrine, in which female inferiority had been officially enshrined for two thousand years (Hooper 1984: 318). To make it worse, this female inferiority is even constructed as a necessary precondition for a happy life as featured by ‘having it all’ for modern women in contemporary China.

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

This was not the first time that Lan Yang exposed her marriage to the public. In her first autobiography *Streaming in the wind*, Lan Yang recalls the first

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53 In the Confucian ideology, a woman’s major role was to produce sons to perpetuate the male line, and there was a saying that ‘a woman without any talent is virtuous’ (Hooper 1984: 318).
encounter with her husband in the house of an American friend, and uses very poetic language to describe how they finally ‘hold hands together’ (Yang 1996: 15). Here the discourse and story-telling style delivers an ‘ideal’ new marriage (the idea of marrying for love whilst still having wealth) to those well-educated, upwardly mobile urban women who are ‘striving for success’ (Chen 2013: 555).

Many online comments tend to regard Lan Yang’s second marriage to Zheng Wu as an entrance to a new high-class international world. In these depictions, ‘it is her magnificent turn-around’.54 Lan Yang also never denies this ‘perfect’ cooperation not just in their marriage but also in her career. She sensitively attributes her success and happiness to the strong support of her family, as she underscores in her book The Happiness Project,

I would like to thank my dearest parents, husband, and children. You helped me to grow from a girl to a woman, and gave me the chance to feel the abundant and exquisite emotion of being a woman. If there is something deserving to be shared with readers, it must be from you. As a stubborn, flying-superwoman, a wife and mum who never cooked, I live by your tolerance and care, and hope you all feel proud of me. Loving you all is the most important project in my whole life. (Yang and Zhu 2013: 7)

After being modelled as providing the proper ‘solution’ for the problem how women balance work and family life, Lan Yang reveals her secrets of achieving happiness and success, which revolve around a psychological self-discipline in combination of traditional ideology: ‘the domestic task and identity are always given the uppermost priority in a woman’s life’. She

54 This is an online forum posting some comments on Lan Yang’s marriage. See https://www.douban.com/note/54353846/
identifies explicitly with the credo that ‘only if you have a husband, parents and children, will you be a woman’. Her discourse here is reminiscent of traditional ideologies of patriarchy in spite of her seeming unawareness of this, and it reconfirms the polarized argument of male-female, object-subject, power-pleasure, from which she intended to open up a new space rather than the simply further constituting these opposites.

One of the participants in the interviews conducted for this research, Da Jun contributed her specific opinions related to Lan Yang in this contexts:

**Extract 1**

I have heard that Lan Yang could hardly build the commercial brand without her husband. Zheng Wu gave his wife the most powerful support. He provided start-up capital for the ‘Sun Media’, I heard, and stood by Lan Yang whenever the channel was confronted with financial difficulties. It seems that when you develop to a higher level, you might have the chance to meet a much better man for a marriage, and embrace a second chance in life to conquer all of your ‘female insecurities’.

As becomes clear from these comments, Da Jun, who has gotten high education up to a master’s degree, still holds on to the conventional idea that ‘the marriage changes a woman’s life’ (Hooper 1984: 320). From Da Jun’s speaking tone and facial expression, I could notice her envy towards the achievements of Lan Yang and the means by which Lan Yang achieved it. Lan Yang’s self-narratives of her marriage further restore the gender hierarchies whilst continuing to promote a repertoire of ‘having it all’, encouraging young women to be modern and sophisticated in order to survive in the commercial and neoliberal China (McRobbie 2004: 259).

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55 Sun Media is a company they co-founded in 2000.
56 This interview was taken in the office room in the Sun Media on 9th November 2015. Da Jun is 30 years old. Please see the records of the interview and the field notes in Appendices. Page 8.
3.1.2.2 Being a Mother

The image of mother has always been a necessary role or vocabulary in Lan Yang’s ‘perfection’ dictionary. She has been constructed as a successful model who seize her life chances tightly, knows exactly what she really wants, always steps into the right spot at the right time, and engages with ‘proper things in the proper time’. As Lan Yang writes in her first book *Streaming in the wind*, ‘I am waiting for my first child at 28 years old, just like my mother at the same age. It is a coincidence, and I think it might be a lucky sign’ (Yang 1996: 101). Women, including Lan Yang, in contemporary China seem to take part in a competition not only for being a mother, but also for when to become a mother. The idea of ‘being perfect’ has become part of the female ‘common sense’. As McRobbie argues, a mechanism unleashing new waves of anxiety, even self-harm has come into play (2015: 4).

Bing Zhu, Lan Yang’s colleague and co-author of her two books, made a great effort to describe Lan Yang’s gratification when she became a mother twice, to a boy and a girl respectively in Lan Yang’s autobiography:

> The year of 1996 is the most successful year of Lan Yang. She got a degree, gave birth to a child, and produced a program, all of which seem to be time consuming for others. However, Lan Yang made it in such a natural and smooth way. (Yang and Zhu 2011: 33)

> On 8th August, 2000, Lan Yang experienced a woman’s perfect happiness: her media dream came true, surrounded by the love of all her friends and relatives, more importantly, her beloved husband and their upcoming second child. (Yang and Zhu 2011: 78)

Lan Yang herself also attached great importance to the same day in 2000, and
she regarded that day as ‘the most beautiful day of my life’ (Yang and Zhu 2011: 106). Lan Yang was depicted as a woman who had refused to retreat too much, and desired to maintain career success alongside a happy home life, while motherhood was translated as a site of ‘ultimate personal fulfilment and emancipation’ (Allen et al. 2015: 919-920).

Words like ‘beautiful’, ‘perfect’, ‘accomplishment’, are quite promising discourses for those young women, and taken as ‘a heightened form of self-regulation based on an aspiration to some idea of the good life’ (McRobbie 2015: 9). Readers could easily be provoked into admiring the joy of ‘making your own choice’, and ‘being your own boss’, as expressed through the discourse. Lan Yang does not hide their intentions in their books to invite their targeted readers, mostly young women, to have empathy with them, so as to consciously internalise this wife-mother, renaissance male-dominated lifestyle, as ‘perfection’. The new feminist subject appeals to those ‘pursuing one’s professional ambitions without abandoning desires for a fulfilling family life’, and it especially focuses on being the mother of a boy and a girl in contemporary China (Allen et al. 2015: 920). As indicated by McRobbie, ‘it is here that the benchmarks and boundaries of female success are established’ (McRobbie 2013: 122).

3.1.2.3 Lean In?
Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, who is famous for her book Lean In (2015), is a close friend of Lan Yang. In addition to writing the preface to the Chinese edition of Lean In, which was published in China in 2014, Lan Yang, in her

57 In October, 2015, the government of China announced that, one couple has the right to raise two children. The ‘one-child’ policy starting from the 1980s onwards was abolished. A study states that the establishment of the new policy is aimed at addressing the reduced rate of birth, the coming of elderly society, the decreased of working force, etc., with more detailed discussions in the following link. See https://baike.pcbaby.com.cn/qzbd/17314.html
latest autobiography *Still In Love*, recalls her visit to Sheryl Sandberg who at that time 'lost her soul mate-her husband' (Yang 2016: 359). It is clear that their similar background, working experience, and even social status bonds the two celebrity women closely. Lan Yang gives high praise to Sheryl Sandberg’s philosophy in *Lean In*, which, she comments, narrates the golden rule of ‘extolling the joy of the perfect domestic idyll and also being on top in the workplace’ (2013). Therefore, Lan Yang promotes it as a feminist manifesto throughout her book and in her speeches around the country.

In one of the interview I conducted for this study, Da Jun, who works for Lan Yang’s company, reported that:

**Extract 2:**

Lan Yang often tells us that to be a mother is a wonderful experience. Every woman should think about it, and it might ‘open up a new world for you’.

Ironically, even within such a maternity-supporting company culture, several senior female producers quit their jobs, when they found themselves pregnant in their late thirties. Like a fairy tale that always ends with the happy marriage of the prince and the princess, this story is reticent about those women left behind, even though some of them once took considerable pleasure and pride in their career, and got high praise from Lan Yang, their employer. Yet

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58 This was what Sheryl Sandberg, the COO of Facebook spoke about women in leadership at an event in Beijing co-hosted by Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business, China CITIC Press and Thinker Future Media. See the report [http://english.ckgsb.edu.cn/news_content/ckgsb-co-hosts-dialogue-facebook-coo-sheryl-sandberg-and-chinese-business-executives](http://english.ckgsb.edu.cn/news_content/ckgsb-co-hosts-dialogue-facebook-coo-sheryl-sandberg-and-chinese-business-executives)

59 Lan Yang writes a chapter titled, ‘what equality do you want, women’, to show their similar opinions with respect to female independence in the workplace and family. This chapter in particular, introduces what the leadership and happy power of women could achieve in the world, as well as their efforts in constructing an international women community online and offline (2016: 356-376).

60 This interview was taken in the office room in Lan Yang’s company, on 9th November 2015. Da Jun, 30 years old. Please see the records of the interview and the field notes in Appendices page 8.
ultimately, no one seems to care about that, as Shani Orgad argues, ‘self-confidence and leaning in prove insufficient to overcome’ the realistic difficulties and the ‘rigid structural factors which ultimately led to [their] decision to quit their jobs’ (Orgad 2016: 177). Furthermore, instead of interrogating the insufficient support institution and state welfare policy, Lan Yang provides more neoliberal suggestion as being self-responsible and training oneself as a super-mum, which is shying away from direct confrontation of hegemony.

Despite the conflict between the demands of work and motherhood, as having been depicted in her autobiographies, Lan Yang has an open relationship with her children. They are close with each other, base on mutual respect and trust like friends. For example, in her book Lan Yang shows that she gives her children unconditional love and the right to free-choice. There are some typical warm and sweet narratives about how she plays online games with her son, and watches cartoons with her daughter comfortably on the couch (Yang and Zhu 2013: 221). In addition, Lan Yang’s daughter always shares secrets with her, such as her quarrelling with a classmate who said that she was selected as the monitor of the class only because her mother is Lan Yang. This specific incident was presented as a chance to strengthen and deepen their bonding, especially when Lan Yang told her girl, ‘don’t be bothered by others’ judgment, keep doing well by yourself, and next year try be selected as the monitor again’ (Yang and Zhu 2013: 234). Clearly, an image of a spiritual mentor as well as an independent, calm, successful mother is strongly constructed here. To enhance the realism of this fantasy (borrowing from Orgad’s notion, 2016: 171), Lan Yang’s son is depicted as a ‘rebel’ teenager, (even her children are stereotypically gender-constructed for her readers), through some inessential trifles. For example, he does not like his mother to show up at his school, and he insists on choosing his own reading materials, etc. (Yang and Zhu 2013: 215-236). In the end, no matter how hard it is to achieve a balance between work and motherhood, Lan Yang nurtures her children into really smart,
healthy, independent souls. Lan Yang is constructed as a 'natural' 'balanced woman', who even sometimes feels guilty, but achieves a good ending (Orgad 2016: 175). She will never be described by Wendy Brown's (2015) terminology of 'mismanaged lives', and she will not allow it.

By perusing a series of Lan Yang’s books, it becomes clear that these texts and life story representations are not consistent with the virtual working and mothering experiences of women in contemporary China. In other words, these books only provide a very persuasive fantasy that induces women to indulge in their consumer lives, and eventually lose the ability to interrogate the structural and institutional issues lying behind these constructs. It is this political mechanism that actually hinders women from the realization of the self and desire.

The media industry is a very fast-paced, demanding, and intense world. A job in the media industry tends to come with long working hours, but can be very exciting, interesting, and rewarding. Bing Zhu, who worked with Lan Yang, described her experiences in the interview that I conducted for this research as follows:

**Extract 3:**

When I got my first internship in CCTV in 2003, 90% of my female colleagues did not have babies, and some of them even did not intend to have. To be childless was even a trendy idea within the news department, and even a symbol that distinguishes independent, self-controlled women from other traditional professional women, not to mention full-time housewives.61

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61 This interview was taken in the office room in the Sun Media on 20th November 2015. Bing Zhu, 42 years old. Please see the records of the interview and the field notes in Appendices page 10.
However, there is a lack of realism in the representation of professional women’s lifestyles on television and in books. For example, it is a common depiction that a female journalist who goes to a bar and has fun all night after a whole day running around to arrange an interview. By contrast, the more realistic scenario is that she edited a program overnight before a deadline, which is a more common lifestyle for women journalists. In addition, it is doubtful whether the mother who switches off easily and smoothly when she comes back home, has a glass of red wine, joins her children on the couch, relaxes and talks about their interesting stories in school (as depicted in Lan Yang’s book of her own life (2013: 125)), exists in real life. According to the interview I conducted for this thesis, a more common description is ‘the only thing I want to do is lying down on the bed. But there are children to be taken care of, the floor to be cleaned, and dinner to be cooked…’. When asked to describe their evenings after returning home from work, these working mothers frequently mentioned that they were exhausted, worn out and stressed.62

In real life, Lan Yang’s promotion of Sandberg’s philosophy proves a blind spot. In Sandberg and Lan Yang’s scenario, feminism becomes a pragmatic rule for a young woman to squeeze into the top. As Lazar describes it, it involves ‘a feminist sounding register, one of “power femininity” (2006: 510), a language of empowerment, equality and taking charging’ (Gill 2009: 25). They not only share many tips on how to get to the top, but also encourage women to excel the ‘lean in’ cycle, which, as they promise, will help women to gain recognition and appreciation from their employers and colleagues (Yang 2013, Sandberg 2015). Paradoxically, their definition of success is problematically based on the male’s measuring index. Lan Yang takes women into custody within a

62 Yunhuan Fan and Lan Gao work in CCTV; Lin Chen and Xiaojun Guan works in Phoenix TV; Bing Zhu and Da Jun works in the Sun Media. They gave those responses in their interviews separately in February 2013, August 2013, November 2015. Please see the records of interviews and the field notes in Appendices. Page. 12-13; Page. 15-17; Page. 8-11.
patriarchal tradition of endorsing success in the workplace and enjoying motherhood and domesticity at home. It is the ‘double entanglement’ of the feminist and anti-feminist. Gender inequality is disguised by a ‘searching for the good life’, which means that even though women have become aware of the gender hierarchy, they are still eager to ‘having it all’.

Furthermore, both Sandberg and Lan Yang endeavour to provide a guiding handbook for women to teach them how to do work more efficiently, especially after they have children. Specifically, they insist that children do not ‘suffer from having a hard-working mother’; reversely, they will learn from her broad-view and rich experience, and they would rather have a happy, active, aspiring, always ‘up for it’ mother than a miserable, staying at home, waiting to be chosen one (Yang and Zhu 2013: 156, Sandberg 2015: 78). Instead of offering guidance, their statement, however, just triggers much more anxiety and endless aspiration. From Sandberg’s perspective, feminism, as McRobbie argues, means to find better ways of adapting to this professional culture, rather than trying to change it, and when there is ‘a change proposed, it should always be good for business, at least insofar as it extracts performance in the workforce’ (McRobbie 2013: 134). This idea of active, sexually confident motherhood marks an ‘extension of its pre-maternal equivalent, the ambitious and aspirational young working woman’ (McRobbie 2013: 120). What is worse, the postfeminist masquerade in family and workplace has resonated with traditional virtues of women in Confucian discourse in a modern sense, which could be ‘double entanglement’ of gender hegemony on Chinese women (McRobbie 2009: 64).

3.1.3 Happiness Project

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63 In McRobbie’s argument, the postfeminist masquerade is ‘a new form of gender power which re-orchestrates the heterosexual matrix in order to secure, once again, the existence of patriarchal law and masculine hegemony, but this time by means of a kind of ironic, quasi-feminist staking out of a distance in the act of taking on the garb of femininity’ (2009: 64).

64 A woman’s ultimate moral obligation was her obligation to the patriline into whom she married, in Confucian doctrine (Ko et al. 2003: 219).
After more than ten years of self-promotion through book publishing, multi-media broadcasting with the tags such as ‘top girl’ and ‘having it all’, the focus of Lan Yang and her team falls on a new topic: ‘happiness’. Over the last three decades, the happiness project has been introduced as ‘measurable assets and explicit goals’ by the Chinese government (Ahmed 2010: 3). For example, former president Hu Jintao proposed ‘building a socialist harmonious society’ in 2005; subsequently, president Xi Jinping put forward the idea of ‘making people feel happy’ in 2017, and pointed up that ‘happiness comes with hard work’ in Jan 2018. It is evident that happiness is ‘not only an important goal and a practical concern in everyday life, but also effectively employed as a neoliberal technology of governance’ (Zhang 2014: 39).

This ‘turn to happiness’ also stimulates the popularity of therapeutic culture and self-help discourses in China. There are numerous books, courses, and television programs which have emerged to ‘provide instructions on how to be happy, drawing on a variety of knowledge, including the field of positive psychology’ (Ahmed 2010: 3). Happiness now is both ‘produced and consumed through these hybrid texts, and accumulates value as a form of capital’ (Ahmed 2010: 3).

Lan Yang and her team have taken this opportunity and have interpreted ‘happiness’ from a gendered perspective. Her status as a woman and a mother gives her advantageous position in offering affective approaches to happiness. Lan Yang founded a new talk show Her Village in 2006 to explore the topic of gender, revolving around the issues such as, ‘should women devote to their careers, or be a mum at a proper age?’, ‘should a woman be domestic, and the man be responsible for earning money to support the family?’ Moreover, in 2013, Lan Yang published her third autobiography, The Happiness Project, which is a self-help book for young women. Covering many stories explored in Her Village, the book ‘helped to gender the cultural idea of happiness by encoding happiness within the domestic sphere as part of
gender performance- that is, as women’s work’ (Bolt 2015: 183).

In the promotional advertising for Her Village, instead of sitting straightly in front of a political figure, Lan Yang wears a red dress, swinging her body with the enthusiastic Latin music. As for her the intention to make this change, Lan Yang, in the foreword of The Happiness Project, explains that ‘woman is often regarded as a sensitive and emotional creature, so when I engage in Lan Yang One On One, I deliberately keep my distance from my interviewees, making myself a neutral subject; while in this program, I relax and enjoy the happiness of being a woman’ (Yang and Zhu 2013: 1). Actually, one can argue that Lan Yang employs her sexuality much less explicitly in the show Lan Yang One On One; she is always dressed simply in a business suit to present her professionalism (see Figure 3.3). However, when asked by the publishing house to provide a cover photo for her third book The Happiness Project, she selected a picture showing her in an off-the-shoulder dress instead. All of her suits fit well and highlight her slim figure. Furthermore, she has an exclusive team of stylists, and she is well aware of the ‘tradeable value’ between beauty and slimness within a highly competitive industry (McRobbie 2015: 16).

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 3.2 The cover of The Happiness Project (Yang and Zhu 2013)
To draw from Evans and Riley’s concept, Lan Yang reproduces a male heterosexual fantasy of what a professional woman should look like, based on the assumption of ego-fulfilling (Evans and Riley 2013: 270). Furthermore, it exemplifies the way that ‘postfeminist sentiment has tightened the relationship between femininity and body work’ (Evans and Riley 2013: 270). Symbolically following Lan Yang’s ‘happiness secret’, women readers may be motivated ‘to work on their bodies through consumerism and within the discourses of individualism, choice and pleasure’ (Evans et al. 2010a), eventually indulging in the value of celebrity culture. In other words, Lan Yang’s body becomes a key site of identification, imitation and desire (Elliott 2011: 465).
3.1.3.1 Happiness expert

There are eight chapters in Lan Yang’s book *The Happiness Project* (2013), covering a wide topic range from appearance, gender equality, success, happiness, public benefit, travel (psychically and physically), parents and children. Lan Yang relays her experiences and those of her interviewees to her readers, as the voice of the authority who ‘knows the water best because she has waded through it’ (Yang and Zhu 2013). To pursue a happy life, these readers may take the text as a common sense guide from qualified ‘life-experts and mentors’. Even if Lan Yang and her friends never claimed to be therapists, they offer various types of support and advice resonating with the discourse of modern feminism about body, individuation and commodity empowerment. To be specific, Lan Yang and psychologist Dr Lan Hai, even co-founded a ‘Happiness Power’ research centre in 2012, and held a series of help and self-help lectures, seminars and workshops in Qinghua University, with the slogan ‘Better Me, Better Future’. As stated by Yang and Hai, their aim was to ‘enhance a woman’s power to gain happiness’. To regard ‘happiness’ as a life goal, which is to be successful domestically and sexually, young women actively seek out this degree of excellence in life and take pride in themselves according to the ideology. I propose Lan Yang as a ‘happiness expert’, which is inspired from the concept of ‘sexpert’. Melissa Tyler (2004) explores the important function of the ‘expert’ – ‘sexpert’ in the ‘most intimate, inter-subjective aspect of our lives creating’ (2004: 100). As Harvey and Gill indicate, ‘Tyler contends that experts engage in managerial discourses to incite a sexual subjectivity that requires constant performance appraisals and skills acquisition’ (2011: 57). Lan Yang exercises the ‘expert’ power not only in guiding sexual relationships, but also in disciplining women through exporting ‘technologies of femininity’.

When explaining the ‘dynamic balance’ between work and family, Lan Yang likens herself to ‘an acrobat who needs to catch two balls and never lets one
down, following the rule of good time management and strength’ (2013: 99). She has also stated that ‘if you just give me a good sleep, I could do everything’. Here ‘good sleep’ is obviously a metaphor. In addition, Lan Yang gives professional women other suggestions including, ‘do what you really like instinctively; set a touchable goal; and find a supporting system in the home’ (Yang and Zhu 2013: 177). To exemplify her argument about how modern women can achieve the balance between work and family, and become happy, she takes reference to several American female politicians and successful women from different spheres, many of whom she has interviewed and has been friends with, such as Hilary Clinton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Helen Gurley Brown (ex-editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan*), Madeleine Albright (ex US Secretary of State), etc.

Moreover, when asked how to find a way to get success in workplace, as well as be a good mother, Lan Yang, in her book, suggests employing ‘negotiating strategies’ to address the dilemma of family and career. One strategy is to relax and be a ‘small woman’, ‘giving your man a chance to spoil you’ and playing an *innocent, girlish* role when negotiating with your husband about sharing housework and childcare (Yang and Zhu 2013: 66).

There is even an example of failure in *The Happiness Project*: Song Dandan, a popular actress who Lan Yang interviewed, blames the ending of her first marriage on her high competence in dealing with family issues. It is explained that now Song Dandan now is truly happy, because she ‘positions herself very low and vulnerable in the home’, making her husband feel like he is ‘being needed’ (Yang and Zhu 2013: 104). Furthermore, it is referenced that even Lan Yang who is not comfortable with ‘showing her weakness’, also once tried this tactic on her husband and found it had a magic function in improving their sexual relationship. Compliance here is enforced as the price of achievement, female success, and domestic peace, at an even more heightened degree of
artifice, which used to be taken for granted but now is denied. Additionally, Lan Yang’s book suggests young women to take on board the new ‘rule’ about smiling regularly, as a ‘smiling girl will not have a bad luck’; it also advocates always being ‘girly’, so as to keep curious about the world. Women are even advised to appear ‘foolish and bewildered’ (Riviere 1991: 96). To be a ‘small woman’ has become a new sense of showing female weakness, which is thought to help women to enjoy the life.

Lan Yang’s ‘expertise’ also covers how to deal with the ‘kitchen’, which is encoded within the domestic space as part of gendered performance. Concerning the responsibility of women, Lan Yang declares that ‘only if you catch a man’s stomach, can you catch the man’, following in English saying, ‘the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach’ (2013: 176). In the book, Lan Yang tells a story about a beautiful hostess Shen Xing (who was an interviewee of Lan Yang). Famous for the cooking program Beauty’s Private Home Cuisine, Shen admits that to excel in the skills of cooking helped her to get rid of self-abasement, since she had no advantages in dancing or singing. Therefore, Lan Yang specifically advocates to enjoy the process of cooking like going through an exquisite ceremony to ‘break the dull and trivial ideology of the kitchen’ (2013: 176). In this discourse, the pleasure of fantasy replaced the boring and weary feature of domestic labor. As Harvey and Gill argue: ‘this is a postfeminist moment, when activities that were explicitly presented by “pleasing your man” in an earlier era, are discursively repackaged as all about “pleasing yourself”’ (2011: 61).
Figure 3.5 Shen Xing’s self-help book about cooking and beauty (Jingdong 2010)

Time-management is another challenge for modern women, especially for those who are married. In her book, Lan Yang recommends a ‘daily self-adjustment ritual’ created by her friend psychologist Dr. Zhang Yiyun. Following this ritual, Dr. Zhang carries out a self-examination for half an hour each day to reflect on ‘What am I feeling today? Am I exhausted? Why did I just quarrel with my husband? Do I have any problems?’ and so on (Yang and Zhu 2013: 127). This is her ‘pumping up’ time, which, as she claims, facilitates her to restart to be able to face new challenges. In addition, Lan Yang points out the importance of multitasking to reasonably allocate time. For instance, while putting on a face-masking, she watches television and calls her husband. She indicates that ‘it is worthy of trying, as you are not only rewarding your skin and gathering information, but also enhancing the relationship with your husband’ (Yang and Zhu 2013: 101). What a ‘perfect’ time is described here! However, is this a ‘good life’, ‘the perfect moment’, not actually a form of popular female fantasy? In her book, Lan Yang offers ‘modern women’ a survival manual, so as to improve sexual relationships, and provide a ‘psychic life of power’ (Butler 1993: 153). However, in doing so she simplifies the
construction of subjectivity, and only encapsulates bodily practice and sexual performance.

3.1.3.2 Technologies of Happiness

Foucault’s ‘technologies of the self’ have influenced cultural research for decades (1997: 223). To ‘permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves’, this idea has been widely used for the analysis of contemporary gendered subjectivity by many feminists (Foucault 1997: 225). As Radner argues, contemporary romance is inseparable from the ‘technology of sexiness’, which means that ‘the task of the Single Girl is to embody heterosexuality through the disciplined use of make-up, clothing, exercise and cosmetic surgery, linking femininity, consumer culture and heterosexuality’ (1999: 15). Lan Yang and her expert team’s recommendations further develop this view in the context of China.

This thesis therefore proposes the idea of ‘technologies of happiness’, drawing on Foucauldian theorizing of ‘technologies of the self’: being a sexy ‘little woman’, excelling in the skills of cooking and gardening, and knowing well of time management, and so on. As mentioned above, these technologies have been presented by Lan Yang and her team through therapeutic books and multi-media broadcasting, which is full of ‘self-disciplining elements’, ‘a kind of neoliberal spreadsheet’, ‘a constant benchmarking of the self’, ‘a highly standardized mode of self-assessment’, ‘a calculation of one’s assets’, and a ‘fear of possible losses’ (Marshall 2017: 18).

In China, the situation seems increasingly much more complicated in this respect. On the one hand, women are encouraged following Lan Yang’s discourses to know about themselves, including their inner beauty, as inner
heart and appearance are both important, and women in every age have their own beauties. On the other hand, Lan Yang presents herself with a really fit, slim body, exquisite make-up, stylish hair, and luxurious dress (her specific clothing sponsor is Maxmara) on the cover of each of her books. It is implied that only after ‘you know yourself’, would you have the chance to be the ‘next Lan Yang’. During the field work conducted for the research, almost all employees (including editors and producers, most of whom are women) felt surprised about her tidy, exquisite appearance. In every meeting (I attended), no matter how late it was, she showed up looking perfect. The two phrases Lan Yang uttered most often were: ‘as a professional woman, you have to pay attention to your appearance, especially in face of partners and clients, because details make a difference’. She talked with natural and focused eye contact, holding a firm tone. As such, this ‘unbounded optimism, energy, and efficiency through the faultless clothes and personal grooming’ became part of company culture (Chen 2013: 559). Furthermore, this highly self-regulating and self-policing culture functioned as a power mechanism, which represents professionalism, but paradoxically ‘undermines women’s occupational identity’ (McRobbie 2008: 5).

For young women, ‘perfect’ functions as a technique to create a ‘competitive self’ - ‘I could be better and happier than I am now’, and consequently a ‘self-beratement’, as McRobbie phrases it, both of which permeate in postfeminist and consumerist society (2015: 15). As the cultural appropriation of feminism ‘becomes part of everyday governmentality’ (McRobbie 2015: 18), Lan Yang as an agency, fully engages in self-discipline, self-monitoring and self-surveillance in her everyday life. According to the observation derives from the field work, she was always immaculately presented and energetic in

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65 Da Jun and Bing Zhu also mentioned Lan Yang’s always tidy, exquisite appearance in their interviews, please see the records of interviews and field notes in the Appendices page 9 and page 10.

66 Please see the field notes in the Appendices page 2.
preparation for her shows, even when waiting for her stylist in the dressing room, or discussing with producers about a program, not to mention before the camera.\textsuperscript{67} Her ever-changing ‘classic-meets-modern’ outfits were always a hot topic of discussion in the office, representing her ‘power dressing’, and contributing to her self-construction as a ‘powerful, dynamic and liberated professional woman’ (Orgad 2016: 178). Moreover, even the office became objectified as part of her ‘perfect’ practice. In the book \textit{Let Me Ask You}, Lan Yang described how a producer reacted to the physical space when she was first invited to join Lan Yang’s company: hardwood floors, expensive wallpaper, modern furniture, as well as the exciting, competitive and challenging atmosphere, which is reminiscent of the experience of working in the media itself (2011: 77).

Readers know that keeping slim is seemed as an image that has tradeable value in the job and marriage market. Meanwhile, the economy dictates that all such consumable items including these books are subject to calculation. To be specific, it seems that Lan Yang endeavours to lead young women to live a ‘successful, happy, and perfect life’ that she already has with these books as instruction manuals. She tries to use her own experience to sooth you, encourage you, cheer you up, and make your life easier. Nevertheless, it only makes readers more anxious, since they are reminded of a large number of targets to be met. When readers (young women especially) are faced with this eagerness to be happy, and the incitement of being successful, they actually have few options to express their rejection, because it may reveal that they are out of date, lack of modernized subjectivity, or are perceived as a sexual failure, perhaps (Bose 2000: 255). The notion that ‘you will never be her’ inevitably leads readers to despair in the end. Furthermore, readers are also forced to take part in a life-long ‘battle’ for the purpose of keeping a good-looking appearance. As a result, they have to invest time and effort in the practice of all

\textsuperscript{67} Please see the field notes in the Appendices page 1.
the ‘technologies of happiness’. In addition, women are surrounded by a huge panic that they are not a perfect and happy cook, and know nothing about being a ‘little woman’ as Lan Yangg does, etc., all of which are developing towards a dangerous direction that one will ‘let oneself down’, and, in words of McRobbie, ‘risk social disapprobation… lose status and self-respect’ (2015: 7). Lan Yang’s paradigm of the ‘ideal woman’ (her version of ‘the perfect’) with prescriptive, ultra-high, seemingly impossible and artificial standards, leads women into a situation of competing against each other. McRobbie notes that ‘the perfect suggests that it is only viable to compete against other women’, and goes on to conclude that ‘as part and parcel of this (re)packaging of competition… what is brought back to life is the traditional mode of girls competing with each other (mean girls) within the confines of normative femininity’ (McRobbie, 2015: 16-17).

Therefore, I argue, all of these technologies actively shape young Chinese women to be perfectly domesticated, ‘innocent’, to expose their neediness. Young women are told that in order to have the perfect family of a beloved husband and one boy, one girl (especially since the Chinese government advocated that every family could have a second child), they have to learn all these technologies. I argue that this is also a modern disguise of deep gender conservatism, and a new hegemony of the entanglement of neoliberalism and postfeminism in China. Drawn in mediated culture and promoted by celebrity female figures, the ‘perfect’ and ‘happy life’ feminism ideology has been translated into an inner force, as well as a set of self-determined goals to meet with.

3.2 Cultural Entrepreneur

3.2.1 Commodified Authenticity on Social Media

The discourse practice defining the brand of Lan Yang operates through many
different products and platforms, such as her programs, her autobiographies, her own blog and microblog. In addition, she takes part in fashion shows, commercial adverts, and even stars in a movie. Lan Yang has gladly submitted herself to the celebrity culture of social media, and her microblog on Sina has 35,170,751 followers.\textsuperscript{68} She has become one of the celebrities under the spotlight of tabloid news, and her daily life, marriage, family, even body and appearance, are reported as the subject of gossip and discussed amongst ordinary people, especially women. It seems to be contrary to her initial ‘dream’ of being a serious professional journalist. Her active embrace of capital and her high intention of self-branding have already made her a postfeminist cultural entrepreneur.

In 2009, Lan Yang registered her micro-blog account on Sina, the most influential micro-blog space in China. In the first couple of years, the micro-blog was largely to promote her two programs (Lan Yang \textit{One On One}, and \textit{Her Village}, as mentioned previously), and occasionally Lan Yang posted some of her own original writings. Subsequently, Lan Yang incorporates the microblog into her cultural enterprise strategy. Due to the restriction of time, some stories could not be edited into the program, and then would be posted on the micro-blog to attract more audiences. With many photos and short videos, the content of the micro-blog complements the discourses of Lan Yang’s books, which is in line with McRobbie’s definition of ‘visual media governmentality’ that the micro-blog becomes a ‘regulatory space for the formulation and working through of [many ideas]’, in this case, postfeminist ideas (2013: 122).

Lan Yang’s micro-blog, vividly displays her ‘perfect’, ‘successful’, ‘having it all’ life in a highly mediated, individualized form. In this section, this thesis will

\textsuperscript{68} Sina is the most influential micro-blog shere in China, and the following link is the main page of Lan Yang’s micro-blog.  
https://weibo.com/yangan?topnav=1&wvr=6&topsug=1&is_hot=1
place emphasis on analysing the visual and written texts of Lan Yang’s micro-blog, so as to examine how her commodified femininity is constituted through the particular discourse practice of micro blogging and other social media. During this process, a feminist discourse analysis I propose is used to serve the examination. In particular, much focus will fall on the notion of ‘commodified authenticity’ and the idea of ‘realness’, as well as how Lan Yang employs those discourses to achieve her commercial goals and present herself as new female subjectivity (Genz 2014: 545).

Celebrity is a popular subject of the academic discussion in this commercial mediated society. Turner argues that, ‘celebrity can be thought of as a social function…’, ‘a cultural formation which participates in the field of expectations … of everyday life particularly held by young people and others’ (2010: 14). In feminist scholarship, celebrity culture is ‘an urgent focus for work in critical gender studies’ (Holmes and Negra 2011: 2). According to Holems and Negra, ‘female celebrities’ stories are used to consolidate a strong cultural consensus about ‘out of bounds’ behavior for women in the contemporary environment of postfeminist representation (2011: 2).

How subjectivity engages in celebrity and postfeminist digital culture, has been explored by a range of academics (e.g. Dobson 2011, Banet-Weise 2012 and Genz 2014). Among a variety of studies, postfeminism has been described as ‘a cultural landscape and historical moment’ in a ‘politically ambivalent, media-friendly and individualistic ideology and practice’ (Genz 2006: 337, Genz 2014: 546), which therefore provides a ‘particular rich context’ for postfeminist celebrity (Banet-Weiser 2012: 56). Different from their predecessors, these ‘postfeminist’ celebrities have clear recognition that online activity plays a pivotal role in media manipulation. On digital sites, the self is positioned as a commodity, which is also known as a self-branding approach (Banet-Weiser 2012: 57). In this ‘new branded world’ (Klein 2013: 29), or in a
broader context of the ‘experience economy’, audiences/consumers are seeking to consume experiences, ‘memorable events’, moments and details that could ‘engage them in a personal way’ (Genz 2014: 549). A celebrity’s neoliberal and postfeminist logic and credentials are reflected by the possession and utilization of the knowledge of self-branding especially on social media and other online spaces. For a celebrity, participating in these ‘interactive’ online social sites, ‘become[s] a way of enacting practices of the self’ (Akane 2015: 325).

In the last few years, much attention has also been devoted to the change in the relationship between the celebrity and the audience/consumer. ‘An ideology of intimacy’ between celebrities and fans has been identified and the celebrity needs to do a great deal of ‘emotion work’ to construct such intimate relations (Nunn and Biressi 2010: 28). Digital media is one of the important spaces to produce these discourses of apparent authenticity (Keller 2014: 152). To obtain and maintain audience loyalty, the celebrity devotes to emotional labour. Mediated authenticity, including a selective type of ‘confession’ and ‘disclosure’ process, is an effective tool within this ‘convincing’ technology (Biressi and Nunn 2010: 54).

Defined as a ‘new consumer sensibility’ (Pine and Gilmore 2008: 38), authenticity is identified as a site of the entanglement among individual selfhood, neoliberal capitalism and entrepreneurial subjectivity, as well as a neoliberal project worthy of investment (Banet-Weiser 2012: 98).

Different from the other two female journalists in the project, Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu, with the inclination to present themselves as much younger, less experienced women who are more familiar with ‘headline-grabbing’ technology, Lan Yang puts a great effort in social media while forming her self-portraiture. As mentioned previously, she has transformed into a cultural entrepreneur.

69 The concept of ‘experience economy’ was imported into China in the late 1990s.
Lan Yang has not only established her own media company, but also has built herself into the distinguished brand of the company - a ‘cultural product’. After more than ten years of running her business career in China, she gradually finds one way of maintaining a balance of ‘business and culture’ - new femininity becomes one of her effective marketing strategies. Based on the analysis in the previous section, her programs are ‘decorated’ with ‘a kind of commercial story telling’ (Genz 2014: 548), which ‘generate emotional content and desire’, and attract more commercial advertisement sponsors through the invitation of more and more female celebrities and stars (Lewis and Bridger 2000: 39).

When examining Lan Yang’s micro-blog on Sina, there are several themes she has more interests in, such as her personal life with photos of her own house, her online interaction with her celebrity friends, revolves round her media events to promote her own programs, commercial brands (such as the jewelry Lan), etc. Lan Yang is much more relaxed on the micro-blog, than in her one-on-one interview program. Apparently, she expects to be regarded as a ‘real’ woman on this platform, rather than a woman journalist and an anchor. In other words, she invests in herself as a project on her micro-blog and tries to ‘be herself’ rather than the shadowy figure of ‘someone else’ (Akane 2015: 323). As Akane argues, if ‘female celebrities appear too contrived, artificial, or phony then they are subject to public ridicule for not being themselves’ (2015: 330).

Through active ‘self-exploitation and manipulation of the authentic capital of her own brand’, Lan Yang has obtained enduring influence and power throughout the last twenty years (Genz 2014: 551). She continually updates her new femininity technologies to meet ‘stringent postfeminist standards’.

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70 This is the micro-blog of Lan Yang’s jewelry brand Lan on Sina, which links directly with Lan Yang’s front page of her micro-blog. See https://weibo.com/lanfinejewellery?refer_flag=1005055013_&is_hot=1
which, however, are based on Western white, middle-class heterosexuality (Holmes and Negra 2011: 2). Whenever Lan Yang interviews female politicians and celebrities, including powerful women from the West (the United States, the United Kingdom, for example), a big promotion for the program is held on hybrid media platforms. As her mediated commodified authenticity is very specifically displayed before viewers, there is a gradual accumulation of brand capital.

Every time Lan Yang interviews different politicians, female celebrities, or interacts with her fans, she takes selfies and posts them on media platforms, and her skills are gradually consummate. It is easy to find that a lot of single photos that she posted on micro-blog have been edited by Photoshop. In the digital era, it has been observed that ‘compulsive self-imaging is engendering a new consumer-based language in the visual realm’ (Murray 2015: 491). Many scholars and commentators (e.g. Walker and Spongberg 2015) have examined the self-portraiture on social media – a ubiquitous phenomenon that has led to ‘potential corrosive effects of technology on our individual and collective selves’ (Murray 2015: 16). In this way, Lan Yang attracts a lot of young female followers, which is strategised as simply a means for her self-expression. For this generation, the selfie is a new way of both performing self-disclosure and presenting a ‘whitewashed transparency’ to others. Therefore, whether the tool is popular or not, it has become a ‘postfeminist individual’s mission to access her true self’ (Akane 2015: 328).

Lan Yang constructs a female online community with the focus on her female topic talk show ‘Her Village’, drawing on a promising and well developed landscape (as the woman is the biggest purchasing group in postfeminist China). In recent years, Lan Yang and her team have developed a series of business plans around ‘women’: mini-films (short movies which last only several minutes), women’s training workshops, women’s products, etc. Piece by piece Lan Yang turns her influence into cultural capital. The micro-blog is an
extension, or representation of her, and social media is one of the most effective platforms for Lan Yang to further promote her influential power, and to attract more young women.

In addition to the ‘selfie’, ‘webcasting’ became one of the hot topics in China in 2016. Lan Yang and her team reacted quickly and proactively, and began to produce ‘webcasts’ on her microblog. Taking a ‘webcast’ that Lan Yang personally participated in before Chinese New Year (broadcasting online on 12th Jan 2017) for example, it displayed how Lan Yang interacted with women, most of whom were her fans, by shopping together in the Beijing Kerry shopping centre to prepare for the New Year home party. More than 200,000 viewers watched the whole process for one hour, and participated in real-time online interaction with Lan Yang through posting comments, and sending virtual presents to her. This activity gained substantial commercial advertising revenue from different companies. As a typical commercial celebrity promotion activity, it is quite popular in recent years in China. In these webcasts, Lan Yang’s appearance of authenticity is, to borrow from Akane, ‘performed through an open confessional style’, with the ‘narration of humorous, self-deprecating anecdotes and laidback demeanour effac[ing] the affective labour of managing a desirable feminine persona’, which differs greatly from her self-identified image as a ‘professional woman journalist’ (Akane 2015: 329). Moreover, Lan Yang invited her female celebrity friends to finish one task for each webcast video, such as making handmade lipsticks, and self-designed jewellery out of polymer clay, etc. During this process, Lan Yang casually chatted with her friends, and even talked about celebrity gossip, or

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71 This is the web address where Lan Yang was doing her ‘webcast’ in Beijing Kerry Centre, a big shopping mall. See. https://www.yizhibo.com/l/dFOy_FDJ-vjBDuc.html

72 This is the address of a webcast when Lan Yang and her celebrity friend, Mary Ma, who is a designer in China, were making organic lipsticks. See. http://www.yizhibo.com/l/NIZq9_xBwL3lJh.html
made self-deprecating references in humorous language, all of which contributed to her construction of an attractive image among young women. Viewers could join an online community, and interacted with Lan Yang and her friends in real time, asking questions about their families, careers, etc. Undoubtedly, they also could buy products introduced or made by them. The webcast is always filmed in the location that is really warm and sweet, with a romantic and cinematic atmosphere, which is consistent with the viewer’s epitome of a fantasy location for a posh girl’s party or a western afternoon tea.

All of these webcast materials demonstrate the accessibility of Lan Yang. Every time Lan Yang hosts a new webcast, she receives more likes and comments than other posts such as daily information or promotion for a program. In this way, Lan Yang benefits considerably from the tension between her self-presentation as a sharp, serious woman journalist who is inaccessible and a soft, interesting, easy-going sister. As a female model that achieves success at a relatively young age, and also meets postfeminist standards, Lan Yang may be considered as ‘unachievable’ for many people. However, her more fashionable appearance, and active online persona (for example, she learns to speak network-based language), arguably reconstruct her accessibility within an online community.

In the social media age, the subjectivity of empowered young women becomes the main target of Lan Yang and her cultural products. To manage this target is inseparable from the application of soft and pleasing discourses with a ‘complexly hybridized type of authenticity’ (Genz 2014: 552). Lan Yang is well aware of the need for reflecting and engaging with, as Riordan summarises it ‘commodified feminist rhetoric of “girl power”’, which can also explain the way that Lan Yang and her team choose to meet these needs (Riordan 2001: 295).

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73 According to ‘Hurun Global Women Billionaires List 2010’, Lan Yang was in the 20th with seven billion RMB incoming. The following link is the news report. See. [http://news.163.com/10/111/10/6L71LBLH00014AE.html](http://news.163.com/10/111/10/6L71LBLH00014AE.html)
With her ‘authenticity’ and humour, Lan Yang’s self-representation on social media distances her from the ‘feminine artifice of being perfect and polished’ as she is in her autobiographies and television programs (Akane 2015: 337). She chooses more casual dress, such as a white T-shirt and jean, but is still well made-up. By now, Lan Yang still resisted taking off the celebrity’s make up in the show for pleasing the audience. Nevertheless, it might not be very far away to see Lan Yang trying this tactic for appealing more young women. After all, she knows how to skilfully exploit a consumer’s desire for authenticity, thus achieving a constant balance between ‘real’ fakery and ‘realness’ (Genz 2014: 552). It is not easy to please these media-savvy, internet-born, reality television-obsessed young women who can easily tell the ‘fake’ from the ‘genuine’. Currently, more than 80% of programs broadcast during weekend prime time in China fall within the genre of reality television. It is against this backdrop that Lan Yang actively transforms herself from a TV celebrity to an online brand, since the audience is mainly the young ‘digital native’ generation. Therefore, Lan Yang is eager to create a proper ‘authentic hyper-mediated identity’ in order to foster emotive bonds with audiences/consumers (Genz 2014). However, from the observation on the webcasts hosted by Lan Yang and her celebrity friends, it is easy to perceive the elitist nature in her bones, through her accent, body language, and even her designed laugh, even if she works very hard to show her ‘down to earth’ credentials. The contradiction between and the combination of the ‘real’ fake and ‘reality’, termed by Genz as ‘a meta-hybridization of authenticity’, provide powerful evidence of a creator who is self-disciplining, good at calculating, and who fits into a ‘gendered, classed, commodified and celebritized neoliberal identity’ (2014: 557).

Amy Shields Dobson’s exploration of the postfeminist digital culture will also be discussed in this part of this thesis (2015). According to Dobson, ‘self-representation can be regarded as a genre, which means a contract or tacit understanding between audiences/viewers and cultural producers’ (2015:
56). In this thesis, the ‘genre’ or ‘contract’ is in a more commercial sense to encapsulate how Lan Yang has signed with audiences/viewers.

By perusing Lan Yang’s visual and textual expressions including images, texts, etc. on micro-blog, it can be seen that there is no criticism of institutional strategies to deal with gender issues, such as whether there should be a institutional security system covering equal employment and promotion opportunities, a health security system during pregnancy and maternity periods, and so on. On the contrary, Lan Yang only employs cheerful, positive and uplifting discourses and narratives to encourage ‘up for it’ young women, or in McRobbie’s words, the ‘new meritocracy’, to chase for ‘having it all’ perfect life (2009: 135). Her depoliticised discourses relate to emerging postfeminist femininity, provoking women into self-responsibility, and reinforcing the neoliberal subjectivity by ‘individualising the problem of unequal gender power relations and replacing it with marketable solutions’ (Gonick 2003: 36).

Furthermore, Lan Yang takes a form of ‘resistance without transgressing the entrenched boundary of gender relations’ (Akane 2015: 336). She stresses the domestic requirements of women in a postfeminist, consumerist context through Lan Yang’s affective, humorous, accessible discourses and practice. For example, their webcasts are mainly focused on the activities of flower arrangement, hand-made lipsticks, party shopping, etc., and they choose to hold the live show at the girls’ afternoon tea party. Lan Yang ‘becomes a social resource used to navigate postfeminist rules governing quotidian situations’ (Akane 2015: 336). In addition, Lan Yang’s attention and writing never fall on those women who live in rural China. Since rural women are not the most important consumers for the majority of companies, they are not Lan Yang’s targeted readers and viewers.
Lan Yang’s conservatism and elitism in gender tighten her relationship with power. For instance, she was one of the central members of the Chinese government’s Olympics bid in 1991, 2003 and 2015. Lan Yang, on behalf of the Ministry of Culture as well as women in China, presented as a fluent English speaker and received really positive feedback. Her wide interpersonal connections among the conservative establishment of political, cultural and economic circles lend her and her husband more chances in their commercial media landscape. Lan Yang’s particular form of feminism provides a new dimension of feminism, which outlined by McRobbie is ‘a radically de-politicized and accommodating feminism; its conservatism is most apparent in its shying away from argument and confrontation; it merely requests a place at the table’ (2013: 135).

During the interviews with participants I conducted in this research, some of them mentioned the tension between social media usage and female identity construction, communication and distribution.

**Extract 4:**

Da Jun: We all know what we post on the social media is not the normal life. We always choose what we would like to show and we want to get positive feedback from others. No one in my Chinese online community likes to be judged as a failure.

In addition, the audience on social media platforms is often (implicitly) invited to police and evaluate femininity. As indicated by Akane, ‘successful postfeminist femininity’ is defined as ‘slim, white, [having] youthful standards of beauty, the work/life balance; or possessing a faithful, heterosexual partner-[all of which] are offered up for the audiences’ disciplinary viewing pleasure’

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74 This interview was taken in the office room in Lan Yang’s company, on 9th November 2015. Da Jun, 30 years old. Please see the records of the interviews and the field notes in Appendices page 9.
Therefore, how to live on social media has become a basic life skill for celebrities including Lan Yang, especially after Wechat emerges in China. Within a broader ‘confessional’ culture defined by the ‘exposure of the self’ which has become normalized according to the observation of Banet-Weiser (2012: 77), the public displays of the private self and feelings turn into ‘intrinsically gendered activities’ (Genz 2014: 553). How and when to present your authenticity and affection? How and when to show off your perfect life, with your beloved husband, daughter/son, even twins? How and when to complain of your work and family stress, to give your viewers a chance to release their jealousy and feel ‘we are all the same’? How and when to post a ‘Like’ to the constant selfies of your friends and colleagues? All of these tricks and technologies are burdens of women’s real lives as well as the sources of their pleasure. As Foucault states, ‘confession is at the heart of the procedures of the individualization of power’, and this seems to be central to the process that the neoliberal self eventually becomes a beacon of new femininity (1997: 33).

3.2.2 Commercial Advertising
Throughout the last decade, in addition to the discourses and narrative practice mentioned previously, Lan Yang was also invited to shoot several commercial adverts of products ranging from laundry detergent, toothpaste and sofas, to office stationery. It has explained her commercial value in the minds of advertisers’ minds, despite her paradoxical representation as a subject. The brand of ‘Lan Yang’ constructs not only a lifestyle for consumers but also the ‘whole environments of meaning’ (Banet-Weiser 2011: 650).

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75 Wechat, a free and cross-platform instant messaging mobile phone application was released in Chinese market in 2011.
Recent years we have witnessed a dramatic change in advertising with the development of economy, technology and social relations. Owing to the improvement upon women’s social status and ability to get wages, there is an increase in their independence of financial status, and the possibility of consumption. Furthermore, the leisure culture also becomes a main discourse in Chinese society. There is an increase in products and services specially designed for women. Meanwhile, women’s presentation in the advertisement is also on the rise. Goldman argues that the notion of ‘commodity feminism’ could explain why and how advertisers intent to ‘fetishize feminism into an iconography of things’ (1992: 133). At the same time, the force of social and political critique of advertising is under neutralisation and domestication (Gill 2008: 436).

Goldman found that, ‘advertisers have tried to connect the value and meaning of women’s emancipation to corporate products since the early 1970s’ (1992: 131). Through taking on the relationships women encounter in daily life, the advertisement tries to redefine feminism by means of commodities. As Goldman argues, ‘advertising to women represents an aesthetically depoliticized version of a potentially oppositional feminism’, or in other words, ‘it is a feminism tailored to the demands of the commodity form’ (1992: 132).

As for the first three of products mentioned above (laundry detergent, sofa, toothpaste), they are largely to target at domestic mothers. Taking the advertisement of sofa for example, Lan Yang presents as a professional woman, with her typical white suit and high-heeled shoes, looking really elegant and polish. She walks in a big, luxurious living room, with French windows, and then sits on black and white sofas, reading while drinking a cup of tea; subsequently, she glances up and sees her husband and her lovely

76 See the link of the advertisement http://www.iqiyi.com/v_19rrha4n74.html
child playing happily in the garden. Obviously, she is a working mother with 'everything under control'. Her dress and surroundings suggest that she is a fashion-smart woman with great fulfilment in both work and home environments. In the advertisement, the advertiser sets up a scenario that offers 'a commodity solution' for a happy, classic middle-class life. In other words, only if you consume the commodity, sofa in this case, could you embrace a fantastic life (Ewen 1976: 34-48).

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Figure 3.6 Figure 3.7

Both are the screenshot of Lan Yang’s commercial advertising (The Advertisement of Zuoyou Sofa 2013)

As the narrator in the advertisement, Lan Yang is eager to associate her family’s happiness with the purchase of the sofa. In a gentle and firm tone, she warmly invites consumers (the majority of them are women) to engage with this personal dialogue. In the course of the thirty seconds advertisement, she seems to really enjoy the shopping time, without any hesitation about the price or quality. Although there is no explicit indication of the payer, it is easy for viewers to infer that Lan Yang, has ‘disposable income, individual freedom and self-control’ (Golden 1992: 132). ‘A tacit theoretical concept of individual freedom of choice lies at the centre of commodity feminism’ (Golden 1992:
Furthermore, the advertisement employs glamorous and elegant words, such as ‘chic’, ‘decent’, to highlight a kind of cultural elegance (Golden 1992: 115).

In another advertisement for laundry detergent, instead of emphasising the domestic and pragmatic feature of the product, Lan Yang’s slim body and successful femininity, act as an agency appealing to female consumers. Different from other advertisements of the same kind, which mostly introduce the cleaning performance of products through interviewing some housewives, Lan Yang’s ads does not present any sign of dirty stuffs to be washed and cleaned, nor housewives sharing their experience of using the product. Instead, Lan Yang shows up in different, colourful and high-quality outfits assumed being cleaned by the product, ‘visually emphasizing the line and curve of the female body along with poses, gestures and gazes’ (Goldenman 1992: 132). It is implied that purchasing the product is a pleasurable activity to obtain a slim body (after using the product, you can be as fit as Lan Yang), elegant lifestyle (with the product, it seems that you even do not need to wash all dirty stuffs, since all the hard working and dirty jobs are skipped in the advertisement), and personal accomplishment. In a word, Lan Yang’s ‘commodified articulation of feminine appearance’, signifies the change of fabulous new women in ‘taking control and power over their lives and relationships’ (Goldman 1992: 107).

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77 See the link of the advertisement  
http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODAOTc2NDI0.html

78 See the link of another similar product’s advertisement  
http://www.iqiyi.com/w_19rrw58is9.html
Figure 3.8

Both are the screenshot of Lan Yang’s commercial advertising (The Advertisement of Bluemoon Laundry Detergent 2014)

Figure 3.9

All in all, those advertisements create a feminised market of products by incorporating emotions in order to ‘play on consumers heartstrings with the intention of influencing their decision-making’ (Majeed, Lu and Usman 2017: 1). As indicated by Fisher and Dube, emotionally advertised stimuli might be much more effective in encouraging women to buy (2005: 856). It is also reminiscent of the ‘can do it all’ fantasy, which not only sustains the increasing professionalization of motherhood, but also sets a new horizon for the middle class based on an aspiring lifestyle (McRobbie 2013: 132).

Conclusion

This chapter carries out a critical analysis of Lan Yang as a perfect agency for the inter-communication among the discourses of postfeminism, neoliberalism and ‘a consumer-oriented sexualized culture’ (Evans, Riley and Shankar 2010: 122). Meanwhile, it explores how these complicated forms of governance, shape a world where women are expected to regulate themselves and others through implementing competitive standards especially being ‘perfect’ (Riley, Evans and Mackiewicz 2016: 110).
Based on the analysis in this chapter, it can be seen that ‘having a well-planned life emerges as a social norm of contemporary femininity’ in contemporary China (McRobbie 2009: 77). ‘The perfect’ has replaced previous conventional unrewarding daily activity for women as a ‘domestic labour’, such as drudgery and other housework. In this sense, ‘the perfect’ functions as a ‘border-marking’ strategy and practice to divide women of different classes (McRobbie 2015: 9).

The notion of ‘symbolic violence’, which borrows from Bourdieu, explains how class hierarchies are maintained and reproduced through the possession of cultural capital (McRobbie 2008: 7). According to the analysis of this chapter, Lan Yang was born as a middle-class girl who inherited the opportunity for mobilization, and joined the upper bourgeois (as a celebrity woman journalist), by deploying ‘technologies of new femininity’. She takes advantage of class privilege in matters of taste and distinction, and ensures the ‘docility or fear’ of social inferiors through her improver/adviser autobiographies, TV programs, and online webcasts. Lan Yang becomes an agency of ‘symbolic violence’ in a soft/light form, engaging with the ‘disparaging, shaming or denigrating’ tactics, in Bourdieu’s terms, to share her secrets of happiness and success within a harmonious society in a ‘cloaked’ way (1984: 91). Even if she used to be a female political journalist for a short time, or at least she dreamed of being one, Lan Yang has developed into a cultural entrepreneur in the consumerist society. She gradually abandons journalistic production and attenuates serious news content on hybrid-media to concentrate on entertainment, leisure and relaxation, especially on digital platforms. She together with her friends (other upper bourgeois figures) becomes the tool of the government and capital in a voluntary manner, leading to the establishment of a new ‘unexpected cruelty within [the] heterosexual matrix’ (McRobbie 2008: 8).

What’s more, instead of fully employing McRobbie’s theory, this chapter of thesis also focuses on specific context of Chinese culture and politics to be
more critically analysing. The Confucian virtues of women, such as ‘filial obligations to her parents and to those of her spouse’ (Ko and Piggott 2003: 219), now having been adorned into more modern discourse, like ‘devote herself into family and keeping it happy and stable’, which making the agency of hegemony in gender in China is much more complicated.

Young women are brainwashed into thinking that feminism is the headstone to support their ‘ambitions’ and their pursuit of ‘the perfect’. However, as the case stands, they have to depend on traditional values, such as maternity. It is the postfeminist discourse that endows women with agency power and free choices, which motivate them to choose to re-embrace traditional femininity by means of their ‘feminist’ freedom. And in China, those women are much more radical, pragmatic, aspiring to attain their gorgeous life.
Chapter 4. Jing Chai- Affective Femininity

Introduction

At the turn of the Twenty-first century, the marketilization ideology began to infiltrate into news discourses, leading up to a significant shift in journalism in China, especially in television news. Local and community events conforming to a more tabloid style became the emphasis of news reporting. In this period, the coverage of political and international affairs suffered a huge decline on provincial channels. By contrast, there was an increase in the stories about crimes, consumers and ‘catchy’ entertainments (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 53). At the same time, the growing number of channels and intensified competition did not provide audiences with more choices, but rather ‘lower the standards that denigrate public intelligence’ (Barnett, Seymour and Gaber 2000: 12-13). Journalists in China have been ‘assigned a difficult balancing act as intermediaries between the nation’s political authorities and the public’, or in other words, they keep striving for meeting the needs of both the Communist party-government and the public (Polumbaum 1990: 33). Officially, journalists are supposed to serve as ‘eyes, ears and the mouthpiece’ of the party-state (Polumbaum 1990: 33).

Within this broad context, the CCTV (China Central Television) news channel, which as a national channel is protected by the state to some extent, still put efforts into serious investigative news, whilst focusing on issues which meet more audience’s interests. The ‘softer’ journalism or more specifically, a new ‘post-feminist style’ of journalism came into being. Characterized by and targeted at, for example, feminine individualism and consumerism, the rise of therapy discourses (even in disaster news), and the depoliticized exploration of emotion, this style of journalism places people’s ‘feeling’ about events prior to the events themselves (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 191).
It is against this background that journalist Jing Chai came to CCTV. Different from Lan Yang (the first case study of this thesis, who was born in a middle-class family with university professor parents), Jing Chai comes from an ordinary working class family. She started her media career as a radio talk show host in Changsha after graduating from Changsha Railway Institute (now known as Central South University) with the accountancy major. Subsequently, she got the chance to join the news program Oriental Horizon (Dongfang Shikong), and then News Probe (Xinwen Diaochao), as a reporter and broadcasting journalist in 2001. The coverage of the severe SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndromes) crisis in 2003 awarded her a national reputation for the first time. She was the only female reporter entering the quarantined hospital at that time, and her ‘brave’ image was shown on the screen repeatedly during the whole report, wearing white protective clothing, looking pale and thin. Her following investigative reports disclosed a lot of contentious issues such as air pollution, child education, etc., contributing to the building of her image as an investigative journalist who dares to challenge the official authority and dig for the truth. Meanwhile, her program was considered to perform the media’s surveillance function. According to the strategies outlined in the official talks on ‘nurturing our own famous journalists’ (Pan and Lu 2003: 224), Jing Chai, along with another two reporters from the News Probe, established their own team with exclusive editors, producers and cameramen. In this team, these reporters have absolute leadership, which breaks the rules of the Communist collective identity, and instead, highlights the characteristics of the individual. By presenting herself as a serious advocate for journalistic professionalism in the mass media, Jing Chai voices her opinions in a de-gendered form of journalism that is compatible with the modern life. Paradoxically, she is attractive not only to those female audiences,

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79 On November 16, 2002, there was an outbreak of SARS in Guangdong province in China, which was not allowed to be reported to the public at the very first start. Until many rumors had swept through the country, the government decided to take the agenda-setting. CCTV, as a national TV station took the job.
especially young women, who resonate with her focus on humanitarian care, but also to those male audiences who objectify her as an embodiment of ‘soft-sexiness’.

Her gender does play a role in her popularity. However, her success is not attributed to her de-gendered style of journalism, but rather to her specific feminine physical image, her voice and the emotional communication through which her news stories are re-narrated and accorded an affective appeal (Zhang 2014: 33). As an entity of national propaganda, CCTV discovers, shapes and distributes this ideologically affective femininity.

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80 This description was made by Zhang Jie who was Jing Chai’s colleague, when he recalled in the following interview. See [http://www.360doc.com/content/18/0303/16/50820729_733962167.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/18/0303/16/50820729_733962167.shtml)
Purposefully portrayed as a courageous investigative journalist who always puts herself in the dangerous and controversial frontline by CCTV (during the news reform), Chai was highlighted in almost every program and media appearance. She has been modeled, even deified, as an ‘independent, free, truth-seeker’ and spiritual leader among the younger generation within the inundated landscape of ‘modern-ambition’ China. Her rise to stardom started from a neoliberal individual-centered discursive construction, which was then gradually approved within the party-state media. In her case, CCTV carried out the strategy of choosing and branding one individual journalist as the face of a news program, under the pressure of attracting more audiences. Given her performance in SARS reports, and her reputation among audiences, she together with other reporters and anchors were packaged as an elite group, to fight for more ‘objective’, ‘true’ news. Soon after, a large number of advertisements and videos promoting their programs emerged on the national news channel every day.

This chapter examines a variety of discourses including written texts (Jing Chai’s blog and her autobiography), visual texts (photos, videos on blogs, books, and programs of/for Jing Chai), and verbal texts (interviews conducted for this thesis of the women journalists who work with her), and also from the participant observation. All these analyses are to explore how Jing Chai employs therapeutic reporting, trauma writing and other hybrid media to make sense of the new female identity in the neoliberal and postfeminism China.

The first section is to explore the interdiscursive production of Jing Chai’s affective news reporting through language use and embodied practices. However, it is worth noticing that this thesis does not aim to identify how Jing Chai’s popularized version of affect-based news reporting ‘deviates’ from journalism professionalism. Instead, it focuses on the tension between Jing Chai’s mediated female subjectivity exploration and the reinstatement of
conventional femininity and patriarchy, so as to provide an analytical gateway to the larger social and cultural context in neoliberal and postfeminism China (Zhang 2014: 32). Furthermore, the analysis will demonstrate how Jing Chai’s news reporting on public affairs acts as a series of meaning-making affective practices to respond to the entangled needs of the state, the market and the consumer subject in contemporary China and the very product of their joint efforts. Last but not least, this thesis expounds how the new femininity of Jing Chai is embodied in the neoliberal affective context.

4.1 Therapeutic Reporting and Writing

4.1.1 Investigative Journalism and ‘Female Softness’

The ‘glass-ceiling’, which refers to ‘an invisible but seemingly unbreakable barrier preventing women from breaking through to the top echelons of industry and business’ has become a global commonplace in journalism (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 73). It is evident that all the television network news anchors in CBS, NBC and ABC in America are males, and it is difficult for women to obtain higher management positions in radio, newspapers and other media (Everbach 2006: 479). However, according to some recent studies, it is time for news organizations to change their attitudes towards female journalists if they want to survive in the increasingly competitive market (Sunoo 1994, Peiser 2000). Previous research has confirmed the link between journalist gender and reporting (e.g. Weaver and Wilhoit 1996, Zoch and Turk 1998). For example, it turns out that women journalists ‘advocate more democracy, less hierarchy and more cooperation than their male counterparts’ (Haugen and Brandth 1994: 210).
Despite the increasing number of women journalist entering the newsroom, most of them do not have the authority or autonomy to change the dominant culture in the industry. As a result, they become prone to accept ‘masculine’ news values as professional standards (Zoonen 1998: 33-46). According to Stuart Allan in mainstream news media, news judgments and news values such as timeliness, fairness, objectivity, etc., are based on the thinking of white men (2005: 126). Therefore, both Van Zoonen and Stuart Allan in their studies observe that women journalists are socialized to view these standards as journalistic objectivity, and at the same time perform in similar ways to produce news that can be considered to be masculine (Zoonen 1998: 34, Allan 2005: 126-133), and eventually maintain the male-dominated power structure (Roger and Thorson 2003: 661).

Investigative journalism, for example, has been branded a more male job in terms of its requirement for spending a long period time carrying out hard research fieldwork and even risk-taking activities. The so-called feminine topic always encompasses ‘consumer news, human-interest stories, culture and social policies’ (Gao and Kratzer 2011: 168). As a result, the majority of news assigned to women is more distinctive, with less investigative coverage. Yet even when women journalists engage in investigative pieces, or in other words, much ‘harder’ ones, they are always expected to behave more like men (Roger and Thorson 2003: 671). Jing Chai, on the contrary, has a particularly feminine image (the bob hairstyle, “innocent” wide-eyed expression, and favorite TV outfit of a black or white shirt and blue jeans). She was recruited by CCTV because she is ‘different’ from other male investigative journalists.81 There is a sharp contrast between Jing Chai’s uniqueness in hard news reporting and the conventional feature of investigative news as discussed previously, which

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81 This evaluation comes from Chen Meng, who found Jing Chai when she was still in Hunan Provincial TV. He said, Jing Chai’s difference in her voice, language, and way of talking gave his idea of recruiting her for CCTV. See http://www.360dc.com/content/18/0303/16/50820729_733962167.shtml
freshens the audience’ ideas up. Accordingly, it is not hard to understand why her popularity is predictable. When putting into a broader social and cultural context in contemporary China, especially after decades of constraints on pursuing individual personality, ‘to be different’ has become the golden dogma of the young generation, although it is thirty years later than their western counterparts.

“This is one of my favorite photos”, as Jing Chai said in her book To See (Kan Jian) (Chai 2013).

In addition, Jing Chai’s ‘female softness’ (nvxing de wenrou) is arguably the most distinct feature of her brand, and thus is highlighted in almost every one of her interviews conducted by other media before. In a way, both Jing Chai and her audiences are oriented to her gender status and consider it to be constitutive of her reports. She is kind and personable, showing an "affinity" (qinhe li) in her dealings with lower-status people, such as teenagers. Her ‘feminine sensitivity of feelings’ (nvxing teyou de xini qinggan) and ‘her voice of poetic charm’ (yinyong ban de yudiao) facilitate her interviews to go smoothly.

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82 This is one of the interviews, see http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blg_4b2274f20100zgsk.html

83 These comments are from several colleagues of Jing Chai and they have worked with her for almost ten years. For the texts, please click the following link: https://www.douban.com/group/topic/2083853/
CCTV launched a program *People (Renwu)* in 2006 to introduce the work and life of Jing Chai, in which this promising star was depicted as a ‘soft affective swordswoman’ (Rouqing Nvxia).\(^8^4\) According to the producers of the program, in Jing Chai’s investigative program *News Probe (Xinwen Diaocha)*, her topics revolved around a variety of social issues, such as insecurity in food, unfairness in court, and environmental pollution, etc.; people whom Jing Chai interviewed lived in a poor condition; topics accused the dark side of the force in China. The program mainly focused on the ‘hard and tough’ topics in Jing Chai’s interviews and how she approached those issues in an ‘individual-center sentimental reporting’ and language style, which is consistent with Roger and Thorson’s argument that women journalists tend to write news stories from a more ‘emotional’ standpoint (2003: 671). Moreover, this program also carried out a further analysis in detail of Jing Chai’s feminine body language and linguistic patterns in her interviews given the relevant controversy aroused.\(^8^5\) For instances, in her interviews, Jing Chai often touched interviewees by hands; Chai’s 45 degree body lean-in to the interviewees happened in her interviews quite a lot; among Chai’s interviews, she always made sympathetic eye-contact with interviewees; in her interviews, she talked in a soft-low-voice, averagely about 20 db, which is regarded as a habit from her experience in radio late-night talk show.

It is worthy of mark that Jing Chai once successfully made an interviewee speak depending on her feminine body language and linguistic patterns. In this

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\(^{8^4}\) It is a program produced by CCTV in 2006, covering Jing Chai’s daily life and work. The materials of the program include interviews with Jing Chai and her colleagues and friends, the analysis of her program, and some footage of her past programs. The link of the program is as follows:

[http://share.renren.com/share/40860931/1532822267](http://share.renren.com/share/40860931/1532822267)

Some screenshot from the program were inserted into the main text of this thesis, to make it much clearer when analysing Jing Chai’s body language, outfit, etc.

\(^{8^5}\) This is one of the online reports about the controversy.

[http://fashion.qq.com/a/20140219/007391.html](http://fashion.qq.com/a/20140219/007391.html)
program, she mentioned that when she tried to talk to a teenager whose classmates committed suicide without clear reasons, the teenager refused to answer any questions until Chai showed real patience through the long-time company and the techniques of soft-hand touching and soft-low-voice. The dramatic, feminine figure of Jing Chai becomes the only resonant image on the investigative news show. It distracts the audience from the complicated problematic issue behind the rural teenager’s suicide. The emotional understanding and resonance between Jing Chai and the teenage interviewee work to release the audience’s grief and anger, and reinforce the imagination of self-healing. Jing Chai and her female softness in news reporting were deployed as one of the approaches by state-press to re-legislate and re-consolidate its authority.

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 4.4 (People 2006)
This is a screenshot of Jing Chai’s interview, when she was trying to talk to a boy living in rural China in 2003, and one of his friends just committed suicide out of no clear reason. In the course of the interview, Jing Chai was very close to the boy, looking at him with sympathy and wiping away his tears. It is not a common approach to investigative reporting as this thesis discussed before.

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86 These are the comments about the program and Jing Chai’s feminine image and its effects on the interview itself. See https://www.douban.com/group/topic/24083853/
Apart from the feminine approach Jing Chai employed in her news reporting, her identification of news is different from the normative masculine version. As she stated in the program *People*, ‘news itself is very dramatic for me. I always think that making news is much accomplished than making a film’. In this sense, Jing Chai blurred the boundary of news and drama, objectivity and subjectivity, by presenting herself as a passionate and even bodily engaged women journalist. However, another female journalist Luwei Lüqiu (who is the object of the next case study in this thesis) holds a strong stance against Chai’s ‘dramatic journalism’. According to Luwei Lüqiu, individuals as the subject significantly matters in the news, but they were heavily ignored especially in Mao’s time. However, if news only focuses on the life of the individual, it actually shows a tendency towards soft-pedaling the real and harsh social and systematic problems underneath the phenomenon, which is an opportunistic strategy.\(^87\) Ironically, although Jing Chai is self-represented as a super-feminine journalist who focuses on exploring new femininity, her idol in career are Walter Cronkite, and Edward Roscoe Mero, both of whom were American white, male journalists, as she said several times in her interviews conducted by other media previously.\(^88\) Furthermore, the two male journalists were famous for their perseverance in digging truth, rather than imposing their own opinions and feelings on the audience, which is quite different from what Jing Chai excels.\(^89\) The contradictory between her female identity exploration as a new woman free from conventional femininity, and her actual practice in investigative journalism, illuminates the difficulty and struggle in creating the alternative form of female subjectivity.\(^90\)

\(^87\) This is the controversy between Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu. See [http://www.360doc.com/content/13/0124/09/3566297_262081936.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/13/0124/09/3566297_262081936.shtml)

\(^88\) This is one interview Jing Chai took, during which she mentioned her idols in career. See [http://my.tv.sohu.com/us/200550658/62961260.shtml](http://my.tv.sohu.com/us/200550658/62961260.shtml)

\(^89\) There are the comments on Edwards Mero. See [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_538796e30100ip5i.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_538796e30100ip5i.html)

\(^90\) As Jing Chai writes in her book ‘To see’, it was her dream in her early 20s (Chai 2013: 3).
In addition, Jing Chai frequently employs quotations from wide-ranging intellectuals in public speech and interviews, which distinguishes her from others. In the interview conducted for this thesis, with one of Jing Chai's colleagues, Yunhuan Fan talked that:

**Extract 1:**

Jing Chai really reads a lot of books, and she seems to be very knowledgeable. I remember on one occasion when we were playing in a Karaoke, she stayed alone in the corner and read a book that I had never heard before.91

By perusing Jing Chai's books, public speech and interviews during the last couple of years from 2003 to 2018, it can be found that Jing Chai prefers quoting two kinds of sayings in her language.92 The first one comes from Confucianism, which is often regarded as the male’s wisdom and ‘adopted as the source of political legitimacy and official ideology’ in China (Zhang 2014: 35). For example, Jing Chai once quoted some sayings from Confucius when she was awarded with the accolade of being one of the '50 most charming persons in China in 2006' in a ceremony. She used the expression ‘a gentleman has to be responsible for his words' (*Junzi qiyuyan, wusuogoueryi*) to interpret the social responsibility of female and male journalists. Moreover, when she was interviewed on the stage (as shown in the photo below), she dressed a black turtleneck sweater with a long red scarf, and her favorite jeans. Self-represented as a ‘literary and artistic youth', Jing Chai's image was intensified again. In a word, Jing Chai attempts to re-explain Confucianism in contemporary China and establish a link between new femininity and

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91 This interview was taken in a meeting room in the news department of CCTV on 22th February 2013, Yunhuan Fan, 35 years old. Please see the records of the interview and the field notes in Appendices Page 12.

92 The reason of identifying this period of examining time is that Jing Chai joined CCTV in 2003, and started to be known nationally.
male-oriented Confucianism through her particular feminine image and linguistics.

Figure 4.5 (People 2006)
This is the screenshot of Jing Chai taking an interview after being rewarded with the accolade of being one of the charming persons in China as discussed above.

The second one is from some artists and poets. For instance, in the program People, which has been discussed in the previous analysis, Jing Chai quoted the sentence ‘art has no skills, and art is the affective communication between one another’ from a modern dancer Lin Huaimin in Taiwan. Jing Chai borrowed it as her interpretation of interview techniques, which resonates with Roger and Thorson’s findings ‘women tend to ask questions that can prompt elaboration whereas male journalists tend to use directives and judgmental adjectives’ (2003: 661). Nevertheless, Jing Chai excavated these techniques in a more artistic way. For example, she defined the interview process itself as the understanding of others and a self-understanding journey. She said, ‘when you should listen to your interviewees, when you should make eye contact with your interviewees, and even when you should frown before your interviewees, are all arts’ (Chai 2006). Again, Jing Chai’s opinion on the interview provoked controversy among journalists. Exposing the feelings of interviewees and the intimate thoughts of celebrities is the distinctive trait of ‘therapy news’ and ‘confessional journalism’ (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 191), which is in accordance with Tessa Mayes’s argument ‘[E]motion indulgence and
sentimentalism are replacing informative, facts-based news reporting’ (2000: 30). A large number of reporters, most of whom are males, complain about this ‘therapeutic’ journalism, and argue that affective news reporting has already emerged in China where the ‘inventing’ trauma or risk is long-standing to make matters worse.93

4.1.2 Therapy News Reporting
Tessa Mayes in her paper “Submerging in Therapy News” exposes a blur of the boundary between the journalists’ independent evaluation of an event and his/her personal empathy with the victim’s feelings’ (2000: 32). In Chai’s autobiography To see (Kan Jian), she reports about domestic violence in China, especially in the village. She interviewed eleven housewives who killed their husbands because they could not withstand the violence any more. In this part of the book, Jing Chai employs her usual writing style (similar to the writing of the fiction), to give a vivid depiction of her interview with every woman, outlining how they were beaten and even sexually assaulted by their husbands. One of the paragraphs is laid out as follows:

Xiao Dou: That night, it seemed he would never stop until he killed me.
Me (Jing Chai): How could you feel it?
Xiao Dou: Because he kept looking at the watch.
Me (Jing Chai): What is it about that action?
Xiao Dou: It gave me the feeling that he was waiting for the time. I distinctly remember it was about five o’clock, and he said, you say it and you do it by yourself, or I’ll do it.
Me (Jing Chai): Did you see his eyes?
Xiao Dou: Yes, they are red, the whole night…

(Chai 2013: 103)

93 This is one report about the discussions of Jing Chai’s argument of the interview. See http://www.360do.com/content/13/0124/09/3566297_262081936.shtml
From the conversation displayed above, it can be seen that Jing Chai employs a large number of affective norms, like ‘feel’, to replace facts and reasons, which works to distract the attention of audiences from the nature of domestic violence and leads them to believe that it is an individual’s bad luck to marry such a horrible husband. Furthermore, putting emphasis on the vulnerable positionality of village women in these stories is conducive to simplifying the complex problematic contradiction of domestic violence in political and social aspects. As a result, it fails to explore the wider structural cause. Jing Chai, in her autobiography, also recalls her own miserable experience. When she lived in a small village in Shan Xi, a province in the middle-west of China, she was followed by a rogue for a long time, and it became a living nightmare even after she grew up and left the village. The inclusion of this autobiographical account here shows a phenomenon outlined in Mayes’s criticism (2000) that the moral authority of the victim-reporter overweighs the principle of impartiality in reporting (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 192).

Jing Chai also posts several excerpts of stories and interviews on her blog.  

In Writing Space, Botler claims that, ‘in the electronic writing space, where every reading of a text is a realization or indeed a rewriting of the text, to read is to interpret’ (2001: 183). One of the stories is about a disable girl, Wei Ling who lost her legs in Wenchuan earthquake in 2008. Jing Chai revisited the girl two years after the earthquake and wrote the interview with the girl’s tone of voice to represent the horrible night when the earthquake suddenly happened on her blog.

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94 This is one of the interviews posted on Jing Chai’s blog on Sina, in which she talked about the missing children and pain their parents especially mothers suffered. See http://blog.sia.com.cn/s/blog_48b0d37b010005dr.html#commonComment
95 Wenchuan earthquake occurred on 12th May, 2008 in Sichuan province, with 69,000 casualties reported in total.
She was underneath the rock for more than fifty hours... When a photographer tried to take pictures of her, she shouted, ‘go away’. Still, no one came to help her out...

Two years later, I met her at her house and asked ‘you didn’t like daytime?’ ‘No’ she answered.

‘Because you don’t feel you are part of the world?’ ‘When everyone falls asleep, the world becomes mine’ she said.

I found her looking herself into the mirror, when nobody was around. I asked ‘will you be mad at your body?’ ‘It is quite a normal feeling for a disable person’.

I didn’t suffer so much pain by myself, so I might not have the authority to comfort her. What I can do is telling her the words I read from the novelist Shi Tiesheng, ‘if disability means imperfect, difficulty and barrier, then every one of us is disable.’

(Chai 14th June, 2010)

Mayes argues that when tragedies occur, ‘eyewitness accounts from victim, as well as rescuers, are an essential part of a news report’ (2000: 30). However, in the above story about Wei Ling, most accounts from victim are emotive language: feel, be mad at, like, etc. Admittedly, it is permissible to include people’s emotions into a report; however, the problem is the priority they are given. For instance, Wei Ling was ‘granted expert status’, which may lead to a potential risk of ‘ending up distorting reality’ (Mayes 2000: 31).

What’s more, netizens’ responses to this story on Jing Chai’s blog are worthy of attention. A netizen called ‘Chumozhenshideziji’ (feel real me),
commented ‘what Wei Ling said is too real to believe. I feel so sorry, and I even cry for her.’ In addition, two netizens shared their own experiences during the earthquake. One commented that ‘it is so cruel to interview a girl like Wei Ling’. As the scholar of emotional history argues, ‘available cultural depictions of emotion affect not only the subsequent expression of feelings, but they in fact have the power to shape contemporary understandings and experiences of emotion’ (Mackelworth, Eyre and Richardson 2016: 2). Jing Chai’s blog in this sense has become one of approaches to self-help and self-rescuing.

According to Mayes, ‘failing to distinguish between the professional and the personal means that reporting is in danger of becoming an act of emoting, and objectivity could diminish as a result’ (2000: 33). For Jing Chai, the failure to distinguish between moral correctness and journalistic professionalism, even if the latter is inherently problematic, has become an inner psychological exploration and even an interrogation of self-identity.

Women journalists are confronted with a serious dilemma in contemporary China. To be specific, they are on one hand praised for positively ‘humanizing’ the news to ordinary people. In particular, from the 1950s to 1980s, television news including political news was regarded as a propaganda exercise, in which the activities of Politburo members were presented the most frequently, and there was no individual story of ordinary people. On the other hand, women journalists were blamed for the rise of ‘therapy news’ at the expense of the ‘serious’ politics and the established institution, as an increasing number of women entered the news workplace, changing the news agenda and reporting style. Whatever situations women journalists are in, they are objectified as ‘winner’ or ‘loser’, based on the masculine norm of news value.
In this sense, Jing Chai also becomes an affective laborer.\textsuperscript{98} According to Hardt and Negri (2000), affective labor can produce affects, including a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion, social networks, forms of the community, or biopower (Hardt 1999: 96). There is little doubt that an emotional tone can resonate with increasingly emotional, psychological, or therapeutic forms of selfhood, which facilitates Jing Chai to build an emotional connection with interviewees during the interview, and evoke the sympathy of the audience (Kleinman et al. 2011: 1074). In this case, affective labor forms a medium through which people act on others, creating new types of subjects and new relations among those subjects (McElhinny 2007: 311).

4.1.3 Affective Emotion in Trauma Writing

To further analyze the discourses and narratives of Jing Chai, this thesis lays emphasis on several chapters of Jing Chai’s book, with respect to the topic of ‘trauma’, including the suicide of children living in the remote country; the homosexual style of life; domestic violence; life after earthquakes, etc. As Dutro and Bien argue, ‘We are read by others through some discourse in ways that may or may not be consistent with how we view ourselves’ (2013: 10). Trauma in writing is a productive lens to examine how the female author makes sense of the interdiscursivity between society and human beings, the relationship between ‘me’ and others, and self-identity. Moreover, writing about the trauma of women, specifically, allows readers to access the subjective experience of females, and the way in which this experience is embodied both physically and emotionally (Griffiths 2009: 57). As indicated by Davies and Harre, in constructing stories of the self and others, the writer often performs a ‘complex weaving together of expectations that are available within any

\textsuperscript{98} In one of his papers, Michael Hardt explains affective labor that ‘is immaterial in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion’ (1999: 96). Furthermore, he states that affective labor ‘has achieved a dominant position of the highest value in the contemporary informational economy’ (1999: 97).
number of discourses’ (1990: 102). This section will pay attention to the discourses the writer employs to ‘feel the weight of each word’ based on the rule that ‘language is the fabric itself—not a tool of communication’ (Benstock 1991: 11).

Subsequently, this section will make a brief review of trauma, feminism and writing, in order to build a vein for analysing Jing Chai’s trauma writings.

At the start of the Twenty-first Century, increasing attention had been devoted to trauma. As a broad interdisciplinary field, trauma study explores trauma and its psychic, social, and ‘cultural impacts; memory; and its representation in psychology, counseling, psychoanalysis, public health, communications, history, social work, and literature’ (Dutro and Bien 2013: 12). Suzette Henke argues that women’s life writing—‘scriptotherapy’—has therapeutic effects (1998: 12). Their engagement in writing is solely out of the impulse towards healing the fragmented self (Lanigan 2003: 826). In addition, Marissa Fugate argues that ‘if the traumatized body acquires a new relationship with the world after torture, then the narrative acts as a way to remove the pain inscribed on the body and as an attempt to reconstitute this new body in relation with the world’ (Fugate 2011: 151). Trauma theory has a close relationship with gender research and women studies, which thus can be employed to analyze Jing Chai’s writing in this book. Some feminist trauma-relative research projects are inclined to trace the representation of women as markers of national trauma, to challenge the masculinist’s discursive practice, resulting in the marginalization of women’s traumatic experiences (e.g. Novak 2006). Others note that women-authored auto/biographies are only a marginal, tentative departure from writings of historical events (e.g. Siundu 2011: 1). As mentioned previously, this section of this thesis is aimed at the interdiscursive relationship and entanglement between Jing Chai and her interviewees. Therefore, trauma writings in this case mean that on one hand, Jing Chai as a
female author injects/projects female affection into these objects during her writing. On the other hand, through the practice of trauma writings, she attempts to find a means of self-identification when re-examining this history. In addition to informing the current readers that their values and struggles may easily be ‘forgotten by later generations’, Jing Chai’s traumatic memory weaved within the discourse reinforces a new femininity within this part of history (Siundu 2011: 118).

Shown on CCTV, ‘The Trauma in Shuangcheng City’ was a controversial news program that Jing Chai made in 2003. Afterwards, she wrote her reflection on the program and her interviews into the autobiography To see. Briefly speaking, the news came from a series of suicides committed by five elementary students in Shuangcheng, a small city in the North West of China (a remote undeveloped part of China). When Jing Chai and her team went to Shuangcheng, no one was willing to talk to them. Jing Chai depicted the first meeting with Xiao Yang in her autobiography, who was the last one contemplating suicide but he was rescued at the last moment.

Ten past ten, there were only several lights on in this small city. The light in Xiao Yang’s home was on. His father just came back home, drunk, and quarreling rudely with neighbors, while his mother sat there quietly. I asked Xiao Yang gently, ‘would you like to come with us to our hotel and take the interview?’ Xiao Yang bent his head, keeping silent for a minute, and answered ‘I would’. (Chai 2013: 42)

Female first-person narration and the cinematic and fictional style of depictions brought readers into a depressive, helpless context where Xiao Yang lived. In

99 See the program online
http://haokan.baidu.com/v?pd=wisenatural&vid=6003873662334464296
Jing Chai’s feminine texts, readers are regarded as active, self-produced-context subjects who can resonate with each other. Indeed, Jing Chai acts as a therapist rather than a journalist in the program, and in the text of her book, particularly when she interviewed Xiao Yang and his classmates, Xiao Cai for example, after these students experience the loss of their best friends in her autobiography. It makes sense of all her body language, her oral communication style, the personal emotion she demonstrated, and the questions she asked, and the highly affecting comments she made.

I saw the word ‘endure’ engraved in her arm.
I: Endure what?
Xiao Cai didn’t answer.
I: Could you sleep?
Xiao Cai shook her head.
I: What did you think of?
Xiao Cai didn’t say anything.
After a while of silence, I said to her: when I was at your age, I had a best friend, named Gao Rong. One day suddenly, she didn’t go to school anymore. The first night, when I came back home alone, I felt really upset. Gradually, I grew up and understood that people will leave some day, but something is always left there, like the textbook said, ‘to be with each other though far apart’ (TianYa Ruobilin).
Xiao Cai cried out loudly…

(Chai 2013: 47)

From the above part of writing, it can be seen that Jing Chai writes every word between her and Xiao Cai into the book, and even depicts the facial

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100 This is the link of the program ‘The Trauma in Shuangcheng City’, which was broadcast in 2003 on CCTV. See http://haokan.baidu.com/v?pd=wisenatural&vid=6003873662334464296
expression of the interviewee. In addition, she explains that, there was no one willing to listen to these students in this small city, and they were even forbidden from talking about the suicide again. This is an accurate depiction of many teenagers living in remote cities and villages in China. Exposed to the puberty crisis, these teenagers approach no one to talk to and some of them choose extreme ways to solve the problem or even merely to attract adults’ attention-adolescent trauma. The self-trauma exposure becomes one of Jing Chai’s writing strategies, with an attempt to invoke the real, and to narrow its distance as a representational practice from the empirical reality of the object.

As a consequence, the ‘therapeutic reporting’ style of body and oral language causes considerable controversy over a journalist’s role in the news. A new terminology lends itself to her- the ‘performativeto interview’, but Jing Chai does not agree with this at all. ‘You are right,’ Jing Chai talked to her opponents in her autobiography, ‘but I couldn’t do it. I was like a junior doctor who saw real injuries for the first time, and I had my natural reaction’ (Chai 2013: 52). In the male-dominated news value, maintaining an objective reporting attitude is the basic working role of a journalist. In other words, when the interviewee is crying, the journalist should do nothing. Several other trauma passages in her autobiography have also been seen as affective practices, demonstrating Jing Chai’s way of trying. She, as a woman journalist and a female author, explores the literary trajectory that deviates from male expectations and provides a new and refreshing way for news narration (Siundu 2011: 192). Through these practices, Jing Chai was forged into a female ‘alternative insider’ within the official mediated (CCTV) construction, which is consistent with the analysis mentioned previously.

Additionally, in another two chapters in this autobiography, Jing Chai writes about women and their families after two severe earthquakes. To analyze the discourses and the interpretations of the life experiences of these sufferers
and Jing Chai, this thesis will draw on the metaphor of the ‘speaking wound’, discussed by Cathy Caruth (1996: 26), and also the recent extension of ‘emotions’ as cultural and social political terms (Dutro and Bien 2013: 8). It is worthy of note that the application of these terms is to explore how Jing Chai’s practice functions as challenging discourses, to provide affective discourses and narration of the subject within the history, and the vulnerable female voice. However, her discursive practices in those writings have not managed to supply a ever-neglected or marginalized wider female perspective or clarifying the obscure nature of memory within male-led history.

In Dutro and Bien’s study, they draw on the metaphor –‘the speaking wound’, to highlight ‘the voice of the other that speaks to one and at the same time to its own and its listener’s pain’ (2013: 13). ‘The act of witnessing someone else’s pain involves sharing and taking in the difficult story one has heard’ (Dutro and Bien 2013: 13). Many other feminist scholars, however, explore more broad space for the cultural and social politics of emotions. They argue that emotions should be ‘examined in social and cultural terms rather than individual psychological effect, and it opens up new perspectives on trauma, social suffering and witnessing within feminism’ (Kennedy and Whitlock 2011: 252).

Taking the Tangshan earthquake for example, it happened in the north of China in 1976, with more than 240,000 casualties and 164,000 injuries. It is the individual and collective national trauma for the Chinese. However, what exactly is it, except the numbers? One of the reasons for the ‘unspeakable’ nature of trauma is the sensitivity of its timing. As the last year of the Cultural Revolution, the year of 1976 witnessed the turbulence of the Communist Party of China. In recent years, many documents about the earthquake are gradually open to the public. A film named The Great Tang Shan Earthquake, starred by
several big star actors and actresses, gained high cinema attendance. In addition, Qian Gang, a male journalist, authors a piece of reportage *The Great Tang Shan Earthquake* (1986), opening up more space for exploring this national trauma. It gives a detailed depiction of the earthquake based on the memory objects in archives, oral testimony and sufferers’ biography.

Qian Gang’s work provides Jing Chai with many of the sources about earthquake sufferers. On its Thirty Years’ Memorial Day, Jing Chai and her team decided to pay a return visit and interview these sufferers. Among them, two interviewees are stressed in her book. The first one is a 60-year-old retired female doctor. The interview was taken in the place where the doctor and her colleagues treated the wounded. The record of the whole interview is as follows in Chai’s autobiography:

The doctor gesticulated and said to me, ‘from the place you sit, four miles to the west, and four miles to the north, people were lying almost anywhere. It kept raining. Water flew on the ground. But it was not rainwater. It was blood. When passing by, you often treaded on bodies. Those still moving were alive. Otherwise they were dead…’

I: Did you tell all these past stories to your family?
She shook her head.
I: Maybe the past will be forgotten by your granddaughter’s generation. Aren’t you afraid of that?
The female doctor said: There are so many pasts that could not be remembered. How much do you know about ‘The Great Chinese Famine’ or the ‘Anti-Rightist Campaign’?

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101 The film was released in 2010, directed by Feng Xiaogang.
102 The Great Chinese Famine happened from 1959 to 1961 in China. There were tens of millions of people died of starvation caused by drought and poor weather.
103 The Anti-Rightist Campaign lasted from 1957 to 1959, which aimed to purge alleged ‘rightists’ mainly within the Communist Party of China. The ‘rightists’ officially referred to those intellectuals who favored capitalism.
I didn’t answer.
She smiled and stopped talking.

(Chai 2013: 221)

The second one is a woman who lost her legs during the earthquake. She was rewarded the accolade of being ‘broken in body but firm in spirit’. She said to Jing Chai, ‘I feel I have already been torn apart, like Tang Shan. What I did later was to pick me up, one piece by piece’. ‘I got goose bumps throughout her narration, like the rain pouring on my body’, as Jing Chai writes (2013: 224).

Jing Chai, as an oriental woman, can arguably be seen as an honest writer whilst being restrained from outpouring her emotions. Reading through the text, it is not hard to find that her discourses are saturated with personal subjective and affective language, which not only highlights individual memories of suffering to resonate with more readers, but also links the vulnerable common sense between these sufferers and the weak, helpless feelings of contemporary people in this uncertain China. However, her heavy emphasis on individual effects of traumatic experience rather than social structures and collective experiences once again obscures the core problem behind the phenomenon. Taking the Great Chinese Famine and the Anti-Rightists Campaign for example, both of them are sensitive topics even in contemporary China, revealing the historical issues of Communist Party of China to some extent. However, when the female doctor mentioned these topics in the talking, Jing Chai made no response. Her approach to trauma is in opposition to that of Ann Cvetkovich who treats trauma ‘[a]s a name for experiences of socially situated political violence… [That] forges overt connections between politics and emotion’ (Cvetkovich 2003: 3).
Admittedly, Jing Chai’s efforts to evoke more recollections of the trauma, especially those marginalized voices in the earthquake are beyond any doubt. However, it is urgent to address how social and institutional structure, and political, economic power, shape and produce individual and collective experiences of suffering and trauma. Meanwhile, the development of approaches to response to social suffering should also be critically examined from a cross-disciplinary perspective. What’s more, there is the tendency to position sufferers as victims rather than survivors in Jing Chai’s discourses and narrative, making it much easier to arouse compassionate feelings amongst readers (Kennedy and Whitlock 2011: 252). Jing Chai’s interviewees are portrayed by sentimental and even despairing language common to fictional narratives, with the empathetic depiction of Jing Chai as supplement (body language and physical feelings). As Berlant insists, compassion is a fragile emotional response, and it should be concerned, when a nation and people only have compassion left in mind (2004: 86). The questions put forward by Kennedy and Whitlock can also be consulted: how are narratives of trauma and suffering circulating in the public domain; does the politics of compassion displace campaigns for social justice; what social, aesthetic and representational technologies are used to ‘teach’ compassionate responses (2011: 253)? In addition, most importantly, how do these emotions and compassionate feelings born from trauma, play a role in the construction of the self, especially for the female?

According to the argument of Kennedy and Whitlock, the legacy of trauma has an impact upon the capacity of individuals to construct a coherent narrative of the self (2011: 254). In this case, Jing Chai holds a first-person perspective and multiple positions in her autobiography. She is self-represented as an interviewer, narrator, self-trauma whistleblower, and ‘speaking wound’ listener, to make an effort to speak out for marginalized voices of trauma. However, during this process, she becomes one of those in power producing what
Cvetkovich might call a distinctive ‘archive of feeling’: a social language of suffering and loss that commemorates historical trauma affectively (Kennedy and Whitlock 2011: 254). As a result, it is inevitable for her to be objectified as ‘the other’. The contradictory tension between self-representation and mediated presentation tears her up fiercely.

Last but not least, in Jing Chai’s writings, many discourses can be interpreted as expressions of the author’s philosophies, with religious meanings to some degree. For example, she writes ‘while others suffer, I must suffer’ to summarize domestic violence at the end of the chapter in the *To see* (Chai 2013: 115). This tone is much more like Buddhist self-reflection texts, and can be found in several other pages, as she said ‘life and death, suffering and aging, are hiding in everyone’s body; sooner or later, we will come across it, and be swallowed’ (Chai 2013: 78). Through this style of writing, Jing Chai explores her inner world and makes sense of the life, which is also the embodiment of self-therapy.

### 4.1.4 Jing Chai’s Blog and Self-writing

With the advancement of the Internet, autobiographical self-representation becomes accessible. Likewise, Jing Chai in her blog, employs subjective and personal narratives to ‘produce the transformation of self and, potentially, of the world in particular contexts’ (Gannon 2006: 479).

In Fangfang Gao and Renee Martin-Kratzer’s research on Chinese Journalists’ blogs, they find the existence of gender differences, and female journalist bloggers are ‘more likely to talk about lifestyle such as fashion, health, and arts or record their own lives’ (2011: 175). However, it is not the case in Jing

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104 In the research, Fangfang Gao and Renee Martin-Kratzer chose 165 journalist blogs (written by journalists) from newspaper websites such as *People’s Daily*, Sohu and Sina, two biggest
Chai’s blog. She is one of the news reporters who opened blogs on the Sina web portal (the biggest and most influential blogosphere in mainland China) in 2006. The first post introduced and promoted her new program of the annual National People’s Congress. Jing Chai also explained that her original intention was to use the blog as a voice channel of her audiences, and build a bridge between netizens and National People’s Congress delegates. She wrote, ‘I will accompany you coming closer to the news, closer to the delegates...I am very lucky to have this choice, hope everyone could support me!’ The old-friend tone and language of writing Jing Chai employed, softening the hard core of political news. The tension between hard news and soft writing highlighted Jing Chai’s feminine subject.

The first batch of reviewers was Chai’s continuous supporters who had followed her since her first program on the Changsha local radio station. They moved from an online forum to this ‘new’ blogging platform. It can be observed that most of them are well-educated, and one comment is even written as a poem to admire Chai’s ‘chivalrous personality’ and her literary talent. These comments mainly revolve around public affairs like education reform. Some reviewers point out issues that they think should be investigated in simple words, such as the desire for more independence from the State Administration of Publication of The People’s Republic of China in order to publish more free collections of poem, whilst others expose illegal activities, such as underground gambling.

Western blogs and social networking portals such as MySpace, Facebook and Twitter, are aimed to provide veritable ‘brag-spaces’, many academic and commercial news portals in China, to examine whether there are gender differences on journalist blog (Gao and Kartzer 2011).

105 This is the link of Jing Chai’s Blog on the Sina Blog. See http://blog.sina.com.cn/chjguancha
professional blogs just list one’s achievements (Zylinska 2012: 70). In light of
the party-controlled and government-regulated media situation in China, the
majority of journalist-bloggers like Jing Chai regard blogosphere as an
alternative broadcasting and corresponding platform. For example, there are
an increasing number of back stories about her news reports on her blog,
which includes some details that might be forbidden from broadcasting in the
actual news program. In addition, she writes her comments and reflective
thoughts on social issues, as well as her responses towards audiences. The
stories ‘behind the scenes’ purport to offer alternative explanations of the news,
or capture the subject’s authentic self, including photos, videos and audios of
working. However, in those political posts, Jing Chai also employed affective
writing, and used emotional words and sentences as she did in her
autobiography. Taking some language of her posts for example, ‘Sad Eyes’, ‘If
you want to talk, I would like to listen to’, ‘Don’t forget why we start, because of
having gone too far away’, ‘We will know no one, if there is no eye-contacting
with each other’, ‘one program is one breath’, ‘The War on high-heeled shoes’
etc.. The first-person narration, subjective adjectives using, and metaphor with
emotion, strengthen her affective feminine image.

Unlike some other journalist bloggers, Jing Chai exhibits a literary style in her
writings and even tries out fictional writings styles to metaphorically express
her ideas, which explains why she is admired as an “intellectual goddess” and
blamed for the typical bourgeois viewpoint at the same time.106 In her blog
entries, many address social issues covered in her news programs, such as
the intense relationship between patients and doctors, demolition disputes

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106 This is a thematic discussion about Jing Chai on Zhihu, and some netizens comment that Jing
Chai actually supports bourgeois in her work and life. Zhihu is a Chinese website launched on 26th
January 2011, which focuses on the questioning and answering. On this website, a community of
its users proposed, answered, edited questions and answers. Zhihu (知乎) means ‘do you know?’
in Chinese.
See https://www.zhihu.com/question/60601075
relating to urban construction, etc. She desires for direct interactions with the audience by posting the discourse of the program, thus thoroughly explaining the details of reports or presenting her personal notes of the interview. Some of the posts display her idea of freedom, harmony, and democracy; and others discuss some journalistic professionalism topics such as the objectivity and balance in news reports.

Jing Chai is one of the few journalists who insist on the good management of their own writings, and who have a blog rather than a microblog. As she said once in an interview, ‘140 words are not enough to fully express my original and authentic ideas and thoughts about the world’. For her, writing plays an essential role in the cultivation of the self, which is consistent with Foucault’s idea that the purpose of writing is ‘nothing less than the shaping of the self’ (Foucault 1997: 211). Although Foucault focuses on the letter and diary writing in the Greco-Roman era, his idea of writing is essential to the ‘art of living’ which is particularly relevant to the practice of the digital writing online (1997: 209). For Jing Chai, blogging becomes a process of self-training, since writing can reactivate thoughts as it ‘calls to mind a principle, a rule, or an example, reflects on them, assimilates them, and in this manner prepares . . . to face reality’ (Foucault 1997: 208-209).

The media reform in China, as analyzed in literature review chapter, did not run in a smooth and uninterrupted manner, and there are many controversies, misunderstanding and confusion emerged in news production, modern moral norms, identity reconstruction, meanings of the self-existence, and soul seeking (Zhao 2008: 8). Therefore, Jing Chai takes the online writing and

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107 This is the link of the interview, in which Jing Chai explained why she refused using microblog, ‘I took a long time to think about what I should write down on a post on Blog; otherwise, I am afraid that I might be wrong, and hurt somebody. Therefore, the blog is enough for me’. See http://www.360oc.com/content/18/0303/16/50820729_733962167.shtml
sharing as a weapon in spiritual combat, and a tool for ‘introspection’. Through this recollection, she constitutes her identity, makes reflection of things, and connects with correspondence from the online readers. Jing Chai attempts to form a ‘whole spiritual genealogy’, which has been lost in the market-oriented and commercialized society. This engagement contributes to the resonance from netizens who look for the establishment of a new relationship with the self. It is an important agent of transforming the truth into an ethos (Foucault 1978: 209).

4.2 Figure of the Maternal under Austerity

After reporting SARS in Beijing in 2003, Jing Chai was considered a brave woman journalist, becoming a mediated celebrity figure. As a ‘new woman’, she got increasing exposure through a number of interviews conducted by other media, short biography documentary, professional rewards, public speech and so on. This section will focus on mediated images she represents in the multi-media platforms, which include the austere woman who is careless about property and a fighting mother for her child, aiming to examine how the culture politics of post feminism under the Chinese context plays out on the middle-class urban women in various even contradictory ways. In addition, by examining the fluid and complex symbolic function Jing Chai has played as a mediated celebrity and her implicit self-expression in some private affairs, this thesis tries to explain the complexity of the construction and distribution of new femininity in the contemporary China.

In China, austerity can be traced back to the age of Confucianism when Confucius said, ‘Keep austerity and I agree with others’. It is held that ‘a gentleman should worry about Dao, not poverty’ (Niu and Laidler 2015: 108).
Esteemed by Chinese traditional philosophy as a moral virtue of people for thousands of years, austerity is also employed by neoliberal governance to keep social stability in the Three Years of Great Famine (1959-1961) and after the 2008 global financial crisis as a program of economic activities (Allen et al. 2015: 908). In the 1960s in China, for example, Wang Jinxi, a male heavy industry worker and leader of the No.1205 drilling team at the Daqing Oil Field, was modelled as an ‘Iron Worker’ and a socialist hero who was also represented as a complimentary figure in television and film as well as in the Chinese government’s political rhetoric. In particular, after 1998, under the broad context of industrial structure transformation in China, millions of laid-off workers were requested to be self-responsible for their living. Moreover, austerity is also assumed to be one of the policies for coping with the present structural crisis (Picchio 2015: 251).

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 4.6 (Dongbei Net 2016)

This is one of the most famous photos of Wang Jinxi, illustrating what the ‘Iron Man Spirit’ is. He jumped into the oil well and stirred the cement to prevent the well from blowout at Daqing in 1959.

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108 The Three Years of Great Famine was a period from 1959-1961 in China, when tens of millions of people died because of starvation.

109 A documentary named ‘Iron Man’ was produced in 1964 in China (Tieren). At that time, workers were called on to learn from Wang Jinxin for his devotion to the development of China.
Since the global financial crisis in 2008, the UK government has ‘implemented a drastic program of austerity for its trans-Atalantic counterparts’ (Allen et al. 2015: 908). As Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea argue, presented as a ‘common sense’ in the West, austerity has been entangled with neoliberal governance to become a ‘necessary program of economic activities’ (2013: 20). In the culture, neoliberal austerity values have been gradually deployed to ‘marshal, harness and legitimize certain kinds of conduct and attitudes and to marginalize others’ (Biressi and Nunn 2013: 12). Although the dynamics of interaction among state, market and media in contemporary China distinct from those of the UK, scholars still observe austerity as a ‘discursive and disciplinary field with distinct subject positions, aesthetics, sensibilities, and repertoires’ that is applicable to the present China, such as in Jing Chai’s case whereas in a subtle and different way (Bramall 2013: 66). In essence, the aesthetic sensibilities of austerity in contemporary China are a nostalgic evocation of the enforced national austerity in the past periods as reflected by the slogan that ‘there is no such thing as sitting idle and enjoying all the benefits’ (Bramall 2013, Jensen and Tyler 2012). In his new speech at the closing meeting of the first session of the 13th National People’s Congress at the great Hall of the People in Beijing on 20th March 2108, President Xi Jinping proposed that ‘we should not in the slightest slacken our efforts, and we should by no means rest on our laurels and seek comfort while losing sight of potential problems. We should always bear in mind what we have set out for, and redouble our efforts to achieve greater achievements in the new era’. The encouraging national political discourse covers the negative effects of the ‘ongoing of privatization, dismantling of public services, dispossesssion of rights and commons, sale of public assets, financial speculation in housing, health, and education’ (Picchio

110 This sentence is quoted from President Xi Jinping’s speech. See http://ww.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2018-03/22/content_35894512.htm
111 This is the quotation of President Xi Jinping’s speech. See http://ww.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2018-03/22/content_35894512.htm
The promising achievements of the country and individuals urge people in contemporary China to live a self-responsible and thrift-based life.

Moreover, as ‘Iron Man Wang Jinxi’ did, nowadays, the government is employing the ‘maternal austerity’ rather than ‘paternalistic moral order’ to ease the anxiety and improve the unequal class relations at present (Zhang 2014: 35). Jing Chai’s status as a female and later a mother has always been a focus of the media attention and a constant reference in the commentaries of her news reporting and all her productions in different texts, genres and media. As mentioned in the last section, she is represented as a ‘sword woman’ in the field of investigative journalism, gaining her fame for fighting against corruption and darkness while showing indifference to wealth. Jing Chai’s mediated femininity is characterized by two characteristic figures: an austere woman who has no care for property, and a mother fighting for her child.

Every time when appearing on TV, Jing Chai wears a white shirt and black trousers, which is considered to be much more appropriate for her professional image as a serious politics journalist and helps to differentiate her from other celebrities on TV, such as Lan Yang. When attending the public activities, there is no sign of luxurious cloth, bag or shoes at all. The similar situation has also been observed in the participant observation in CCTV conducted for this thesis. At that time Jing Chai was chatting with her female colleagues in the office room and they talked about a down jacket she bought in a small shop, Jing Chai said that her cost on the jacket was only 400 RMB, and she didn’t buy many stuffs in big shopping malls.¹¹²

What’s more, the interviews conducted by other media and online reports with visual and narrative trope regularly report Jing Chai as a ‘thrifty woman

¹¹² The participant observation happened on 28th January 2013. Please see the field notes in Appendices Page 2.
characterized by ‘ordinariness’ in dress.\footnote{This is one of the reports online, which analyzes different outfits of Jing Chai in different programs, and concludes that she is a thrift woman as well as a successful journalist, with outfits fit for her profession, which partly accounts for why she can be widely accepted by the audience. See \url{http://www.sohu.com/a/4194974_117470}} They also describe her as a lofty character that has surpassed this commercial society, which is much more likely to match with the viewers’ fantasy about her precious personality of loving culture and arts rather than wealth. Another story that has been mentioned by herself and frequently stressed by lots of media is that she was born into an ordinary home with both worker parents and one younger sister, Jing Chai was labeled as ‘a girl from a small village’ and didn’t graduate from an elite university, making her career all through her great efforts.\footnote{In the seventh chapter of Jing Chai’s autobiography To See (Kanjian), she writes about her family and home-village in Shanxi. Besides, she also criticizes the severe pollution issues in Shanxi as a consequence of a long time’s coal mining (Chai 2013: 117-134).} ‘Remarkable work ethic’ can also be reflected by her depiction that she spends almost 75% of her time together with the colleagues rather than the family, because the work requires them to be always on the road (Allen et al. 2015: 913). In an online interview, Jing Chai was discovered that after 10 years’ work, she was still renting a house in Beijing. Although the report doesn’t explicitly point out that Jing Chai couldn’t afford the house on her own because she earns little, many online comments on that report praise her as a good journalist who only works for the benefits of others.\footnote{This is one of the interviews, in which Jing Chai was asked, ‘Why didn’t you buy a car and why did you choose to rent a house?’ She answered, ‘Success and treasure are not reliable and cannot give me the sense of security. Surely, I am not as noble in moral as you think me of, but most of time, it is the life itself that I value.’ See \url{http://culture.feng.com/whrd/detail_2012_05/23/14743730_0.shtml}} Owning a house has been the biggest agenda and dream of Chinese people, especially in Beijing, which indeed is an expectation that may never come true for many migrant workers. In this sense, Jing Chai ‘becomes like us’ (Allen et al. 2015: 918). These discourses closely connect the spirit of thrifty, harding-working and ordinariness with Jing Chai’s success in the name of professionalism while devaluing those who are lazy, irresponsible, and poor in making choices.
Instead of critically examining why many people are still troubled by housing issues from the perspective of systematically structural inequality of economy and politics, individual behavioural deficiencies are blamed.

Moreover, Jing Chai’s maternal feminine has become the agency of the cultural regime of austerity. Two years after her resignation from CCTV, she produced a documentary named ‘Under the Dome’ in 2015. Self-financed by her autobiography sales, the documentary was concerned about air pollution and released online.\(^\text{116}\) At the start of the documentary, Jing Chai told a story about her own child who developed a tumour in the womb. She admitted that it was her daughter’s experience that motivated her to make the documentary, ‘when she stood besides the window, wanting to go outside, she couldn’t because the PM 2.5 was really unhealthy.’\(^\text{117}\) Although Jing Chai used to self-represent as an independent woman journalist, who refused to talk about her marriage and family life in public, her mediated motherhood was regarded as a return to retro-domestic femininity, who ‘finally’ became a mother,\(^\text{118}\) and deployed her daughter’s story as an affective narrative to attract the audience. As Jing Chai said in the documentary, she resigned for the sake of her daughter, and she was willing to ‘come home, becoming a housewife and taking care of her daughter’.\(^\text{119}\) She didn’t consider the domestic work should be shared by her husband, and in McRobbie’s argument, it is ‘a stable form of

\(^{116}\) This is the link of the documentary released online. However, it was taken off four days after the release due to its coverage of some sensitive issues in relation to pollution. To avoid making this thesis desultory, the reason will not be further studied. See http://www.iqiyi.com/a_19rrhb0549.html

\(^{117}\) This is the link of the website providing the whole scripts of Jing Chai’s documentary. See http://www.downhot.com/fawen/yanjiang/1545256600.html

\(^{118}\) During my participant observation in CCTV from January to February 2013, almost no one can tell whether Jing Chai was married or not.

\(^{119}\) This is the link of the website providing the whole scripts of Jing Chai’s documentary. See http://www.downhot.com/fawen/yanjiang/1545256600.html
family life’ (2013: 130). Through those discourses, it can be concluded that as the revival of the ‘traditional’ family value, childcare has become a personal matter rather than a real work of the government.

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 4.7 (Chai 2015)

This is a shot of the documentary, with Jing Chai’s daughter’s big photo on the big screen while Chai was talking about her original intention of making the documentary. Simply wearing a black and white outfit, Jing Chai was still the thrifty and beloved mother who tried not to distract the audience’s attention from the story itself. It was particularly convincing, since that was the first time for Jing Chai to talk about her private life in public, and her austere decisions such as living in a rental house for more than 10 years.

Jing Chai, taken as a form of ‘visual media governmentality’, in McRobbie’s word, props up ideas about what a female journalist, as well as a mother should be like (2013: 126). The analysis above also illustrates what Biressi and Nunn call a “discursive and pragmatic alliance between government, economics and entertainment” (2013: 145).

4.3 Womanliness as a Masquerade

The analysis previously is established based on Jing Chai’s autobiography as well as hybrid media representation and self-representation. In order to drive this thesis into a broader and further space, participant observation research was conducted in Jing Chai’s news department from January to February in 2013. This thesis resorts to the notion of ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’ for explaining more contradictory propositions in Jing Chai’s self-identify in her
physical workplace, especially away from the camera (Riviere 1991). The participant observation during the working and leisure time, and the interdiscursively analysis with hybrid texts, which identifies the increasingly evident contradiction between her conscious self-representation as an independent professional woman to meet viewers’ fantasy as well as her private pride and even narcissism.

Joan Riviere (1991), in her article ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’, first extends the theorization of the masquerade. The article exemplifies the case of an intellectual female patient who habitually undermined her own authority by flirting inappropriately with male ‘father figures’. She often behaved in such disgraceful way after delivering a public speech, particularly a successful one. Due to the anxiety, the woman had an uncontrollable impulse to flirt with her male colleagues, thereby undercutting the image of authority and power generated by her public performance. In “‘disguising herself” as merely a castrated woman’, Riviere argues that her patient attempted to escape the castration of men who she regarded as father figures for fear that men would seek retribution for her possession of the penis (Riviere’s term) by castrating one of them (1991: 92). In other words, the patient sought to defuse the anger of men by ‘presenting herself as a sexual object’, a castrated woman rather than a phallic one (Riviere 1991: 98). Under this cover, she could elude the threat of actual castration. ‘Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of the masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected’ if she was found to ‘possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not stolen the goods’ (1991: 100). In flirting with her male colleagues, the woman/thief turns out her pockets to profess her innocence, the non-possession of the phallus in this case.

The analogy with the thief implies that Riviere’s patient committed the second
theft by taking on the guise of womanliness through her flirtation, and assumed an identity which was rightfully hers. The woman's 'true' nature, then, was phallic, and her womanliness was a detailed display of a stolen identity in order to cover up her guilt about the unauthorized (seeming) possession of the phallus.

Nevertheless, this thesis is not in an effort to engage with such further and extreme extension, based on the contemporary context in China where ‘the womanliness of a masquerade’ appears in a more subtle sense.

In her autobiography To See (Kanjian), Jing Chai recalled her first meeting with Chen Meng, the producer in CCTV who exploited her potentialities to be a journalist and anchor in the national TV channel, when she still hosted a talk show in Hunan, a Provincial TV channel. When asked ‘if you report the news, what do you care about the most?’ Jing Chai answered, ‘people in the news.’ It seems that as she mentioned in her autobiography this answer impressed Chen Meng, and nudged him into the final decision on hiring her as the co-anchor and journalist of an investigative news program (2013: 371). At that time, the male anchor was Yansong Bai, a nationally well-known journalist who had already worked in CCTV for about 10 years. In the traditional journalism convention, journalists should give priority to the digging of the truth and fact. Meanwhile, they need to be objective, which means that they are not the leading actor in the report and only could deliver their attitude through the fact. Such convention is more in line with the male’s characteristics that underscores rational thinking rather than affective appeals.

Paradoxically, after Jing Chai joined the CCTV news department, a series of reconstruction projects were enforced on her. She was forbidden from wearing a long dress and wavy hair in working hours. In addition, the first time Jing Chai held the interview in the studio, the executive producer of the department
appraised her analogy with ‘Yidan Jing (another female senior anchor) when she was young’ (2013: 4). Molding Jing Chai into a female news anchor with inherently calm, objective, succinct traits, whereas CCTV tried to highlight her soft, mild, poetry, touched personality and reporting tendency. Such self-contradictory expectation and representation of Jing Chai as a signal rendered her ‘lost herself and twisted speechless’ (Chai 2013: 105). However, as time passed by, Jing Chai accepts the game rule, and devotes to the exploration of a new way out. She takes full advantage of her femininity in the workplace and the report, and even features it as her specific reporting characteristics to convince her male colleagues that it could make sense. It is evident that despite the strong ability of a woman,\textsuperscript{120} ‘she has a compulsion to hide all her technical knowledge from him and show deference to the workman, making her suggestions in an innocent and artless manner’ (Riviere 1991: 95). Furthermore, as Irigaray argues, ‘the masquerade... is what women do...in order to participate in man's desire, but at the cost of giving up their own’ (Irigaray 1977: 131).

‘Womanliness as a masquerade’, in Jing Chai’s scenario, is much more complicated. By the look of it, every time after she completes a public interview successfully or presents on TV as a leading standard anchor, she puts on a soft, considerate and smart masquerade that her colleagues especially male–peers are fond of,\textsuperscript{121} to release their anxiety of being threatened, and to ‘avert anxiety and retribution feared from men’ (Riviere 1991: 91). Compared with Riviere’s patient who habitually undermined her authority by presenting herself as a sexual object and flirting with ‘father figures’ depending on her

\textsuperscript{120} In Judith Butler’s book, she challenged the binary between femininity and masculinity to state that on one hand, ‘women must become, and must “be” precisely what men are not, since women lack the essential function of men’, namely the Phallus; on the other hand, men are said to ‘have’ the Phallus (1993: 66-67).

\textsuperscript{121} It is quite easy for her given how she was chosen as the anchor of CCTV in the very first place, and she has already stereotyped herself based on her past media experience as analyzed before. This participant observation happened on 18\textsuperscript{th} February 2013. please see the field notes in Appendices Page. 3, Extract 3.
strongly femininity womanliness after giving a wonderful public speech, Jing Chai handles it in a much vaguer way. Taking a staff meeting held on 20th February, 2013 for example, the main agenda of this meeting was to look through all the episodes of the last year, and discussed about the reason what this program should be improved.\textsuperscript{122} During this meeting, Jing Chai acquired unrivalled reputations among professional journalists. The tide of compliments to Jing Chai swept the whole meeting. As a commentator appraised, ‘every producer I talked in the program wants to work with you, and I should learn from you’. ‘You could be the one very shortly, if you want to’, Jing Chai responded immediately before anyone could say anything, blinking her innocent eyes, and flapping the commentator’s shoulder. The commentator laughed loudly and contentedly. Even if Jing Chai has a high degree of confidence, and thinks that she is completely equal to a man, which could be told from her writings, she not only chooses to ‘disguise’ herself and display her lack of authority, but also acts as a ‘gentle killer’. She has to treat the display of her masculinity to men as a ‘game’, something not real, or a ‘joke’ (Riviere 1991: 96).

As indicated by McRobbie, ‘the post-feminist masquerade exacts on the part of the working girl a kind of compromise’, and she must retain a visible fragility and the displaying of a kind of ‘conventional feminine vulnerability will ensure she remains desirable to men’ (2009: 79). Being knowledgeable and energetic, Jing Chai has a soft tune, thin body, girlish dress, and knows when to be quiet, which is sharp in the interview but ‘adorable’ under a camera. All of these characteristics meet the conventional expectation of women. While remixing with a modern professional image, she builds a contradictory but much more unpredictable and sexy type of ‘new femininity’ in this male-intellectual-oriented workplace. It gives a new insight into Adkins’ (2000)

\textsuperscript{122} This participant observation happened on 20\textsuperscript{th} February 2013. please see the field notes in Appendices Page. 4, Extract 4.
definition of re-traditionalization, or in the view of McRobbie, endows ‘resurgent patriarchalism’ with a new feature in the Chinese context (2009: 46).

When it comes to whether this ‘masquerade’ is her genuine womanliness or a posteriority function, it is appropriate to cite Riviere’s argument that ‘my suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing’ (1991: 98).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted Jing Chai as one of the most controversial female figure in China, and how multiple discourse she has practiced to exploring new female subject. News reporting, political documentaries, autobiography and social media writing, and so on, have been examined further, together with qualitative data from participant observation and interviews conducted in the field work.

The ‘female softeness’ I have argued, in Jing Chai’s reporting, through soft-low-voice and sympathetic body-language, has been employed by the state-press and government to re-legislate their authority. Furthermore, Jing Chai deployed two types of sayings in her writings and public speakings, which have eroded the boundaries of private and public, fact and feeling, politics and entertainment. The trauma writing Jing Chai was fond of in her own autobiography and online writing, although has the intention of foregrounding women’s voice in history, has turned out to weaken the interrogation of the real structure problems behind.

Austerity has been presented as a ‘common sense’ in the West, however, not analyzed properly in China, which is a neglect in my opinion. Therefore, the
Chapter 4. Jing Chai- Affective Femininity

Chapter examined how Chinese government employed ‘maternal austerity’ nowadays, embodied by Jing Chai in this case, which developed from ‘paternalistic moral order’ to re-empower its ideological control. Jing Chai’s mediated image on multiple media, has been employed as one of the strong strategies.

Last but not least, the discussion of ‘womenliness as a masquerade’ , has stated that Jing Chai has already internalized patriarchalism with a new feature in the Chinese context.
Chapter 5. Luwei Lüqiu- Alternative Femininity

Introduction

When it comes to femininity, the discussion is always stuck into a matrix of the vocabulary and conceptual tool of beauty, maternity, ‘good life’, ‘balance between family and work’, sexiness, etc., which derive from normative gender identification. A gender discourse concluded by the notion of ‘postfeminist sensibility’ gives an insight into understanding femininity as a bodily property, self-disciplinary to be able to transform herself, with the controversy of choice, individualism and empowerment (Grill 2007, McRobbie 2009, Evans and Riley 2010, 2013). When intersecting with the neoliberal context, the postfeminist self becomes a project transforming through multiple modes of consumption (McRobbie 2008).

Butler argues that, ‘women have become a troublesome term, a site of contest, and a cause of anxiety’ (1990: 4). In a broader context, the gender is ‘a relatively converging point of culturally and historically specific relations’ (1990: 14). This instable, fluid, constant ‘doing’ feature of the ‘gender’ makes the exploration of ‘femininity’ possible.

According to McRobbie, the notion of freedom and choice is inextricably connected with the category of ‘young women’ (2004: 255). Similarly, as an analysis agency, the vocabulary of ‘maternal’, ‘sex’, and ‘beauty’, and so on has already been forged into the static feminism discourse system and become conventional institution or power to ‘undermine’ feminism itself in the disguise of emancipation.

123 ‘Analysis agency’ here means that any scholars in feminist study need to carry out research within this boundary.
It seems that there is still short of an effective critical ideology of ‘women’. In other words, the political, cultural and theoretical vocabulary is inadequate. As Gill asks, ‘to what extent, can our current terms, our familiar genres of criticism, make sense of and intervene in this new way of representing women’ (2008: 437)? This thesis does not advocate ignoring the physical difference between men and women, nor pursues gender neutralization of the language, even though the gender itself has already been ‘into trouble’, as Judith Butler indicates (1990: 3).

Just as mentioned above, some feminist scholars have conducted ideological analysis and they might continue to explore it further. This thesis aims to find an alternative approach to deal with the concepts of women, identity and femininity within culture, politics and sociology, in the context that ‘new femininity’ has become a global discourse. In this sense, it is consistent with the fluid, contradictory new femininity, or may be the ‘trouble of new femininity’. Accordingly, in this chapter, the focus of this thesis will be transformed from only defining one dimension of new femininity in post-feminist, to explore a possible space of ‘alternative femininity’.

In the final chapter of McRobbie’s book, *The Aftermath of Feminism Gender, Culture and Social Change*, she makes great efforts to broaden the possibility of feminism by introducing Rosi Braidotti and her ‘affirmative feminism’ in a critical and cautious way (McRobbie 2009: 150-170). McRobbie appeals to people to ‘focus on the creation of differences and singularities in regard to the possibilities of “becoming women”’ (2009: 159). Therefore, McRobbie regards Braidotti’s interesting attempts at getting rid of traditional femininity, ‘as a feminist’s creation of new female feminist subjects (maybe non-girls) in the world’ (2009: 161). Within different theoretical frameworks and discourses, McRobbie puts much emphasis on the concept of the agency by following Stuart Hall’s cultural theory and Butler’s gender theory, while Braidotti
develops Deleuze’s idea that focuses on ‘cracks and fissures’, to explore the possible modes of ‘becoming women’ (McRobbie 2009: 160).

Braidotti’s rule-breaking spirit and creative practice in new sexualities theory also contribute to the writing of the final section in this chapter. This thesis tries to find a ‘third space’ beyond the binary of males and females. In other words, it is to draw on an alternative repertoire to analyze the vocabulary of femininity. The ‘third space’, according to Homi Bhabha, is ‘fraught with uncertainty and potential’, which was also employed by McRobbie to examine her international teaching classroom in the university in London (1994: 26). Most students in her class are young women from the outside of the UK. These women are eager to change their lives through self investment and attending the ‘new global economy’. In addition to observing the entangled phenomena and power in the teaching process, McRobbie pays attention to other aspects, such as classroom politics, subject-producing practices, educational migration, etc. She suggests regarding the classroom as a ‘third space’ wherein a group of females aspire to ‘participate’ in this uncertain, anxious, and ambivalent global multitudinous women flow (McRobbie 2009: 164-167). This term and its potential explanatory meanings resonate with the intention of this chapter, which tries to give an insight into carrying out the third case study in a possible alternative way. In addition, McRobbie’s generous support of Braidotti’s departure, based on her own constant critique of the vulnerable, easy-to-slip mask (in McRobbie’s words, post feminist masquerade), confirms the necessity of knocking at the point of rupture (McRobbie 2009: 161). However, it doesn’t mean that this chapter will follow the route of ‘the “West” out to “know” the “East” determining a “westernized Easterner’s” symptomatic attempt to “know her own world”, or of something like a solution’ (Spivak 1981: 155). Nor does it mean that there will be a sort of “pure East” as a “pure universal” or as a pure institution’ (Spivak 1990: 8). More importantly, this chapter especially the last section is to critically draw on theories of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler,
Angela McRobbie, Rosi Braidotti, Gilles Deleuze, and Luce Irigaray, to explain one of the most complex entanglement of ‘doing’ and ‘undoing’ of femininity in China.

Therefore, at the beginning of this chapter, Luwei Lüqiu’s hybrid-texts within postfeminist sensibility discourses are analyzed to explore the tension between her identities as a ‘neutral woman’ or a de-gendered journalist and her mediated construction as ‘new femininity’. The first section will highlight the contradictory construction of Luwei Lüqiu’s ‘beauty’ and her struggle, especially will propose an original notion of ‘professional beautifying’ within postfeminist framework. Subsequently, this chapter will place emphasis on Luwei Lüqiu’s ambivalent position and various discursive practices in, about and for Hong Kong, and her exploration of opening up a new space in examining woman, identity and femininity as a new woman.

5.1 Conventional Beauty and Feminine Appearance

5.1.1 Conventional Beauty and Self-Recognition

Compared with other two female journalists in this thesis, Luwei Lüqiu is not a conventionally beautiful woman, especially in the definition of fashion magazines and TV makeover programs. She writes about ‘beauty’ and feminine appearance in her autobiography Rose in her Journey (Xingzou zhongde Meigui),

Since I was a child, my parents and all my family members have told me that I am not a pretty girl. Therefore, I never feel annoyed about my appearance; it never could be changed anyway. Every time I saw those beautiful girls, I did not envy,
but rather admired them. Until now, I would like to join my male friends and appreciate the beauty of girls together.

If I could choose, I would not wear make-up, except for reporting in the studio. I think, in the face of a true friend who loves you, likes and cares about you, it will make no difference.

In my daily life, choosing and matching clothes might be the most time-consuming. I believe that the dressing can reflect one person’s personality, aesthetic standard, and taste. Only when you have plentiful life experiences, can you become confident, and then more tolerant.

Everyone has a different appearance. If all the people engage in remodeling according to the so-called ‘beauty’, namely the repetitive ‘beauty’, then what the point is it?

(Lüqiu 2012: 2)

From the comment and description listed above, it can be seen that Luwei Lüqiu connects appearance, dress, and beauty with personality, confidence, and recognition. When exploring the diversity of beauty, women actually develop an understanding of themselves (Evan and Riley 2013). It is not the first time that Luwei Lüqiu’s expresses her ideas of ‘beauty’ and feminine
appearance in the public. She also mentions other people’s first impression of her in the *Rose in her Journey*

Every time I went to a new place for speech, almost all the people who saw me for the first time felt very astonished about my ‘ordinariness’. Sometimes, I was also a little bit ashamed. However, after standing on the stage to tell my story, gradually, I could feel that people thought I was an attractive woman. (Lüqiu 2012: 2)

Those discourses indicate Luwei Lüqiu’s contradictory notions and depictions of beauty and feminine appearance. On the one hand, her ‘alternative’ femininity includes the implied ‘flouting’ or ‘denying’ of traditional femininity-through-conventional-beauty. As she writes, ‘it is one’s confidence rather than appearance that should be considered’; on the other hand, she still desires to become an attractive (in sexual sense) woman (2012: 2). According to her depiction in the book, she still spends much time in dressing, and she believes that an independent woman is beautiful because of her elegance and confidence. In her mind, beauty still has its ideological sense, within normative ethics. If she does not include beauty in femininity, she might not need to write one specific chapter about the controversy over beauty in her autobiography.\(^\text{124}\) Although she thinks she is not concerned about or does not want to care about the traditional image of femininity--no matter how intentional she is, her appearance contributes to the construction of the self and of womanhood in conventional gender politics. There are subjectivation and subjectification involved in this process--what she thinks of herself and what people think of her. Therefore, postfeminist sensibility reproduces the

\(^{124}\) In the first chapter titles ‘About Label’ in *Rose in her Journey* (2012), Luwei Lüqiu writes about her comments on beauty, the main idea is she always knows she is not a conventional beautiful woman, but she is told she is a charming woman, especially when she is working, and she believes for a woman, the most important merits is confidence rather than beauty (2012: 3-4).
self-regulation of transforming and maintaining ‘appropriate’ femininity (Evan and Riley 2013).

In the interviews I conducted during the field work, two interviewees who worked with Luwei Lüqiu mentioned her appearance, and discussed how it might affect her identity construction in the public.

**Extract 1:**

Lin Chen: Though Luwei Lüqiu is not as beautiful as other celebrity women journalists, she is very smart and works really hard. Sometimes, I even believe that it might be the public comments which always focus on her non-conventional beauty that make her work even harder.\(^{125}\)

**Extract 2:**

Xiaojun Guan: Just between you and me, I think Luwei Lüqiu actually does mind what others talk about her non-conventional beauty. After all, no woman would dislike being praised as beautiful, isn’t it?\(^{126}\)

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\(^{125}\) This interview was taken in a coffee room located near the Phoenix TV on 25\(^{th}\) August 2013. Lin Chen, 32 years old. Please see the records of this interview and field notes in Appendices Page.16.

\(^{126}\) This interview was taken in a coffee room located near the Phoenix TV on 29\(^{th}\) August 2013. Xiaojun Guan, 30 years old. Please see the records of this interview and field notes in Appendices Page.18.
Luwei Lüqiu has expressed her unwillingness (at least in her autobiography) to connect her professional performance with her appearance, however, ‘[f]or women, beauty has always mattered in a personal way as an inevitable, and underlying socio-political framework for how they operate in the world’ (Brand 2000: 5-6). As the above discourse reveals, beauty is not just physical appearance, it sets as ‘a currency system like the gold standard… in assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for’ (Wolf 1991: 12). In terms of the appearance, Luwei Lüqiu ranks low in the list of celebrity women journalists (if there is a real list or the list exists in people/audience/colleagues’ mind). Therefore, in the public’s eye, she has to ‘win back’ by working harder, as her colleagues Lin Chen and Xiaojun Guan assume. What’s more, as Ann Cahill argues, ‘the phenomenon of feminine beautification is a crucial and oppressive moment in an overall patriarchal structure’ (Cahill 2003: 42). Few people, especially those who are close to her, believe that Luwei Lüqiu has abandoned the requirements of (conventional) beauty. Beauty, as ‘a resource and feeling, stabilizes and enables hierarchies’ (Figueroa and Rivers 2013: 136).

In my cases study, few questions were raised concerning the beauty of Lan Yang and Jing Chai, because in the audience’s eye, they had the conventional beauty though neither of them liked to talk about their appearance in public, assuming that it would weaken and damage their professional authority. Instead of taking beauty as a determinant, people or audience take it for granted that their beauty plays a role in their success no matter in work or marriage, and believe it isn’t problematic as a convention. As Claire Colebrook states,

The question [of beauty] for feminist politics is not so much moral—is beauty good or bad for women? It is pragmatic: how is beauty defined,
deployed, defended, subordinated, marketed or manipulated and how do these tactics intersect with gender and value? (2006: 132)

As the above analysis illuminates, the ambivalent attitude and double-standard of (mediated-) beauty complicate women’s self-identity construction and representation of new femininity.

5.1.2 Resistance and Accommodation

Rose Weitz’s analysis framework for the tension of resistance and accommodation is inspirational for the construction of this section to further examine the body, beauty, new femininity and subjectivity. According to the illustration presented previously, there is a contradiction between the body of a woman and her beauty. Specifically, the woman’s body is defined as inferior and submissive to that of man, making the body an important site for power struggles within women’s daily life (Weitz 2001: 668-670). Weitz’s research explores the intersection of ‘resistance’ and ‘accommodation’, in which women are regarded as ‘neither “docile bodies”-who passively internalize social norms and apply self-disciplines to themselves; nor free agents-that celebrate the power of resistance’ (2001: 669). Weitz believes that it is possible to achieve a balance between resistance and accommodation.127

The case of Luwei Lüqiu, however, is not so optimistic, but rather more complicated. Taking the fourteenth chapter titled ‘About Women’ in her autobiography Rose in her Journey (2012) for example, she tells a story about herself as a second-year elementary school student in the 1980s, when China just carried out the ‘opening-up policy’.128 At that time, a new Western

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127 Resistance means to resist subordination, while accommodation refers to accepting or not challenging the ideology that supports subordination (Weitz 2001: 668).

128 In the 1980s, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China began to open to the world, with the economic development as the main policy agenda. Subsequently, the Chinese economy was integrated into the global capitalist orbit under the open-door policy (Zhao 2003: 33). Western cultural ideas and products start to be imported in China.
hairstyle featuring long and curly hair became quite popular in Shanghai. A lot of women had their naturally black and straight hair permed. Even just at eight years of age, Luwei Lüqiu got permission from her father to catch up with the tide that swept the newly emerging sphere of fashion. ‘Unfortunately, the new hair style was not suitable for me, and I looked ten years older’, she writes banteringly in her autobiography. She cites this example to show her fashion-pursuing trait and her pride in being a Shanghai girl (Lüqiu 2012: 137). It is evident from the language and utterance she employed that Luwei Lüqiu got the ‘pleasure’ from making a ‘free choice’ to create some specific images and appearances, in this case, the Western normative beautiful hairstyle (Cahill 2003: 59). In other words, investing in the prospect of beauty is based on ‘her own active’ choice, rather than the attempt to get the approval of men, which embodies women’s (especially young women) vision of more powerful and intensive control that tends to be reflected in the ‘fashion-beauty-complex’ (Bartky 1990: 65).

Luwei Lüqiu as a young girl (8 years old) freed herself from patriarchy (her father’s agreement), and became one of the first generation of women who caught the fashion trend imported from the West. In her writing, Luwei Lüqiu disguises the superiority of this class with self-responsible (in a playful sense), independent, aspiring neoliberal self. Under the cover of women’s self-identification, Luwei Lüqiu actually points up the aesthetic creativity in conventional white, middle class, (long and curly hair) standards by describing the bodily delight in a bantering tone.

Moreover, Luwei Lüqiu, in the same book, mentions that, even though she was not a beauty by conventional criteria, she was indeed an ‘attractive’ girl. As she writes, ‘from junior school to university, I had many boy friends, and I still remember that one boy told me “Lüqiu, you are not beautiful, but you are always the most “shining star in the crowd”’ (Lüqiu 2012: 138). She adds that,
her favorite book is *Jane Eyre*, which highlights the self-esteem and independence of women. In addition, she underlines the differences between being beautiful (*Piaoliang*) and lovely (*Meili*), and illustrates that the latter includes a variety of features, such as natural beauty, kindness, and earnestness and so on. Her ambivalent attitudes towards beauty reveal her subconscious endorsement of conventional beauty. Specifically, she is eager to be recognized as a ‘beautiful’ woman when she repeats ‘her attractiveness’ in the male gaze in her discourses. In the sense, ‘appearance becomes the vehicle to female recognition and validation’ (Riley, Evas and Mackiewicz 2016: 109). Meanwhile, she gets self-relief and self-comfort by replacing conventional beauty with the more vague term ‘lovely’. By self-representing as an independent, wise lady like her model- Jane Eyre, Luwei Lüqiu expresses her intention to resist the conventional norms and its power. However, the accommodation or reinvigoration-in McRobbie terms and other post-feminist’s vocabulary, is much more in disguise (2015: 18).

### 5.1.3 Professional Beautifying

After admitted to the Phoenix TV in Hong Kong in 1997 as a journalist, Luwei Lüqiu got her hair cut and has kept it in a short and simple style ever since. ‘It is more professional and easier to take care of when I am in the field, you know’ (2012: 1). According to her explanation in the preface of *Rose in her journey*, short hair, in this sense, emphasizes and externalizes her authority as a political journalist, which is also consistent with the conventional aesthetic values. Despite the disguise of revealing the professional self, the specific ‘professional beautifying’ actually restates and emphasizes the binary of female/male as the non-professional/professional image. Long, dyed, curly hair as a conventional feminine feature is recognized to be weak in authority in the journalism industry. It is not by accident that Lan Yang, Jing Chai and

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129 She also writes that she never likes jewelry, because it just likes a piece of glass (2012: 138).
Luwei Lüqiu all wear short hair, I argue, it is regarded as the symbol of capability and experience. All of them are highly self-disciplined women who believe that only the self-beautifying can pave the way for their career. Self-beautifying has already automatically become a part of their professional agenda-setting on a daily basis, no wonder at all about the trend among contemporary women in China to dress in similar. In this section, the reflection of interviews and participation observation I conducted in the field work for this thesis will be presented as the cross-reference of the analysis of ‘professional beautifying’.

In the interviews with the female journalists who work with Lan Yang, Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu, ‘professional beautification’ also emerges as a theme within the post-feminism discourse.

**Extract 3:**

Lan Gao: Usually, I don’t have much time in thinking about clothes, you know. But sometime, I still need to cheer myself up by putting on nice dress. I was almost late for this morning’s meeting. I forgot to prepare today’s clothes last night, and it was time consuming to dress properly. I am so embarrassed.  

**Extract 4:**

Da Jun: You know, It definitely happened to me before. Sometimes I spent one hour to choose clothes, shoes, and even accessories for the next day.

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130 This interview was taken in a meeting room in CCTV on 26th February 2013. when Lan Gao and I discussed that Jing Chai always wears simple cloth, and for a journalist, they really don’t have much more time on thinking of appearance, but still as a woman, every one loves being looked nice (Lan Gao 2013). Please see the records of interview and field notes in Appendices page 13.

131 This interview was taken in an office room in Sun Media on 9th November 2015. when Da Jun and I discussed that Lan Yang is always looked tidy, exquisite no matter how busy they are. And it
Extract 5:

Xiaojun Guan: You know, I don’t even bother washing my face when I am home, but to go to the company and other working meeting is my ‘dress up’ day.\(^{132}\)

According to Barkty, the ‘everyday’ practice of beautification and considerable efforts into appearances, as those participants described, are the internalization of conventional inferiority (1990: 55). In addition, she contends that a notion of ‘panoptical male connoisseur’ that ‘resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment’ (Bartky 1990: 34). Moreover, Gill has put in a more specific post-feminist discourse that the beauty work is now a subjectification instead of an objectification, within ‘the rhetoric of agentic individualism, choice and empowerment’ (2007: 148). In other words, engaging in bodywork ceaselessly has become their self-scrutiny practice, and the technology of aspiring self, to survive and succeed in the consumer-oriented neoliberal society (Foucault 1988: 66).

5.1.3.1 Postfeminist Gazing between Women

This section will explore the ‘looking/gaze’ between women, especially in the workplace, and examine how women internalize ‘professional beautifying’ as a new disciplinary regime in postfeminism China. Sarah Riley, Adrienne Evans and Alison Mackiewicz have interrogated women’s looking and regarded it as a relatively neglected aspect of female subject formation (2016: 95). However, they focused more on women’s looking in leisure and entertainment time. After seems that every one in the company need to think about their appearance when working (Da Jun 2015). Please see the records of interview and field notes in Appendices page 9.

\(^{132}\) This interview was taken in a coffee room located close to Phoenix TV on 29\(^{th}\) August 2013. when Xiaojun Guan and I discussed that Luwei Lüqiu is actually very nice woman, who likes to talk about female subject, however, she is too busy to join the casual talking. Xiaojun Guan and Luwei Lüqiu also talked about professional beautifying as well, and Xiaojun Guan said, always shows up in perfect looking is too tired (Xiaojun Guan 2013). Please see the records of interview and field notes in Appendices page 18.
interviewing with attendees at the drinking culture and the UK’s night time economy, they put forward a term of ‘postfeminist gaze’ which shaped how women make sense of themselves (Riley, Evans and Mackiewicz 2016).

The participants work at the Phoenix TV in the interviews I conducted for this thesis provide descriptions of the judging looks between women to assess their professional feminine appearances.

Extract 6:

Lin Chen: my female colleagues and I often talk about our embarrassing experiences in the morning. Although we are in the rush for work, we still can’t bear one last ‘flaw’ of our appearance, and try to make it better using the lash curler one more time. While showing confidence in our appearances, we at the same time are ‘looking at’ each other judgmentally in the whole process from the top to toe.\(^{133}\)

Lin Chen accounted for this inescapable looking between women, especially in the workplace which has been overlaid with competition. Women first attempt to use the self-mocking discourse, as Lin Chen already did, to relieve their obsession into self-improvement, and then blame it for postfeminist anxiety that is provoked by the judgmental looking. ‘Do I look better than you?’ is deeply rooted in modern women’s minds and lives.

5.1.3.2 ‘Faking’ Praising Rhetoric

‘Faking’ praising rhetoric is another discourse deployed by women in the process of looking, which plays an important role in constituting feminine

\(^{133}\) This interview was taken in a coffee room located close to Phoenix TV on 25\(^{th}\) August 2015. These words came out when I and Lin Chen talked about professional beautifying in their workplace. Please see the records of the interview and field notes in Appendices page 16.
subjectivity. It emerges from the interviews and the participant observation in the field work in the Phoenix TV.

Based on the discussion in the literature review chapter, the journalist has already become a feminized profession. ‘Girlfriendship’ occupies an important place in the participants’ social life. In the workplace, ‘women feel a complex mixture of love and envy, competition and solidarity, within their female networks’ (Winch 2012: 29). The tense atmosphere in the workplace impels them to continuously study new techniques of ‘surviving’. According to the observation in the Phoenix TV, where Luwei Lüqiu works, most of the time, she was too busy to join in the chatting among female colleagues, but occasionally, she said, ‘you look great today’ when she saw her colleague wearing a new dress;\textsuperscript{134} or in the face of her female colleague Xiaojun Guan comments, ‘you look much thinner than last time we met’, she responded, ‘I didn’t lose weight, but thank you. You look thinner, too’.\textsuperscript{135}

In spite of Luwei Lüqiu’s struggle against the identity with normative femininity, the pervasive discussion of feminine appearances, as well as women’s looking still press her into obeying the rules. All the participants are assigned to live within the normative expectation of heterosexual interactions (Riley et al. 2016: 103).

In the interview with Xiaojun Guan about praising rhetoric and talking during the looking process, she said:

\textbf{Extract 7:}

\textsuperscript{134} The participant observation was taken in the office room in the Phoenix TV on 6\textsuperscript{th} August, 2013. Please see the field notes in Appendices page 5.

\textsuperscript{135} The participant observation was taken in the meeting room in the Phoenix TV before a daily morning meeting on 10\textsuperscript{th} August, 2013. Please see the field notes in Appendices page 5.
Actually, many times I feel a little bit hard and awkward to say so many praising words, especially to my boss or truly close friends. But, you know, nowadays everyone does it. Surrounded by people who are good at it, you have to learn those ‘life skills’ especially if you have a female boss.\textsuperscript{136}

From the above, Xiaojun Guan has questioned the faking compliments in the process of women’s looking, and has expected it to be different to some extent. As revealed by Alison Winch, however, ‘girlfriendship is harnessed as a way of naturalizing a normative body with successful femininity,’ and ‘a system of mutual governance for the attainment of the ideal body’ (2012: 21). In order to become popular in a feminized community, participants have to persuade themselves to learn the new technology of aspiring female self. The looking between women and the following ‘fake’ praising rhetoric jointly externalize the anxiety of self-belonging, and push women consciously to self-transformation. As Riley, Evans and Mackiewicz argue, ‘a power dialogic of looks that holds out the promise of recognition of successful femininity and the threat of failure’ (2016: 99).

A similar phenomenon was observed in the field work in the Phoenix TV, the situation was even much worse in a female colleagues’ lunch gathering on 18\textsuperscript{th} August 2013.\textsuperscript{137}

\textbf{Extract 8:}

Lin Chen: Dear, you are much more beautiful than last time we met.

\textsuperscript{136} This interview was taken in a coffee room located close to Phoenix TV on 29\textsuperscript{th} August 2013, please the records of the interview and field notes in Appendices page 18.

\textsuperscript{137} Please see the records of this participant observation and field notes in Appendices page 6.
Xiaojun Guan: You are so sweet. Actually you are the one who looks gorgeous wearing this dress.

After lunch, Lin Chen had to leave early, since she got a news reporting to finish. Xiaojun Guan walked with me back to office, and she asked, ‘Don’t you think the dress isn’t quite fit for Lin Chen?’ I smiled and said nothing.

The rapid changing attitudes held and discourse deployed by the participants reveal the contradictory construction of feminine appearances in female comradeship. In urban China, middle-class women do not use misogynist language, or ‘mean girl discourses’ to define normative femininity, such as ‘stupid belly’ (Riley Evans and Mackiewicz 2016: 108). Instead, they employ faking compliments in the ‘derogatory’ gaze, like what the participants had done (Winch 2012). As indicated by Winch, ‘women preserve and perpetuate discourses of misogyny’ and ‘they themselves are complicit in their own disempowerment’ (2012: 22).

In a word, professional beautifying means that women construct their feminine subjectivity and develop into normative feminine appearances for achieving success in the profession and gaining recognition within the heterosexual community. According to the above analysis, Luwei Lüqiu holds a contradictory attitude towards appearances and beauty despite her self-proclaimed identity of a new woman. She changed her hairstyle and lost her weight, to ‘be seen as a better one on TV’ (2012: 186). The ‘appearance’ still plays an important role in constructing her self-recognition. In addition, the looking between women, and the following self-regulatory professional beautifying has become one of the practices that ‘enable postfeminism to

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138 Riley, Evans and Mackiewicz explain what the ‘mean girl discourse’ is in their research on ‘postfeminist gaze’ in UK. She writes that girls always assess girls in a passive way, one of their participants said in her interview that ‘girl will take the piss out of me, such as saying I have ‘stupid belly’, when we go out for shopping together’ (2016: 106).
reshape, intensify, and reinforce forms of gender power’ (Riley, Evans and Mackiewicz 2016: 105).

5.2 Feminizing Journalism Professionalism-- ‘Rose in the War’

This section aims to examine the intersection of gender, professionalism and mediated feminine image in contemporary China through a case study of Luwei Lüqiu who became widely known for her ‘Rose in the War’.139 As Ben Lupton argues, the negotiation of gender identities happens frequently in the workplace ‘through struggles for power and resources within a wider system of gender relations’ (2000: 34). There is a contradiction between Luwei Lüqiu’s self-representation as a professionally de-gendered journalist and the paradoxical presentation strategy employed by the TV station, which highlights the resurgence of the patriarchal regime in the workplace in the name of ‘Journalism Professionalism’.

Journalism professionalism commits to the pursuit of objectivity, validity, reliability and truth in the news reporting. In this sense, the journalist must restrain his/her emotional response in order to be professional (Tuchman 1971: 662). Apparently, Tuchman’s writing is angled from the conventional masculine perspective, in which all decisions in the newsroom are made by the ‘newsman’, and there is no sign of the ‘news woman’ at all (1971: 668). Similarly, Liebler and Smith also claim that women journalists have been socialised with the inclination towards the traditional or ‘male’ definition of newsworthiness (1997).

139 This is one of the column of Luwei Lüqiu, making her the ‘Figure of the Month’ on Sohu, one of the most popular websites in China. The title is ‘Rose in the War--Luwei Lüqiu’. Rose is her English name. The column not only explains the reason why she was called as ‘Rose in the War’, but also covers some reports Luwei Lüqiu wrote from the frontline, and some other comments from her colleagues and friends.
See http://media.sohu.com/15/2/subject208073215.shtml
However, some feminist scholars hold a different opinion that women journalists tend to be loyal to their gender identity as women, while maintaining professionalism (Zoonen 1998: 37). Others argue that, women journalists have challenged the conventional news value, and engaged with the exploration of foreground news concerning women (e.g. Skidmore 1998, Zoonen 1998). However, it is more complex in Luwei Lüqiu’s case.

As the first Chinese female journalist entering the battlefield, Luwei Lüqiu, to a certain extent, has broken through the glass ceiling of her profession, which is unprecedented in the female journalistic world. Being a public affair journalist, Luwei Lüqiu is devoted to re-interpreting her journalistic practice in a neutral way, showing great concern over politics in her reports or on social media. It is clear that she desires to prove herself in work and redefine the role of female journalists in reporting, according to her first autobiography ‘I have already been on the Way’ (Wo Yi Chufa) (2003). In her view, being successful is to retain authority in news reporting, rather than only being praised as very brave (2003: 185).

Complexity and paradox penetrate Luwei Lüqiu’s mediated representation in her books, TV programmes, and other social media platforms. The media that she works for swings her decision about image promotion and its construction. After joining Phoenix TV in 1997, Luwei Lüqiu got a lot of opportunities to cover international events including war, thus winning herself a national reputation. A private TV station founded in 1996, Phoenix TV is headquartered in Hong Kong. At that time, Hong Kong was in the middle of transferring of governance. Phoenix TV is a television broadcaster registered both in Mandarin and Cantonese language, whose targeted audience is within the global

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140 See Luwei Lüqiu’s microblog on Sina
https://weibo.com/luqiuluwei?c=spr_wbprod_sougou_sgss_weibo_t001&is_hot=1
Chinese-speaking community, especially the audience in Mainland China. As the first 24-hour Chinese-language channel covers news around the world, Phoenix Television was jointly owned by ‘Murdoch’s News Corporation, Today’s Asia Ltd., and China Wisdom International in Hong Kong’ when it first came into being, and in 2006, a state-owned enterprise, China Mobile, bought the stake of News Corp (Xie 2013: 1). Phoenix TV is featured by sophisticated ownership and high quality of international news report, making it stand out among its counterparts. With the aim ‘to influence the influential people’, Phoenix TV initially focused on breaking news report, public affairs’ debate show, financial program, etc., because news reports which ‘usually deal with conflicts, bloodshed, casualties, and killings’ have more potentialities of ‘hitting the headline’ (Mellor 2012: 184).

What’s more, Phoenix TV seized one of the greatest moments in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China's history-the re-unification of Hong Kong. The first batch of staff was recruited from other TV stations in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, including Luwei Lüqiu. On 1st June, 1997, Phoenix TV sent a large number of reporters to give live coverage of various events, and also collected different reports from abroad, which opened up a new information channel for Chinese, especially young people living in Mainland China, in the age when there was no widespread popularity of the Internet. Subsequently, Phoenix TV established its reputation in the journalistic world.

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141 Liu Chun, the vice-president of Phoenix TV, mentioned in one interview on 28th April, 2010, that, ‘influential people here refer to male, 30-50 years-old, elite, traditional hard advertising targeted audiences, in the automobile industry, banking industry, etc.’ The link below is the paper by Xu Fan, a lecturer in Communication University of China, based on interviews with Liu Chun and other people who worked at Phoenix TV (2014). 
http://www.csn.cn/xwcby/xwcby_gbys/201406/t20140627_1231612.shtml

142 The live coverage of 911 in the US is one of well-known reports of Phoenix TV, which establishes its timely, objective, thorough investigation brand image as the first Chinese language news channel covering the breaking news. The link below is the clips of the 911 reports in the documentary about the 10th Anniversary of Phoenix TV.
http://phtv.ifeng.com/event/special/zixuntaishizhounian/detail_2010_12/25/3697372_0.shtml
When Lüqiu first joined Phoenix TV in 1997, there was a tension between the representation of Luwei Lüqiu as a new voice and Phoenix TV’s masculine branding strategies. For example, in order to show how Luwei Lüqiu fits the established ‘professional, high quality, international view, elitism’ brand of Phoenix TV, the promotional campaign placed great emphasis on her similarity to masculine experienced male journalists and her philosophy major in university,\textsuperscript{143} as well as her reporting experience as the first Chinese female journalist to enter Iraq during the war. In addition, Phoenix TV took ‘Three Celebrity-ism’ (\textit{SanMing Zhuyi})—‘celebrated anchor, celebrated journalist and celebrated commentator’ as another promotion strategy, which means that the company chooses several anchors, journalists, and commentators to develop their own value as a team as well as the individual brand. During this process, Luwei Lüqiu was appointed a member of the journalist group, although she also acted as an anchor in some news programmes. Subsequently, Luwei Lüqiu served as a news commentator, and was branded as one of the ‘celebrated commentators’ with her other male peers. The branding strategy emphasised Luwei Lüqiu’s sagacity, self-reflexivity, reasonable temperament to ‘consolidate her authoritative image while reversing a traditional image of women as a weaker sex’ (Mellor 2012: 185). According to Noha Meller, women journalists ‘may compromise their gender identity to accommodate for the demands of masculine work’, and then become enmeshed in a negative, being-dominated position (2012: 182). Luwei Lüqiu, on the contrary, holds more active self-presentation, as she writes in ‘\textit{Rose in her Journey}’, ‘what defines a journalist, is not based on gender difference, but rather

\textsuperscript{143} In one book named ‘\textit{Anchors of Phoenix TV}’ (\textit{Fenghuang Mingzhubo}) published by Phoenix TV in 2005, with the aim to promote those anchors, Lüqiu was represented as a journalist devoting herself in the work, as she said, ‘work is absolutely the most important thing in my life. I might be a selfish woman to some extent, since I always think my daughter has her own life and there is no need for me to sacrifice for her’. ‘My major in Fudan University is philosophy, and it helps me a lot in work, since it taught me thinking dialectically in reporting.’ (Ma et al. 2005: 237-239, 247)
proficiency and ability’ (2012: 146).

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 5.2 (Renren Net 2002)

This photo was taken in Kabul with a staff from the International Mine Clearance Organization by Zhou Bing, a photographer in Phoenix TV in 2002, when Luwei Lüqiu was reporting the war in Afghanistan. The photo was published in the book ‘Anchors of Phoenix TV’, showing Luwei Lüqiu’s bravery. Furthermore, as Marlo Edwards argues, ‘the woman with a gun can clearly be read as an “exceptional” female figure who has adopted a traditionally male form of violent power’ (2005: 27).

5.3 (Phoenix TV 2007)

This photo was one part of the poster of all famous anchors, journalists and commentators in Phoenix TV (the complete one is as below). Luwei Lüqiu stood in the middle, with two hostesses, one host, and one commentator around her. Comparing with the other two hostesses in much brighter colour and feminine style dress, she wore a black outfit, ‘supplementing her looks with un-emotional attire’, which highlighted her professional rationality and her low key personality. It was ‘a strategy to boost a certain professional image as well as increasing the credibility of news output she produced’ (Mellor 2012: 181-191).
Joshua S. Goldstein (2001) argues that although there have been more women serving in the army, the war still remains as a gendered construct. As mentioned previously, Luwei Lüqiu was sent to the Middle East to report the war in Afghanistan in 2001, and she became the first Chinese woman journalist and also the only journalist of Chinese media in the Afghanistan war. This sparked a debate online about whether women journalists should be sent to report the war, especially after two male journalists were called back from the frontline by CCTV for safety considerations.\textsuperscript{144} In addition to public praise and curiosity, there were some criticisms that women journalists like Luwei Lüqiu should not risk their lives to enter war zones, especially when they are mothers (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 172). Meanwhile, others questioned that Phoenix TV deployed the image to ‘spice up’ the drama of war reporting under market-driven pressure, which is a commonplace in the West (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 173). Later, in an interview, Luwei

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\textsuperscript{144} This is a report about one of the male journalists, Junyi Shui, who was sent by CCTV to Iraq. Before the starting of the war, Junyi Shui was called back to China for safety considerations. In the report, Junyi Shui talked about the controversy that whether he should be back to China, while Luwei Lüqiu and her cameraman still stayed in Baghdad, and some netizens called him 'a army deserter', which became one of his biggest regrets in his career. See http://news.ifeng.com/a/20140704/41011506_0.shtml

This is another online discussion titled 'The Interrogation of soul: Luwei Lüqiu and Junyi Shui', in which various comments from netizens are collected such as 'Chinese male journalists should be shamed', 'I sighed, I was speechless, I was disappointed, and I felt sad', etc. See http://media.sohu.com/44/32/news08233244.shtml
Lüqiu explained why she was sent to report the War in Iraq in 2003. ‘It was a breaking news, and I was the only journalist who had a verified visa in Phoenix TV at that time, and could catch the plane’. Nevertheless, this report became a turning point in her career.

One of Luwei Lüqiu’s identifiable TV images is to serve as the reporter in Baghdad in 2003. In one programme made by Phoenix TV in 2013, 10 years after the Iraq War, Luwei Lüqiu was invited to the studio to share her experiences in Iraq. This programme introduces the whole process that how Luwei Lüqiu and her cameraman managed to enter Baghdad, with special focus on how Luwei Lüqiu dealt with ‘hazardous attacks’ or ‘hostile environments’ (Mellor 2012: 184). It showed the audience that Luwei Lüqiu and her colleague suffered a car accident, and her face was injured. However, Luwei Lüqiu did not have much time to deal with the wound, and she just put a piece of adhesive bandage strip on it and continued with her interview and reporting. During the whole report in Iraq, Luwei Lüqiu was represented as a fearless female reporter. With her emotion concealed, she always calmly looked at the camera, which eliminated the stereotype that women are emotional in the report. Furthermore, the report also highlighted that she wore the same clothes for a few days, thereby ‘negotiating her journalistic ethics in mediating suffering in order to gain and maintain a certain aura of professionalism’ (Mellor 2012: 181).

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145 This is a report on China Daily, published on 22th September, 2010, in which Luwei Lüqiu recalled her experiences in the war frontline, including the reason why she was sent to Iraq. See [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2010-09/22/content_630368.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2010-09/22/content_630368.htm)

146 See [http://phtv.ifeng.com/program/zmdfs/detail_2013_04/22/24514271_0.shtml](http://phtv.ifeng.com/program/zmdfs/detail_2013_04/22/24514271_0.shtml), the clips of Luwei Lüqiu’s report in Iraq start from around 2’10”. The program also covered changes in Iraq during the last ten years through different journalists’ reports.
Figure 5.5 (The 10th Anniversary of Phoenix TV 2010)

This photo was taken in a hospital on the way to Baghdad, when she was interviewing the civilians who were injured in a bomb made by the US army, on 23th March 2003. Her injured face with a bandage strip was presented in the reporting, and has become one of the most frequently mentioned images of Luwei Lüqiu in the warsince then.  

After over 10 years, what Luwei Lüqiu said in the report has faded from the majority of people’s minds, and no one questions whether Lüiqiu Luwei as a war correspondent did a great job, however, the image of a woman’s bandaged face has carved deep in the public memory. Lüqiu’s presence in a dangerous zone has become a mediated heroic act, even though she in several interviews conducted by other media pointed out that ‘a journalist should not exaggerate an accidental event, just to highlight his/her courage, nor distract the audience from the event itself.’ The firm tone and imperative mood put emphasis on her determination. Ironically, due to Phoenix TV’s feminising promotion strategies, Luwei Lüqiu has ended up at the centre of viewers’ attention, and one of the unforgettable characters in her reports.

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147 When searching on Baidu, the biggest searching engine web in China, with the key words, ‘Luwei Lüqiu, the woman journalist in the war’, there will be a lot of photos like this one. See http://image.baidu.com/search/index?tn=baiduimage&ps=1&ct=201326592&lm=-1&cl=2&nc=1&ie=utf-8&word=%E9%97%BE%E4%B8%98%E9%9C%B2%E8%96%87%20%E6%88%98%E5%9C%B0%E8%AE%B0%E8%80%85

148 This is one interview of Luwei Lüqiu by Beijing Morning News, in which Lüqiu shared her experiences in different battlefields, such as Baghdad, Libya, etc. She pointed up that ‘news has nothing to do with gender, and there is no specific point of view from women.’ See http://news.163.om/11/0927/01/7EU0KGLG00014AED_mobile.html
Despite her resolution to be away from the centre of the report, her ‘objective’ reporting tone and ‘stern look’, as well as her image and presence in the war-zone exceed the stories themselves, and became the foreground in the programme.\textsuperscript{149} As Luwei Lüqiu wrote later in her autobiography ‘\textit{Rose in her Journey}’, ‘women have to be more competitive, adventurous and iron-hearted than men, since no one takes much more care of you because you are a woman’ (2012: 142-143). It can be inferred that she attaches great importance to the factual basis of her reporting and insists that the ‘journalistic profession is about seeking the truth objectively’ (Mellor 2012: 185). However, audiences still expect to see more femininely sensitive reports that offer ‘a woman’s point of view’ (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004: 180).

Luwei Lüqiu’s gender is one of the reasons that Phoenix TV forged her identity after she became a war correspondent since 2001. After all, a female journalist in the war is much more suitable and acceptable for the construction of the heroine. In her autobiography \textit{Rose in her Journey}, Lüqiu wrote that ‘I have to admit that in our society, if women do something that is conventionally done by men, then it will be a selling point’ (2012: 143). Both the ‘selling point’, the lexis with a commercial sense she used, and the judgement in the sentence she made, illustrate that although Luwei Lüqiu is self-represented as a woman exploring the alternation of work and life, she somehow still holds conventional gender norms.

From the analysis above, it is evident that Luwei Lüqiu’s mediated image is complicated and paradoxical. On the one hand, driven by Phoenix TV’s masculine tendency to attract male audiences with economic capabilities, Lüqiu attempts to detach herself emotionally from the report, thus presenting

\textsuperscript{149} This is a programme made by Phoenix TV at the 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Iraq War, and Luwei Lüqiu’s reports were highlighted in the first place. Her identity as ‘the first Chinese woman journalist entering the war zone’, was stressed by the producer and anchor in his opening words in the studio.

See \url{http://phtv.ifeng.com/program/zmdfs/detail_2013_04/22/24514271_0.shtml}
as a de-gendered journalist, or in other words, ‘consolidating her professional identity as an objective journalist or a professional mediator who didn’t allow subjective emotions to interfere with objective mediation of news’ (Mellor 2012: 186). Luwei Lüqiu has taken full advantage of her outfit, body language, and speaking tone, and has developed them into ‘technologies of the professional journalist’. On the other hand, her gender and ‘feminine image in the front field’ are used as a ‘selling point’ for branding by Phoenix TV. As showed in the following photos, Luwei Lüqiu’s injured, pale face, messy hair, and emaciated body were broadcast throughout the country. What’s more, the tension between Luwei Lüqiu’s mediated feminine image and the cruel, destroying power delivered by the war background (such as the shabby city in the left photo, and the city in bombing shown in the right one), has dramatised her ‘new femininity’ exploration in the war.

Figure 5.6 (Phoenix TV 2003)  Figure 5.7 (Phoenix TV 2011)

Both photos were taken in Baghdad in 2003 by journalists from Phoenix TV

5.3 Alternative Femininity
The above analysis of Luwei Lüqiu in post-feminism context, is still within the normative feminine subjectivity framework, such as beauty and appearance, attachment in news report, etc., which doesn’t mean it is moving away from the theme of this chapter pursuant to that of exploring the ‘alternative femininity’. On the contrary, it reveals exactly the difficulty, as well as the meaning of the exploration in this fluid and complicated society. In the following section, it is to carry out a critical analysis of virtual femininity, and the entanglement of Rosi Braidotti, Luce Irigaray and Angela McRobbie’s argument on female subjectivity, thus examining the potentiality of alternative femininity. Mary Louise Pratt’s ‘contact zone’ also inspires the following writing and provides a ‘hub’ for the open-ended discussion ad alternating reflection, although the ‘contact zone’ itself is full of ‘intractable conflicts’ (1992: 7-8).

5.3.1 Virtual Femininity and Luwei Lüqiu’s Writing
Rosi Braidotti’s feminist theory is developed based on her philosophical project, examining how ‘the difference’ is positive, rather than a negative opposition of ‘the same’ (2003: 45). To be more specific, in the context of feminist theory, she explores the possibility that gender differences transcend the binary opposition within her broader idea of breaking through the binary distinction between self and the other, Europeans and foreigners, human and non-human (Braidotti 2014: 223). Her philosophical emphasis on ‘the difference’ can help to clarify the ‘difference’ or ‘alternative’ in the analysis of Luwei Lüqiu’s experience, as well as the ‘new femininity’. Admittedly, as McRobbie argues, there is a very different vocabulary and theoretical framework between the two terms; however, it is still possible to link them in the context of exploring the multiple changes in the ‘new femininity’ (2009: 160). This thesis is not inclined to employ directly and crudely the repertoire of Braidotti’s vocabulary nor totally abandon Foucauldian’s. Indeed, this section of this thesis is developed from the ‘conceptual tools and ethics’ produced by the debate over the two feminist frameworks (Braidotti and Regan 2017: 175). A critical analysis of
these feminist scholars' interpretation of feminism, femininity, and becoming woman itself, is also an exploration of possible space for alternative femininity. The thought ‘cracks and fissures’ helps to materialise the analysis in this section (McRobbie 2009: 159).

5.3.1.1 Virtual Femininity

In Braidotti’s research, she expresses her concerns about post-feminism in nowadays Europe, as she writes,

Post-feminist neoliberalism is pro-capitalist and hence it considers financial success in the world as the sole indicator of the status of women...it fosters a new sense of isolation among women and hence new forms (2006: 45).

In this argument, Braidotti emphasises that those scholars on post-feminism are overly concerned with consumer-oriented capitalism (e.g. Gill 2007, McRobbie 2004 and Lazar 2007).

The ‘high’ post-structuralism which is defined as ‘the work of Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and their feminist counterparts Kristeva, Cixous, Kofman, Irigaray and others’ in the writing of Braidotti, has a far-reaching impact on Anglo-American feminism (Braidotti 2014: 224). In the view of Braidotti, some scholars like Foucault and Derrida have much more power and priority in explaining the phenomenon of feminism, whereas others have to ‘wait for long time to be “discovered”, such as Deleuze and Irigaray’ (2014: 224). Therefore, Braidotti calls for resolute action to break this kind of hegemony in epistemology.

Holding the ‘difference’ in mind, Braidotti defines herself and other scholars as the ““intermediate” generation which is closely linked to the so-called feminist
third wave’ (2014: 244). She proposes a ‘nomadic’ theory, which engages with Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Luce Irigaray’s theories (Braidotti 2003). In an affirmative tone, her sexual difference theory highlights the significance of reevaluating the ‘bodily roots of subjectivity’ for redefining the female feminist subject. By focusing on a series of debates about feminism and micro-politics of becoming, she proposes the multi-layered interactivity and complexity of subjectivity. Specifically, it is women’s ontological and political desire that posits them as female subjects (Braidotti 2003: 44). In this sense, the consciousness of inequality in political aspect drives her to present the difference and diversity in a positive way. What Braidotti highlights strongly is to actively and positively pursue the identification of she during the process of social-construction. Braidotti engages with post-structuralism by depicting the feminist subject of knowledge as ‘rhizomatic’ in a net, interacting in a non-linear way (2003: 60).

Moreover, the ‘body’ also plays a key role in Irigaray and Braidotti’s idea of subjectivity (Braidotti 2003: 56). However, it does not function in a biological or a sociological sense. Different from Gill’s body practice of sexualism, the ‘body’ here means the overlap between ‘the physical, the symbolic and the material social condition’ (Braidotti 1992: 173). More importantly, Irigaray again takes the body into account to place emphasis on the mobilization of a set of differences, as described by Tina Chanter (2016: 46). Therefore, the body/female, is a field/surface, rather than a point/singular entity, inscribing race, class, age, religion, politics, etc. Meanwhile, Braidotti explains that Deleuze’s idea of women can be ‘revolutionary subjects only to the extent that they develop a consciousness that is not specifically feminine, dissolving ‘woman’ into the forces which structure her, such as religion, nationality,

150 Braidotti defines ‘the generation of feminist philosophers between 1981 and 1995 as the ‘intermediate’ generation’, although what the ‘intermediate’ is still under discussion. She argues that ‘feminist of the intermediate generation simultaneously pursue the aims of the second feminist wave and lay the foundations for future developments’ (2014: 227).
ethnicity and language (Braidotti 2003: 50). In this sense, ‘the notion of the body is transformed from a substance dualistically opposed to the mind, to a dynamic process of embodied interactions’ (Braidotti 2014: 239).

By contextualising ‘the difference’ within the history of European philosophy and political theory, Braidotti traces the feminist philosophy of sexual difference back to the crisis of European identity in her analysis, where the terms of ‘disrupt’ and ‘dis-assemble’ appear with tall frequency (2003: 46). She criticises that the ‘difference’ has been ‘colonised by hierarchical and exclusionary ways of thinking’ historically (Braidotti 2003: 45). In other words, people who were ‘different’ from Europeans, were exclusive, disqualified, and inferior, which explains why both feminism and post-structuralist fight for subverting the oppressive connotation of ‘difference’ and the binary of Self and Other. To put more specifically in gender relations, Braidotti states ‘the subject of feminism is not woman as the complementary and specular other of man’ (2003: 50). Specifically, she does not exist because of being different from the man, or being the other of the man; she is ‘the subject of quite another story’ and a ‘mutant’. For Braidotti, feminine subjectivity has ‘taken her distance from the institution of femininity’ (2003: 45). She could live without him. In a word, both Braidotti and Irigaray strive to exit from the ‘phallogocentric definition of Woman’ (Braidotti 2003: 47). Developed from the dominant subject with masculinity, the definition of ‘woman as the other’ becomes their main target of criticism. They point out that the feminine ‘lives’ in the imaginary men, rather than functioning as a corporeally touchable entity. Only if Women repossess this imagination, can they represent themselves in the real sense. Irigaray proposes a strategy of ‘mimesis’, as women have been ‘symbolically coded in language, culture, science, knowledge’, discourse, and so on (1993a: 35). However, there are still many problems to be further examined, such as if the feminine only exists in the male or the female’s imagination, and how to tell the difference between Women and Men? What
are the image and representation of Women, as she suggests? Are those representations constructed in the same or quite different way? And is the 'mimesis' possible to take on?

The 'virtual feminine', proposed by Braidotti, makes an interesting sense, which entangles with multiple, complex processes of the definition of the feminist subject (2003: 51). Following the same logic, the binary or, in their words, the dialectics of homosexuality and heterosexuality should also be abandoned within this sexual politics project. Instead, it is necessary to explore an experimental space for women’s desire and ‘specific sexual morphology’ (2003: 46). McRobbie, however, questions Braidotti’s ‘account for the realms of feminist creativity and becoming’, and argues that Braidotti’s examination echoes with Birmingham’s work of 1970s on youth subcultures, which ‘facilitated transitions into ‘spaces of resistance’ (McRobbie 2009: 160).

Braidotti’s notion of gender relation and subjectivity is also profoundly influenced by Deleuze who focuses on the ‘becoming’, with a vision of the subject as ‘being endowed with multiple sexualities’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 242). Although McRobbie holds a different view from Braidotti, she still praises Braidotti’s ‘writing and reasoning like an artist, novelist, and a feminist inventor of worlds’ (McRobbie 2009: 161). In particular, Braidotti’s encouragement to depart from conventional femininity and establish a new female subject undoubtedly provides a kind of ‘crack or rupture which opening for transformation’ (Braidotti 2000: 159). Nevertheless, there is still a gap in Braidotti’s argument about the essence of ‘radical transformation’ and ‘difference’, because ‘it is still very much ongoing and in the making’ (2014: 244).

When it comes to the ‘nomadic’ woman as mentioned previously, the novel notion of ‘nomadic’ is not only in the sense of being dispersed, but also in the encouragement to open up a potential space of reinventing self, which endows
‘all the exploited, marginalised, oppressed minorities’ with ‘transformative power’ (Braidotti 2003: 52). As thus, the affirmative feature of feminism that Braidotti identifies has its embodiment of ‘an affirmative passion for and desire for the transformative flows that destabilise all identities’ (2003: 55).

There are three aspects of Braidotti’s argument and approach, which, to some extent, inspires the following exploration on more potentialities of female subject and alternative femininity. First of all, the space that Braidotti strives to create is beyond the phallocentric, Eurocentric thinking’ (2014: 229). Although this thesis is not to dig further into the ‘nonhuman, or non-girls’ implied in some arguments of Braidotti, the ‘newly undesignated subjects who have found the means of exiting from the grip of male and female spaces of identity’ contributes to the following analysis (McRobbie 2009: 161).

Second, Braidotti’s suggestions on leaving the only emphasis on concerning with capitalism also redound to the analysis. In addition to the economic institution, the analysis of this section takes into accounts the political domination and other control in the process of analysis. Last but not least, Braidotti calls attention to the danger that ‘feminism has become a force for the redressing of grievances and for compensation for injuries’, and appeals to leave a matrix for feminism, which is marked by pain, suffering and victimhood (2002: 58). However, in the book _Metamorphoses-Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming_, Braidotti introduces two cases to serve her analysis. One is the death of Princess of Wales, Diana, while the other covers those young women, gays and people of colour, who were ‘asylum seekers in the contemporary European Union’ (2002: 22). Regrettably, both cases relate to the injured and victims.

It is worthy of attention that although Braidotti stresses that those people in her argument have been ‘forgotten or swept aside by Thatcherism’, the first ‘figuration’ she picks is Princess Diana, a worldwide female celebrity (2002:
22). In addition, Braidotti uses the ‘becoming’ frequently in her analysis, instead of employing ‘present, represent and self-represent’, which are more familiar words in McRobbie and other post feminism scholars’ repertoire (Braidotti 2002: 25). It is meaningful to emphasis the ‘process and always ongoing’. However, Braidotti’s attempt to make a ‘difference’ is not so successful in this case. Braidotti criticises some phenomena in the social and cultural sphere, such as the large number of women undergoing cosmetic surgeries, taking mood-enhancing drugs, or suffering from anorexia, etc., which is quite similar and even resonates with post feminist scholars (2002: 27). Additionally, Braidotti interrogates women’s pursuit of ‘perfectibility’, which is similar to the argument of McRobbie and the examination of this thesis in Lan Yang’s chapter. Therefore, the ‘body’ is not the totally ‘virtual’ existent as she states in her theory (Braidotti 2003: 53).

5.3.1.2 Knowledgeable Femininity

This section, as mentioned previously, will engage with critical thinking, rather than directly applying Braidotti’s theory and approach, since they themselves are arguable and self-contradictory as having been discussed in previous section. It is much more suitable to critically analyse Luwei Lüqiu within the entanglement of Braidotti, McRobbie and the theoretical frameworks of other scholars, which is in line with Braidotti’s statement that difference is positive (2014: 225). It is worthy of note that the tension between Braidotti, McRobbie and other scholars’ arguments and approaches provides a potential space or ‘location’ of alternative femininity. In Braidotti’s ideas, ‘location is a collectively shared and constructed space, [which] refers to a process of consciousness-raising through the intervention of others’ (2002: 231). For example, texts from oriental women could motivate women in the West to have self-reflection critically. In this sense, it alienates women from ‘the familiar, the intimate, the known, and casts an external light on it’, and then, ‘as Deleuzian
defines, “de-territorializes” them, or in Foucault’s language, it is “micro-politics” (Braidotti 2002: 19).

Based on the discussion in the previous section, Luwei Lüqiu has published four autobiographies, I have always been on the Way (Wo Yi Chufa) (2003), Bias (Bufen Dongxi) (2011), Battlefield Journal in Libya (Libiya Zhandi Riji) (2011), Rose in her Journey (Xingzou Zhong DE Meigui) (2012), all of which have been analysed in this thesis. By perusing these four autobiographies, it is not hard to find that two of them are Lüqiu’s diaries when she was in Baghdad\textsuperscript{151} and Libya\textsuperscript{152} during the war. In those two books, she does not give a detail account of herself and civilians, or the personal stories of the victims in the war, though it may be more appealing to readers (Mayes 2000: 32). Instead, the topic mainly encompasses the cause of confrontation between Shiah and Sunnite from historical views, the complicated affective relationship between people in Iraq and Saddam, intellectuals in Iraq, Gaddafi and his mercenaries, the gap between the rich and the poor in Libya, etc. More importantly, different from Jing Chai who deploys emotional narrations and linguistics to arouse sympathy among readers,\textsuperscript{153} Luwei Lüqiu is inclined to use direct and judgemental adjectives. For instance, in one chapter titled ‘The First Sight of Benghazi’ in Battlefield Journal in Libya (Libiya Zhandi Riji) (2011), Luwei Lüqiu described her first impression of Benghazi as follows,

When you talk with officials of the transition government, or ordinary civilians in Benghazi, you will find that just after two short months, they have already gotten used to expressing their own queries and appeals through international norms such as ‘democracy, freedom, and human rights’, etc. Certainly, it is not proper to define their appeals as fake, or criticise them for getting more sympathy from international society.

\textsuperscript{151} This book is I have always been on the Way (Wo Yi Chufa) (2003).
\textsuperscript{152} This book is Battlefield Journal in Libya (Libiya Zhandi Riji) (2011).
\textsuperscript{153} The affective style of writing of Jing Chai I have analyzed in details in the last chapter.
However, pursuing economic interests is one of the reasons that can’t be ignored.

Libya exports 1,600,000 barrels of crude oil every day. It could be sold at a higher price because of its higher quality. However, the majority of ordinary people do not benefit from the income of oil sails. Almost one third of people still live under the poverty line set by the United Nations. (Lüqiu 2011: 31-32)

In the above discourse, Luwei Lüqiu does not use any descriptive words to detail the life of people in Benghazi. It is not a story-telling style of writing. Instead, she explores the reason for the change in the logic of thinking among people in Benghazi, and highlights the economic and political factors. From those rational writings and explanations, it can be seen that Luwei Lüqiu has followed her own rules in reporting and writing. As she states, ‘it is our responsibilities of finding the truth, rather than becoming the leading actor in the spotlight’.154

Braidotti argues that traditional sociological categories such as ‘marginals’, ‘migrants’, or ‘minorities’ are inadequate in describing the new alternative subjectivity (Braidotti 2002: 20). I argue that it is the ‘marginal’, ‘minor’ even ‘excluded’ dimensions in conventional femininity which should be considered or involved in alternative femininity in a different logic. Like what Luwei Lüqiu has done in her war reporting, the rational writing and observation are not just a way of broadening the horizon, but the approach to self-reflection, and self-exploration, which is aimed ‘to honestly meet myself’ as she writes in the cover of her autobiography (Lüqiu 2012: 67). Therefore, it is an ‘interactive

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154 This is one online discussion about the difference between Jing Chai and Luwei Lüqiu. Specifically, Jing Chai is more willing to express her own emotion in the reporting as analysed in the last chapter, while Luwei Lüqiu holds the view that a journalist should ‘hide his/herself’ behind the news. See http://www.360doc.com/content/13/0124/09/3566297_262081936.shtml
process that brings forth complex aspects of our existence, especially our own implication with power’ (Braidotti 2002: 19).

On 21st August 2009, Luwei Lüqiu registered her micro-blog in Sina, one of the most popular micro-blog spheres in China.\textsuperscript{155} The update of her micro-blog is at tall frequency.\textsuperscript{156} Taking her posts in January, 2017 for example, she kept a really close eye on international affairs including feminism topics.\textsuperscript{157} The current affairs she focused on revolve around smog issues in China, women hold up half the sky movement, women march in the U.S.A, Meryl Streep’s Golden Global Speech, The documentaries The Cuba Libre Story and Trostky-Rise and Fall of A Revolutionary, and campus bullying in China. From these posts, it is easy to see that she tends to use nouns, verbs, rather than descriptive adjectives, which along with the variety of news topics she covered, illustrate her proficiency and knowledge in public affairs.

In 2015, Luwei Lüqiu quitted her job in Phoenix TV, and started her PhD study and research in the United States. Therefore she posted news reports from different sources around the world, including newspapers, mainstream TV news, comments on social media. ‘I want to share more alternatives and possibilities of the same news, as well as news backgrounds’ (Lüqiu 2011: 14), as she writes in the Bias, ‘I think the bias is not caused by the difference in territories and races, but rather derived from how much information you have, and what is your logic pattern’ (Lüqiu 2011: 9). It can be seen that the words ‘to be different’ and ‘to find alternatives’ are highly mentioned in her discourses, which is also the core idea in her writing.

\textsuperscript{155} This is the link of Luwei Lüqiu’s first post on the micro-blog of Sina, writing, ‘I just sign up to see what’s the difference between Micro-blog and twitter’. See https://weibo.com/p/1035051189729754/home?is_all=1&firstfeed=1&stat_date=200908&page=1#feedtop

\textsuperscript{156} This is the link of Luwei Lüqiu’s micro-blog on Sina https://weibo.com/luqiuluwei?c=spr_gdzh_bd_360ss_weibo_mr&sudaref=www.so.com&sudaref=passport.weibo.com&display=0&retcode=6102&is_all=1

\textsuperscript{157} This is the link of Luwei Lüqiu’s posts on micro-blog from 1st January to 31st January 2017. See https://weibo.com/luqiuluwei?is_all=1&stat_date=201701#_rnd1523232137524
Luwei Lüqiu established an ‘online media literacy classroom’ on her micro-blog. Until February 2017, it held debates over fifteen topics, and the latest two discussed the national election in the United States. Taking the post on 23rd December 2016 for example, it talked about the issue of ‘fake’ news in the West. As of 9th April 2018 when the data collection was updated, there were more than 240,000 readers of this post. In addition, Luwei Lüqiu often shares some stories from different countries in a succinct language. Luwei Lüqiu acccents facts rather than judgement in the news, which reflects her objectivity and professionalism in her work.

According to the analysis above, this thesis intends to conduct two thorough discussions over Luwei Lüqiu within the entanglement of Braidotti and McRobbie’s thoughts. First, Luwei Lüqiu announced the decision of quitting her job in Phoenix TV to acquire a PhD degree on the micro-blog on 22st May 2015. She wrote that, ‘I like challenge and pressure, and I always ask

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158 There are fifteen posts about media literacy on Luwei Lüqiu’s micro-blog, all of which are written in a very concise way, and in declarative sentences, giving a sense of objectivity and showing her authority in media literacy. The following are the translations of those topics, which can also illustrate the accurate language she employed.

1. Reports of the relationship between American president Donald John Trump and the Russian government;
2. Fake news in the American national election;
3. The production of international news in China;
4. How capital controls media;
5. Could dirty words be used in the news report?
6. How should the media handle with those anonymous sources?
7. The ideas of poll, endorsement, fact check, spin, spin doctor.
8. The analysis of some latest reporting, for example, the divorce of Angelina Jolie Voight and Brad Pitt, Hilary got pneumonia, Chen Guangbiao, one of Chinese rich men.
9. Advertisements and public relations
10. The difference between Government-owned and government-sponsoring media
11. How mass media produce content, distribute products, etc.
12. Six rules of media literacy
13. Media theory of liberalism
14. Media theory in Communist countries
15. The introduction of media literacy

See https://weibo.com/p/103505118929754/wenzhang

159 Luwei Lüqiu has stopped updating her posts on Media Literacy on January 2017.

160 This is the link of Luwei Lüqiu’s announcement on Sina.

https://weibo.com/1189729754/Cj1E7nSGx?from=page_1035051189729754_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#_rnd1523236962684
myself: can I continue this repetitive life? Could I look for another possibility? Is it the time to change my life in my forties? Could I still improve myself at this stage?' With a more critical view of such choices in life, McRobbie argues that occupational identity and the acquisition of qualification have already been used for ranking female subjects of capacity, which means that they are ‘active and aspirational subjects of the education system’ and thus could be regarded as one way of pursuing perfection in women’s life (2009: 73). Instead of examining such phenomenon directly, Braidotti from a different angle of analysis, explains that the exploration of this new female subject is ‘a process, made of constant shifts and negotiations between different levels of power and desire, that is to say wilful choice and unconscious drives’ (2002: 28). In this sense, I argue, the ‘crack and rupture’ between these two approaches motivate the diversity and difference in the femininity. In other words, could the endless exploration of the new female life/subject, or becoming a knowledgeable subject, be one potentiality of alternative femininity? Does it somehow echo with Irigaray’s idea of ‘virtual femininity’? Is it ‘neither one essentialised entity nor an immediately accessible one’ (Braidotti 2002: 29)?

Second, Luwei Lüqiu’s writings on micro-blog reflect the entanglement of ‘performativity’ put forward by Butler (1993) and McRobbie (2009), and ‘mimesis’ in Irigaray (1993a) and Braidotti’s ideas (2002). Judith Butler’s theory of performativity ‘challenged categorical understandings of gender, suggesting that gender is constituted (and reconstituted) through ritualized performances of gender norms’ (Jenkins and Finneman 2018: 157). For her, ‘performativity is not a singular “act”, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of the reiteration’ (Butler 1993: xix-xxi). By contrast, Braidotti adapts Irigaray’s textual and political strategy of ‘mimesis’, and regards it as an ‘affirmative form of deconstruction’.

161 The ‘perfection’ theme has been examined widely and deeply in Lan Yang’s analysis.
The term of ‘mimesis’ is a repetition of ‘imaginary and material institution of femininity’, which is also known as ‘the active subversion’ (2002: 31). What's more, repetition can stimulate the generation of difference, and women then have the possibility of speaking the feminine, ‘think it and represent it in their own terms’ and in Deleuze’s words, ‘this is an active process of becoming’ (Braidotti 2002: 32). When critically reading those two arguments, it is not hard to find that there are some similarities between Butler’s view of ‘instability within construction’ and Braidotti’s proposal that ‘subversion is active’ in the exploration of alternative femininity. In this case, Luwei Lüqiu attempts to demonstrate her exploration of the new female subject through repeating performance. To be specific, she posts daily writing online about international current affairs, media literacy rather than feminine topics, in a rational, objective, fact-oriented writing style and undemonstrative language and tone. It is a challenge to the conventional female self-writing which Jing Chai has done, and therefore can be deemed as an innovative approach that Luwei Lüqiu employs for exploring knowledgeable femininity.

With all the analyses above, could the knowledgeable feature be identified as a potentiality of the ‘new femininity’ of contemporary women? Before answering this question, it is necessary to reflect on: If what Deleuze stresses is ‘the process of becoming’ in the molecular woman, does the ‘knowledgeable femininity’ make sense in the ‘beyond gender’ discourse (Bradotti 2002: 41)? If homosexuality should not be naturally regarded as the opposite to heterosexuality in a complementary sense, as Bradotti argues, does ‘knowledgeable femininity’ embody Deleuze’s ideas of ‘polysexuality’, or ‘the bodies without organs’ in the dephallic style (2002: 82)? My answers here are positive.

162 Further examination of Jing Chai’s affective self-writing can be found in the last chapter.
5.3.2 The ‘Global Girl’ in Hong Kong

Compared with other two women journalists in the cases study, Luwei Lüqiu has a more complex background. She was born to a family in Shanghai that was later torn apart by divorce, and primarily raised by her grandparents. After graduating from Fudan University as a philosophy major, she worked in an international company as an accountant. Subsequently, she immigrated to Hong Kong in 1995, and lived with her mother. In Hong Kong, Luwei Lüqiu was recruited by Phoenix TV, a commercial TV Station headquartered in Hong Kong, as a journalist. At that time, Luwei Lüqiu functioned as a bridge of communication between China mainland and Hong Kong, focusing on the social and political contradiction of the era (Lüqiu 2011: 198). Luwei Lüqiu’s discourses and narratives in hybrid texts also depict and reflect on the desire and anxiety of women to explore new female subjects in Hong Kong. In particular, she portrayed the situation of the ‘mainland girl’ in Hong Kong, including herself.

5.3.2.1 Hong Kong as a ‘Post-handover City’

‘In 1997, Hong Kong changed its sovereignty from a British colony to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)’, and started to pilot Deng Xiaoping’s ‘one country, two systems’ policy (Marchetti 2016: 591). Since its reunification with mainland China in 1997, the special status of Hong Kong as ‘the world city of Asia’ in the past has been challenged. In order to assert its local interests and culture, and remain ‘flexible citizens’ (Aihwa 2006: 89), Hong Kong citizens have negotiated with China mainland in various ways (Marchetti 2016: 593). Women and the media play an important role in this post-handover period. What’s more, Hong Kong citizens have ‘developed a stronger regional identity’ and many people label themselves as ‘Hong Kongers’ (Cheng and Ho 2014: 2).

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163 Phoenix TV’s background has been introduced in the second section of the chapter.
In addition, those global girls who go to Hong Kong’s Universities cannot be ignored. In June 2012, the Hong Kong government announced the ‘Policy Address 2010-2011’ that ‘Moral and National Education’ would replace ‘Moral and Civic Education’ to ‘strengthen national education’, which ‘sparked fierce controversies in Hong Kong’ (Cheng and Ho 2014: 1).

5.3.2.2 ‘Triangle Contact Zone’ for the Global Girl

In her book *Imperial Eyes-Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt comes up with an inventive idea of the ‘contact zone’ (1992: 6), which inspires the following analysis and writing. After studying literary letters of the colonizer and the colonized, she reveals, the ‘contact zone’ is ‘social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination’ (1992: 7). Those early explorers and travellers heading to Africa and South America, eventually, managed to bring wealth and knowledge back to Europe, even though some of them were called ‘innocent explorers’. Therefore, Pratt regards the ‘contact zone’ as ‘the space of imperial encounters’, to highlight ‘the interactive, improvisational dimension which easily was ignored before’ (1992: 8).

Similarly, McRobbie describes her classroom in the university in London as a ‘contact zone’, which is new to her, and should be attached with great importance. The majority of students in McRobbie’s classroom are young women from different countries, with keen interests in the feminism topic, and strong desires to find ‘who I am’ through reading Judith Butler, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, etc. In addition, there is a worrying trend of the ‘ambivalence and uncertainty in the class, and these classrooms echo with a sense of potential, and a female desire to “participate in”’ (McRobbie 2009: 165).
Different from McRobbie and Pratt’s examination on the contact zone, the ‘contact zone’ is employed in a more complicated situation in this thesis. For those ‘global girls’, it was harder to get recognition in the society of Hong Kong and to make sure what kind of women they want to be. The remix of culture from the West, China and post-handover Hong Kong, complicated their identity exploration process. In this sense, women in Hong Kong are regarded as ‘metaphors for social, economic and political change’ in Hong Kong in a global context, which means that Hong Kong women are able to ‘mirror, respond to, reflect upon, and absorb global currents in feminism’ (Marchetti 2016: 593).

Therefore, I argue it as a ‘triangle contact zone’, where Luwei Lüqiu and other global girls could explore new femininity and ‘become’ new female subjects, although the contact zone itself is still full of uncertainty, and even ‘lacking in structure’ (Pratt 1992: 8). Luwei Lüqiu demonstrates the construction of the ‘triangle contact zone’ in Hong Kong through her writings (books and micro-blogging) and lectures, whilst she is also within the zone. Therefore, Luwei Lüqiu is the ‘traveller and “travelee”’ at the same time, which will be further explained in the following section (Pratt 1992: 8).

According to the examination of McRobbie, most of ‘global girls’ for her, are blacks who are ‘invited to be readers of fashion magazines like Vogue or viewers of television programs like Friends, or films like Bridget Jones’s Diary’, and eager to be ‘a global femininity’ (2009: 88). Gayatri Spivak also warns that the West seems to be supportive for young women (most of them are from Third World counties), but actually the intent is to ensure the wide spread of neo-liberalised global capitalism (Spivak 2002: 62). Luwei Lüqiu, however, does not fall in these two categories. She is much more like those who mobilise from the country to city, from the East to West, so as to explore alternative female subjects, which despite the hardness, is really a ‘process’ of
‘becoming’ and ‘a political and conceptual project of transcending the traditional subject-position of Woman as Other of the Same’ (Braidotti 2002: 19).

Among all the autobiographies of Luwei Lüqiu, two of them are about Hong Kong. In the chapter ‘I love Hong Kong’ in ‘I have always been on the Way’ (Wo Yi Chufa) (2003), she recalls the change of her life after she came to Hong Kong. In particular, she talks about her experience in Hong Kong Baptist University, where she got her master’s degree. She writes that ‘within those two years, I have made a lot of improvement up on, my English, my professional knowledge, my international point of view, etc. This is one important reason that I love Hong Kong, the global city’ (2003: 175-176). A strong feeling of ‘love’ penetrates in the text, and she even starts every paragraph with the same sentence structure ‘I love Hong Kong, because...’ Despite the rational writing style and the small number of descriptive adjectives used in her narration as she always did, the place is more than a concept in the geography sense in her writing. A term of the ‘sense of place’ or ‘a writer’s country’ highlights the emotional significance of the place, which is easy to resonate with readers (Krummel 2015: 722). In her writing, readers can identify with her happiness of becoming a new girl in Hong Kong at the very start of her ‘becoming’.

After living in Hong Kong for ten years, Luwei Lüqiu gradually developed the self-identification as a Hong Kong citizen, according to her writings in a chapter titled ‘I am a Hong Konger’ in the book Bias (Pianjian) (2011). In particular, she recognises Hong Kong as a city were well known for ‘respecting personal rights, pursuing freedom, and holding sympathy with everyone’ (2011: 205) in an effort to shape a ‘home’ belonging and transnational identities (Christou 2006: 76). In addition, she labels herself as a ‘Hong Konger’ rather than a Chinese, as she writes, ‘many people from China mainland react very strongly
and interpret it in an ideological sense. Due to such self-identification, they label me as the one who has superiority, hypocrisy and vanity especially when they know I was born in Shanghai’ (2011: 88). She attempts to confront the challenge directly and provide the controversy with a discussion space on her books as well as on her micro-blog (which will be discussed further in the following part). It is a commitment of her to asserting the diversity and difference as a positive and alternative value (Braidotti 2002: 28).

The writing in these two books reveals how Luwei Lüqiu ‘becomes a global girl/woman’. At the beginning, she ‘feels everything is good...thank god for letting me be one part of the city’ (2003: 175-177). The writing is featured by a really positive tone and religious implications that she has not employed before. Gradually, she becomes more rational to focus on analysing the culture and politics in Hong Kong in her following books (Lüqiu 2011). She tries to transform from a girl who enjoys the ‘good thing’ in Hong Kong to be a more critical observer. Through such discursive practice, Luwei Lüqiu keeps pushing her readers towards a new, rather than an established form of female subjects.

The more dominant topics of Lüqiu Luwei’s microblogs are world politics, economy, and public affairs, etc. There are few discussions over conventional ‘feminine’ topics such as food, fashion and consumerism. Luwei Lüqiu writes the posts on microblogs and four autobiographies in a terse, direct, and

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164 To randomly take Luwei Lüqiu’s posts from 1st October to 30th October as an example, she mainly focused on political topics like riots in Catalan, American President Election, Gun Control in the U.S.A, and on her lecture in the University about propaganda. In addition, she paid attention to sex and gender. For example, she recommended two documentaries. One is about Lady Gaga, while the other The Ascent of Woman produced by BBC. Meanwhile, she covered a Netflix original documentary, Joan Didion-The Center Will Not Hold. There are two posts about the freedom in divorce in China, and a paper discussed about feminism. Further analysis of Luwei Lüqiu’s micro-blog will be taken in the following sections.

https://weibo.com/luqiuluwei?is_all=1&stat_date=201710#feedtop
reasonable style, showing the frankness and spontaneity in her personality.\textsuperscript{165} From 2009 to 10\textsuperscript{th} April 2018,\textsuperscript{166} there are one thousand and seven posts with the key word ‘Hong Kong’ on Luwei Lüqiu’s microblog, all of which can be divided into three general types, including public and political affairs happened in Hong Kong;\textsuperscript{167} controversial news reports about Hong Kong, especially those relating to China mainland;\textsuperscript{168} and her personal life in Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{169} The language used in those posts is very terse, and constituted by short sentences. Moreover, the structure of these posts is simple and direct.

What’s more, there are one hundred and thirty posts about the ‘female’, which cover diversified topics of women, ranging from culture, politics, and the economic sphere. The titles of the posts are ‘Women’s Fight for Independence in the History’,\textsuperscript{170} ‘The Attitude of Cross-National Marriage, a Country’s Open Degree’,\textsuperscript{171} ‘Beauty Pageant with Difference’,\textsuperscript{172} etc. All those lexis and

\textsuperscript{165} Four autobiographies have been analysed in the chapter of Luwei Lüqiu, including ‘I have always been on the Way’ (Wo Yi Chufa)(2003), ‘Bias’ (Bufen Dongxi) (2011), ‘Battlefield Journal in Libya’ (Libiya Zhandi Riji) (2011), ‘Rose in her Journey’ (Xingzou Zhong De Meigui) (2012).

\textsuperscript{166} The day of 10\textsuperscript{th} April, 2018 is the final day of updating the analysis source, since this thesis is required to be submitted on 8\textsuperscript{th} May 2018.

\textsuperscript{167} Women’s march on the women’s festival is a typical example, with the link as below. See https://weibo.com/1189729754/G6mw7iAHs?from=page_1035051189729754_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#_rnd1523283967558

\textsuperscript{168} There is a report about a child from China mainland, peed on the street when he travelled in Hong Kong with his parents, triggering a big argument between Hong Kong and China mainland. Luwei Lüqiu supported those people mostly from Hong Kong, and indicated that it was not right to pee on the street. Many readers from China mainland criticised Luwei Lüqiu for her intolerance of people from China mainland, although she is also from the same place. See https://weibo.com/1189729754/B1bw7ca4U?from=page_1035051189729754_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment

\textsuperscript{169} The sunset in Hong Kong. See https://weibo.com/1189729754/CtPUgefW7?from=page_1035051189729754_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#_rnd1523285195574

\textsuperscript{170} See https://weibo.com/1189729754/Ga0BBfiB0?from=page_1035051189729754_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment

\textsuperscript{171} The discussion of cross-national marriage with the title the attitude of cross-national marriage, a country’s open degree.
language employed in the posts, as well as those photos uploaded on the microblog have illustrated Luwei Lüqiu’s efforts in exploring the ‘alternative femininity’. By means of such discursive practice, Luwei Lüqiu has explored and constructed a knowledgeable matrix including feminism discussions, serious news, etc., all of which are conventionally identified as non-feminine. Luwei Lüqiu regards the micro-blog as a platform to communicate with her students and other netizens. She explores a space for experimentation by women and for women to ‘escape from sexual sameness, i.e., identification with male phallus’ (Irigaray 1977: 105).

Since 30th July 2015, Luwei Lüqiu started to engage in a thirty minutes online radio programme named ‘Weekly talk in America’ to introduce politics and culture in the U.S.A. At that time, she had quit her job in Phoenix TV and went to America for her PhD research. Subsequently, she updates three programmes including Hilary and Trump in American election satiric culture, The Pre-President who moved out of the White House, and Is American National Election a money politics? It could also be regarded as ‘practical in the sense of pointing to a solution in praxis, in “doing”’ (Braidotti 2002: 33). However, it is worthy of mark that except Luwei Lüqiu as a female anchor in the programme, there are two males guests, which leaves more spaces for further discussion.

After Luwei Lüqiu got her master degree in Hong Kong Baptist University, she began to lecture one module for graduate students in this university in 2007. Ninety percent of the students attending her module are from mainland China,

See.https://weibo.com/1189729754/G5sYrcUPb?from=page_1035051189729754_profile&wvr=6 &mod=weibotime&type=comment

172 The news report is about beauty pageant with difference in Peru, which does not take body measures, but rather highlights the statistics of violence against women. See.https://weibo.com/1189729754/Ft8Toci5C?from=page_1035051189729754_profile&wvr=6 &mod=weibotime&type=comment#_rnd1523335895815

173 See https://weibo.com/p/10151501_100276589/hot?from=page_101515&mod=TAB#place
and about seventy percent of them are women. In her book *Bias (Pianjian)*, she describes those ‘global girls’ as very competitive and always fighting for a decent outcome, at the cost of enjoying the process (2011: 71). This phenomenon is partially caused by the ‘mother culture’ in China, a country with the biggest population in the world, where girls grow up with this competitive rhetoric. Those ‘global girls’ (born after the 1990s) are different from Luwei Lüqiu and her peers, they grow up in a higher living standard, with a more open-minded and individual personality. As Luwei Lüqiu writes in her book *Bias*, ‘those girls are much more pragmatic. When they are in the university, they always want to learn skills rather than knowledge, and this partially explains why many girls choose finance and business management as their majors’ (2011: 69). ‘Knowledge’ here is identified as non-pragmatic, or in Foucault’s argument, ‘Knowledge is an “invention”, behind which is: an interplay of instincts, impulses, desires, fear, will to appropriation’ (1997: 14). Therefore, those global girls, including Lüqiu Luwei at her younger age, aspire for ‘knowledge’ and crave for the abilities and power to be part of the international market.

McRobbie argues that the modernity of global girls is featured by their pursuit of freedom, enjoyment of self-beauty, their ‘youthfulness and latent powers and waiting to be unleashed’ (2009: 89). However, girls in China are not so passive, and in such inferior status. The majority of ‘global girls’ are from middle-class, or at least low middle-class families who fully support them to get further education and training from ‘different culture’, so as ‘to broad the view’, even though it still reaffirms the patriarchy that takes the daughter as the only hope of a family, and higher education as one of the routes to higher social status. Undoubtedly, some developed Western countries like the United States, the United Kingdom and so on, are the main targets of those ‘global girls’, but Hong Kong is also one of their favourites. Hong Kong is regarded as ‘a port city open to American influence, British colonial administration, and a cosmopolitan
outlook’, with a reputation for the quality education system, pedagogy, comparatively lower tuition fee, geographical proximity and cultural similarity in China mainland (Marchetti 2016: 598). All of these factors are appealing to young women.

Admittedly, the act of going to Hong Kong is not sufficient to pave a way for merging into the global economy, but the opportunities for upward social mobility and potential new privileges still encourage these young women to seize all possible opportunities (Spivak 2002: 51). As mentioned above, Luwei Lüqiu once lectured one module for graduate students in Hong Kong Baptist University, called *International News Reporting*. She included gender-related topics in her module, in an effort to provide these global girls with a space to discuss and think about gender, discourse and power, thus improving their critical awareness (Lazar 2005: 15). Luwei Lüqiu also invited her friends to be guest lecturers such as Jane, who was a woman journalist in the Pakistan branch of *New York Times*. Nevertheless, there are some other elements also involved into the ‘triangle contact zone’, which should not be ignored. The pedagogy of Luwei Lüqiu’s module as well as other modules in Hong Kong’s universities is pursuant to the rule in Western Countries, especially the UK. All the textbooks are English original editions, or written by Hong Kong professors in English.\(^\text{174}\)

The above analysis has explained the complexity of ‘triangle contact zone’, especially for global girls. On one hand, Luwei Lüqiu has made great efforts exploring new female subjectivity, through her multiple discursive practices to call upon more feminism discussions and more possible formal modes of political engagements, in ‘roaming, nomadic and rhizomatic’ way, probably; on the other hand, there are still many obstacles within the ‘triangle contact zone’, as have been stated above. However, no matter what, it still could be argued

\(^{174}\) Most of professors in Hong Kong’s universities have gotten their degree in western countries.
that the process/project of exploring ‘alternative femininity’ is how ‘he or she is motivated by the political consciousness of inequalities and is committed to asserting diversity and difference as a positive and alternative value’, and the ‘triangle contact zone’, is a space of experimentation by women, where is definitely worthy of giving it a try (Braidotti 2002: 29).

Conclusion

This chapter has made many efforts to explore the alternative femininity through Luwei Lüqiu’s various discursive practices. Luwei Lüqiu’s contradictory ideas of conventional beauty and self-recognition have been analyzed in the first section of the chapter. ‘Professional beautifying’ and ‘Faking praising rhetoric’ have also been proposed, which has also revealed the difficulty of the exploration. What’s more, the critically discussion of theories of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Angela McRobbie, Rosi Braidotti, Gilles Deleuze, Luce Irigaray, and so on, has provided strong theoretical framework for the analysis of the last section. The positive ‘difference’ and the ‘crack and rupture’ have been highlighted for new female subjectivity. The ‘knowledgeable femininity’ and ‘triangle contact zone’ are the two key arguments that this thesis has proposed for potential alternatives. More importantly, the discussions on the ‘alternative femininity’ and ‘triangle contact zone’ could serve to open up a new space for future development of more enlightening further ideas.
Conclusion

To describe the on-going situation of understanding femininity, Marnina Gonick in the concluding chapter of her book, metaphorically states that she is going to unfold ‘a discourse map’ of femininity and ‘persuade a recalcitrant visitor’ to ‘revisit sites of special interest, and trace alternate routes’ with her (2003: 161). In a more confident manner, I will invite every reader who has gone through the whole long journey together to celebrate the new findings arrived at during this process. However, my conclusion is not intended to simply repeat or bind all the discussions showed in the previous chapters, not least the main argument has already been developed throughout this thesis. In other words, it is not a stable, fixed, and complete ‘ending’ of my examination of ‘new femininity’ and ‘postfeminism’ in contemporary China, but rather implies more potentialities based on summarisation and expansion.

This thesis achieves something of a breakthrough in its foregrounding of women journalists, as a specific profession and a female subject within the intersection of political, cultural and social sites. As mentioned in the literature review, there is a gap in exploring women journalists’ subjectivity in the academic circle. Only a negligible number of studies investigate it in a journalistic theory framework, or review the more general ideas of its history, which in many cases is already outdated. For instance, when probing into the topic of female journalists in China, many scholars both from home and abroad are inclined to put emphasis on their activities in The May Fourth Movement in 1919,\textsuperscript{175} which has been regarded as the commencement of China’s pursuit of modernization. It is regretful that little attention within the Westerncentric scholarship is devoted to women in contemporary China, not to mention,

\textsuperscript{175} The movement was launched mainly by students when the Chinese government then was forced to sign the Sino Japanese unjust treaty.
research on women journalists in neoliberal and postfeminist China. Therefore, in an effort to fill in this gap, this thesis is zooming in one of the most active, fluid, unpredictable subjects- women journalists- and interrogating the power of producing and reproducing their female subjectivity through multiple discursive practices.

This thesis is carried out in the context of neoliberal China, even though it has never been admitted by the Chinese government that China is neoliberal. The startling transformation economically and ideologically from ‘the collective-oriented socialism to the post-reform market-driven post-socialism’ (Zhang 2014: 41), has brought huge effects on the life of individuals in China, especially on women were subjugated for hundreds of years in feudal China. After being erased from the official discourse and record for centuries, women now come back to the centre of neoliberal discourses, although in an ‘unhappy’ way. As a result, female subjectivity has been disrupted by the entanglement of neoliberalism, consumerism and post feminism In China. In addition, this thesis clarifies the different identification and explanation of post feminism, such as ‘a backlash against feminism’ (Faludi 1991), ‘a distinctive sensibility’ (Gill 2007), and ‘a double entanglement of a “doing” and “undoing” feminism’ (McRobbie 2004). All of these arguments and examinations lay a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis in the main body.

What’s more, taking new femininity as the focus, this thesis regards the struggle, resistance and negotiation reflected in women journalists’ discursive practices of new femininity as constitutive of subjectivity. The analysis is also inspired by Lawrence Grossberg’s statement that everyone exists within what he calls the ‘strata’ of subjectivity (1993: 30). In this thesis, femininity is one

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176 More explanations in detail of women have been done in the literature review chapter.
particular position within that strata, where women achieve self-positioning through various discursive practices. Therefore, as discussed in the previous chapters, femininity is a slippery term that is really hard to pin down (Holland 2004: 2), since there is ‘always more to the story’ according to the argument of Deborah Britzman (1998: 321). The story of feminism is not only about the problematisation of femininity within the body and mind, but also acknowledges the productive role of specific modalities of power in various subject positions (Gonick 2003: 10).

In order to tell a ‘good’ story in the main body of this thesis, three dimensions of new femininity have been stressed in the main body of analysis for the first time, in which femininity is not taken just as ‘a solitary quality or inherent characteristics of particular sexed bodies’, but rather ‘an expression of certain kind of discursive practices’ (Gonick 2003: 13).

The option of taking Lan Yang as one of the cases study in this thesis is not only driven by her national reputation, but also ascribed to her transformation from a woman journalist into a cultural entrepreneur, indicating the emergence of commercial femininity in China. During the analysis, ‘perfection’ is regarded as one of the key themes that shape the mediated self-presentation of Lan Yang due to the entanglement of neoliberalism, consumerism and postfeminism. This thesis has conducted a detailed analysis of how Lan Yang deploys autobiographical writings to define the ‘top girl’ and the ‘having it all’ lifestyle, which is extremely appealing to those ambitious and upward young women in China. On the one hand, the ‘Only One Child’ policy in China has placed a lot of pressure on the child in a family since it was issued in 1980. In particular, girls have been taught that they have much more weaknesses in their work and family lives within the conventional gender discourse. On the other hand, as Deng Xiaoping announced the Open-Reform policy in the 1980s, and President Xi Jinping stated ‘happiness is achieved through hard work’ on New
Year’s Eve of 2018, women have become one of the most anxious groups to be pushed for never-stopping self-development. ‘Affluent, middle-class maternity’, for example, a ‘well groomed and manicured appearance, with an equally attractive baby and husband’, is taken as the post-feminist masquerade, re-assuring the dominant power of patriarchy in gender (McRobbie 2013: 131).

Furthermore, this thesis has found that Lan Yang disguises the neoliberal hegemony in feminist discourses as indicated by several chapters in her autobiographies, ‘what is equality for a woman?’, ‘independence manifesto of a woman’, etc. Through such radically de-politicised discourse or through the agency of ‘gentle neoliberal feminism’, she accumulates adequate cultural capital together with her husband. For example, when being asked about how to be a mother and keep a stable, happy family, Lan Yang is inclined to make more neoliberal suggestions such as being self-responsible and training oneself as a super-mum, which is evident to shy away from the direct confrontation with hegemony. At the same time, the neoliberal rhetoric of ‘self-governance’ in her family has resonated with the traditional virtue of women in Confucian discourses in a modern sense,177 which may double the ‘entanglement’ of hegemony on Chinese women.

To make matters worse, she has developed into a celebrated agency of neoliberal governmentality by closely connecting with the government such as devoting herself to winning the hosting of 2008 Summer Olympic Games and 2020 Winter Olympic Games for China. In addition, the hiatus of non-elite women in Lan Yang’s multiple texts has been interrogated in this thesis. The main target readers of Lan Yang are those A-list top girls who have much more ‘power’ and aspiration in consumption, with a strong desire to be a member of

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177 A woman’s ultimate moral obligation was to serve the patriline into which she married, in Confucianism (Ko et al. 2003: 219)
the international market. What Lan Yang and her readers have in common is their admiration for Western culture and values, especially the American and the Britain ones. As analysed in the third chapter, Lan Yang went to Columbia University for a masters degree, which is deemed as one of the most important reasons that she has changed her life and gotten so much ‘accomplishment’. Moreover, Lan Yang’s global relationship (mainly from Western Countries) has also contributed to her highly independent female image and charming femininity (Yang and Zhu 2011: 230-235). McRobbie tends to describe those young women as ‘self-adornment, and the playfully seductive with the innocent, so as to suggest a sexuality which is youthful, latent and waiting to be unleashed’ (2009: 89). However, these so called global girls are actually more utilitarian, pragmatic and goal-oriented, according to the findings in this thesis. Regardless of their description, they have re-colonised and re-shaped the racial hierarchy within the realm of normative femininity (McRobbie 2009: 89).

Through participant observation and interviews I conducted for this research, this thesis has also highlighted the contradiction of discourses, verifying the tension between Lan Yang’s self-representation and its mediated presentation. What’s more, mediated authenticity on social media has already been discussed in this thesis. To be specific, both self-branding and self-promotion have become a ‘must-have’ ability of post feminist celebrities including Lan Yang. In addition, viewers of social media have been invited to join the camp of policing and evaluating femininity, which is in line with Akane’s argument about how ‘post femininity is offered up for the audiences’ disciplinary viewing pleasure’ (2015: 328). Therefore, in this image-saturated society, personal thought and feeling can be transmitted in almost every moment through networked intimacies, and how to live on social media has also become a crucial life skill of women (Schwarz 2011).
The final analysis in the case study of Lan Yang has focused on body/appearance presented in her commercial advertisement. Self-represented as a fashion-smart woman, Lan Yang has given a ‘commodity solution’ to a happy, middle-class life through free consumption.

In a word, ‘the perfection’, ‘having it all’, ‘happiness’, ‘self-branding’, and so on, have been defined as ‘technologies of femininity’ in this thesis, by drawing on Foucault’s concept of ‘technologies of self’. Women are indoctrinated with the idea that one may ‘attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality’ by obtaining those technologies (Foucault 1988: 18). Moreover, Butler’s notion of performativity here has also opened up the ‘possibility for different forms of repetition that enable parody, subversion and pleasure’ (Evans, Riley and Shankar 2010: 126). It is worthy of attention that the government and commence have converged in a more subtle way, resulting in a complicated and even fatal consequence in contemporary China. What’s more, the analysis and writing in this chapter have developed an in-depth understanding of ‘commercial femininity’ as well as the power underneath it.

Jing Chai, becomes a public figure with a completely different image and background, and her presence is also controversial in China. In this thesis, Jing Chai is the representative of ‘affective femininity’, another emergent form of femininity in China. Her therapeutic reporting, trauma writing and other multiple media discursive practices including visual, verbal and non-verbal discourses, have been examined broadly and deeply in this thesis. It is poignant that more attention of feminist scholars should be devoted to news reporting, political documentary, etc., instead of merely focusing on the products of popular culture such as chick-lit movies, commercial advertising, soap drama, fashion magazines. This research has actively engaged with such interdisciplinary study.
In the first section of the chapter, much emphasis has been placed upon the tension between male-oriented investigative journalism and Jing Chai’s feminine therapeutic reporting and autobiographical writing. As Foucault argues, ‘writing will exert in the domain of the inner impulses of the soul’ and it could be regarded as ‘a weapon in spiritual combat’, which has highlighted ‘the role of writing in the philosophical cultivation of the self’ (Foucault 1997: 208).

Therefore, the chapter has summarised three features of Jing Chai’s multiple media writing and reporting, to point up her self-exploration of a ‘new woman’ and expand the interpretation of ‘affective femininity’.

The feminine verbal and non-verbal language in Jing Chai’s reporting has been remarked and branded as one of her traits. During the interview, Jing Chai tends to use a soft-low-voice and feminine body language such as sympathetic eye-contact with interviewees, hand-touching etc., which is easy to resonate with the audience. Given the higher acceptance of news stories as well as the value and moral delivered in the reporting, Jing Chai’s female softness in news reporting, has been employed as one of the important approaches to the re-legislation and re-consolidation of authority by the state-press and the government. At the same time, in this way, Jing Chai’s female softness has been politicalised to cater for the ideological intention of the state press.

Two types of sayings in Jing Chai’s quotation in her news reporting and writing have already been extracted for the discourse analysis, which also distinguishes Jing Chai from other female journalists. One is from Confucianism, and it is usually regarded as the male’s wisdom. It is evident that the tension between Jing Chai’s feminine image and male-oriented Confucianism language usage has complicated her mediated subjectivity, and illustrates the complication of exploring the new female subject in
contemporary China. The other comes from sayings of artists and poets employed to express Jing Chai’s personal feelings, which are however not deployed frequently in conventional news reporting (Roger and Thorson 2003). It has blurred the boundary of facts and feelings, of the public and privacy, of politics and entertainment, which might invent ‘soft or cosy’ politics, based on the analysis in this thesis.

The trauma writing of Jing Chai has been further analysed in this thesis, from the perspective of its close relationship with the body, the subject, women and history. It is considered that the writing about the trauma of women allows readers to access the subjective experience of women (Griffiths 2009). Therefore, this thesis has focused on Jing Chai’s writing in her autobiographies to demonstrate how she finds a way to self-identification. Moreover, this thesis pays special attention to several discursive practices employed by Jing Chai. There are two traumas depicted in her writings, namely, the suicide of children in Shuangcheng, the western rural area of China, and the Tangshan Earthquake, one of the largest disasters happened in 1976 in China. As this thesis has argued, through the female first-person narration and the cinematic and fictional style of depiction, Jing Chai has self-represented as a therapist rather than a journalist. In particular, she exposes her own traumatic experience during interviews as well as in her writings, which therefore has led the former to be named as the ‘performative interview’. Additionally, she takes advantage of some other discursive practices like ‘speaking wound’, personal emotion injection, so as to resonate with readers, especially those in the inferior position (Caruth 1996: 26). It is clear that although Jing Chai’s trauma writing is aimed at the foregrounding of those ever-neglected voices from women in the history, her affective discursive practices, as analysed in this chapter, have diluted/weakened the powerful/intense interrogation of ideological and political problems behind these stories.
In order to further examine the ‘affective femininity’, this thesis has also looked into Jing Chai, as a mediated celebrity figure. The image of an austere woman who has little care for wealth, and a mother fighting for her daughter, has been interrogated deeply in this thesis. In particular, this thesis has analysed how ‘austerity’ develops from the traditional notion of Confucianism to the modern discourse in China for the first time. This is especially true of the newest statement about ‘austerity’ in President Xi Jinping’s speech to the 13th National People’s Congress in 2018 which has provided a broad and proper context for Jing Chai’s case. Always wearing plain outfits in front of the camera, Jing Chai comes from an average family and has more than ten years’ experience of living in a rented house in Beijing, all of which has been framed as austere virtues. In addition, Jing Chai achieves success in profession depending on her thrifty and hardworking spirit, encapsulating the femininity that a neoliberal female subject should embody.

The participant observation in the field work in China Central Television Station detailed in this thesis also contributes to a further understanding of Jing Chai, by drawing on Joan Riviere’s ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’ (1991). However, there are some differences between the case in Riviere’s writing and Jing Chai in this thesis. To be specific, Riviere’s notion of ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’ is more radical, since the patient in her writings presents herself as a castrated woman, rather than a phallic one, in order to relieve man’s anger (1991). By contrast, Jing Chai’s case is more subtle, which can perhaps be taken as a positive development from Riviere’s argument. In the section of analysis, this thesis has explored the tension between Jing Chai and her male colleagues in the workplace. The argument has been made that no matter how confident Jing Chai is of her equality with male peers as she has written in her autobiography, she has chosen to disguise herself, and display her masculinity to men as a ‘game’, or a ‘joke’ (Riviere 1991: 96).
The analysis of Luwei Lüqiu is a particularly exciting part of this thesis. It has drawn critically on the theories of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Angela McRobbie, Rosi Braidotti, Gilles Deleuze, and Luce Irigaray, to explain the most complex entanglement of ‘doing’ and ‘undoing’ of femininity, and to explore new possibilities of femininity, namely the ‘alternative femininity’ described in this thesis. To be specific, according to Butler, ‘the category of “sex” is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called “a regulatory ideal”’ (1993: xi). In other words, as this thesis has illustrated, ‘sex is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs’ (Butler 1993: xi). Luwei Lüqiu is regarded as a good place to start to open up a ‘new world’ in this thesis.

Luwei Lüqiu’s contradictory ideas of conventional beauty and self-recognition have been analysed in the first section of the chapter that focus on her and her work. Always regarded as an unconventionally beautiful woman, Luwei Lüqiu still puts many writings and arguments in her autobiographies, interviews and speeches to do with the topic of beauty and appearance, even though she has been self-represented as a woman who does not care about her appearance. As this thesis has argued, she replaces the term ‘beauty’ with a more vague one ‘lovely’, and stresses ‘confidence’ and ‘humour’ as the ‘attractiveness’ of a woman, which undoubtedly shows her inner-underlying yearning for conventional beauty. Furthermore, it has stated that beauty is actually ‘an expression of power relations’ (Wolf 1991: 12), and ‘stabilizes and enables hierarchies’ (Figueroa 2013: 146). It is the entanglement of ‘accommodation’ and ‘resistance’ that forcibly reiterates the conventional norms of beauty and femininity, as well as the power underneath.

There was another enlightening finding of ‘professional beautifying’ and ‘faking praising rhetoric’ present during participant observation and interviews I have
conducted for this research, and this thesis has proposed examining them within the context of post feminism. ‘Professional beautifying’ especially has been differentiated in this thesis from its Western counterparts. Instead of using the direct ‘mean girl discourse’ such as ‘stupid belly’, Chinese middle class women prefer faking praising rhetoric when confronted with the extraordinary praising consumer-oriented language, which is however much more ‘poisonous’ in the exploration of the new female subject (Riley, Evans and Mackiewicz 2016: 108).

In addition, the examination of Luwei Lüqiu’s war reporting is thought-provoking. ‘Rose in the War’ has been the most recognised brand of Luwei Lüqiu, since she is the first Chinese women journalist who has ever been to the frontline of the war. It is found that there is a contradiction between Luwei Lüqiu’s self-representation as a professional de-gendered journalist and the paradoxical branding strategy of Phoenix TV. Despite her effort to go deep into the dangerous place in the war for reporting, the news itself was not prioritised by Phoenix TV. Conversely, the tired, pale, wounded image of Luwei Lüqiu was continually broadcast on TV. It was employed by Phoenix TV as a ‘selling point’ for commercial promotion. More importantly, as this thesis has argued, the tension between Luwei Lüqiu’s mediated feminine image without conventional beauty, and the cruel, destroying power of the war reflected on TV has dramatised her new femininity’s exploration in the war.

All the discussions and analyses of Luwei Lüqiu in this thesis have shown the complexity of exploring alternative femininity in contemporary China. The writing of this chapter is greatly inspired by Rosi Braidotti, a famous feminist theorist who proposes the positive ‘difference’. However, this thesis neither employs directly the whole repertoire of Braidotti’s theory, nor totally abandons that of Foucault’s. It is the ‘cracks and fissures’, in McRobbie’s words, that open the transformation from normative femininity to alternative femininity
(2009: 159). Meanwhile, this thesis stresses the necessity of introducing different ‘conceptual tools and ethics’ to the whole conventional rhetoric (Braidotti and Regan 2017: 175). Braidotti depicts the female subject of knowledge as ‘rhizomatic’ in a net, and the body as a ‘dynamic process of embodied interactions’ (2014: 239). Therefore, She should not exist because of being different from He, which means that she must reprocess the imagination of herself, to realise, what Braidotti argues, the ‘virtual feminine’ (2003: 51).

Based on the previous analysis, this thesis has proposed the ‘knowledgeable femininity’ as one of the potentialities of ‘alternative femininity’ through exploring Luwei Lüqiu’s discursive practices in autobiographies, on social media, and her teaching experience in Hong Kong Baptism University. To be specific, Luwei Lüqiu writes her autobiographies in ‘more analytic over emotional’ and ‘investigative over non-investigative’ style, which is antithetical to the emotional, affective narration and language that Jing Chai has used. Instead of telling the stories of her own and victims in the war, Luwei Lüqiu is devoted to uncovering the cause of the war. It can be seen as an ‘interactive process that brings forth complex aspects of our existence, especially our own implication with power’ (Braidotti 2002: 231).

This thesis has also highlighted two aspects of ‘knowledgeable femininity’ through critically investigating the entanglement of Braidotti and McRobbie’s thoughts. One is about Luwei Lüqiu’s reflection on her further study for acquiring the Master and PhD degree. According to McRobbie, it can be deemed as the endless post feminist pursuit of ‘perfection’, while Braidotti regards it as a ‘process of shifts and negotiation of power and desires’ (2002: 28). In this thesis, it is an exploration of alternative femininity within the ‘crack and rupture’. The other is about Luwei Lüqiu’s discursive practices on social media through examining the entanglement of ‘performativity’ in Butler and
McRobbie's argument as well as the 'mimesis' put forward by Irigaray and Braidotti. I have argued that, the 'knowledgeable femininity' makes sense in the 'beyond gender' discourse, and has the potential of embodying Deleuze's idea of 'polysexuality' (Bradotti 2003: 50).

In the final section of this thesis, a new notion of ‘triangle contact zone’ has been proposed as the potential space/hub for exploring alternative femininity. Luwei Lüqiu's writings (books and posts on the micro-blog), and lectures, in, for and about ‘Hong Kong’ have been assumed as a potential form of the zone. Based on the development of Luwei Lüqiu’s writings in her two autobiographies, it has been argued that there is a ‘process’ of ‘becoming’ and ‘a political and conceptual project of transcending the traditional subject-position of Woman as Other of the Same’ (Braidotti 2002: 29). In the end, Luwei Lüqiu’s effort to call upon more feminism discussions and more possible formal modes of political engagements has been pointed up as an important approach to the exploration of 'alternative femininity'.

It is worthy of remark that the methodology employed in this thesis as the ending for the first section of this chapter. As Patti Lather argues, feminist researchers have struggled within multiple research paradigms to highlight ‘the contestability of modernism’s truth claims about women’ (1991: 20). Therefore, this thesis has provided a possibility of different approaches. ‘Feminist Discourse analysis’ is critically developed from discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and feminist critical discourse analysis. What’s more, this thesis has also deployed the approach of interdisciplinary research, participant observation and semi-structure interview as a proper supplement to bring out more interesting qualitative details.

**Post Femininity or Post-post Feminism?**
It is the ‘most bewildering time in the history of sexual politics’, as Rosalind Gill argues (2016: 613). Within another theory framework, Homi Bhabha theorises the liminal place of ambivalence, and terms it as ‘the third space’ (1990: 209). For Bhabha, ‘the third space’ is the point from which one might have the possibility of ‘going beyond the contained grid of fixed identities and binary opposition through the production of hybrid cultural forms and meanings’ (1990: 208). Or in his own words, ‘this third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives’ (Bhabha 1990: 211). This thesis does not recognise his intention of breaking the continuity of history. However, it has to admit that ‘the third space’ resonates with the ‘triangle contact zone’, in the sense of disrupting the fixity of ‘new femininity’, the ‘new female subject’ and exploring alternatives. Or in radical words from Minh-ha Trinh, ‘not quite the Same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out...her intervention is necessarily that of both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider’ (1991: 74). This thesis adheres to the exploration of ‘the difference’ and keeps on looking for every potential definition of alternatives.

When it comes to the stories written and represented by women journalists, the dramatic tension building around the crisis/uncertainty of ‘new femininity’, is a fascinating start for departure.

The job for a woman journalist is full of pressure.\textsuperscript{178}

The family is much more important than your job, and that's the reason I had a second baby.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{178} It was from the interview of Bing Zhu, who works in the Sun Media (Lan Yang’s company), 42 years old. The interview was taken in the office room on 20\textsuperscript{th} November 2015. Please see the records of this interview and field notes in Appendices page 11.

\textsuperscript{179} It was from the interview of Yunhuan Fan, who works in China Central Television, 35 years old. The interview was taken in the meeting room on 22\textsuperscript{th} February 2013. Please see the records of this interview and field notes in Appendices page 12.
It is not quite different as a journalist, regardless of your gender.\(^{180}\)

You have to admit that you have some advantages as a woman journalist, since sometimes you can show your weakness, and no one will blame you.\(^{181}\)

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All those vivid but contradictory discourses from the interviews conducted for this research has shown woman’s on-going struggle for ‘self-understanding’ and ‘becoming somebody’. Meanwhile, these discourses challenge the conventional notion of female subjectivity and the authoritative discourse of femininity as I have examined in the previous chapters.

In the article ‘When Was the Post-colonial?’, Stuart Hall raises a question that whether the word ‘post’ always and necessarily means ‘after’ (1996: 12). Following his thought, this thesis has moved beyond ‘a take-for-granted and unquestioned assumption of displacement’ (Gill 2016: 622). It is not about how the new automatically displaces the old, but rather is related to a much more complicated situation where ‘multiple and contradictory ideas could co-exist at the same time and space’ (Gill 2016: 622). This thesis has carried out a thorough examination of the entanglement of the ‘doing’ and ‘undoing’ of ‘new femininity’.

Post feminism, as I have analysed as a controversial term, has been called into questions. As what I have illustrated before, there is neither the offer of progressive or backlash linear story, nor their associated or subsequent effects

\(^{180}\) It was from the interview of Xiaojun Guan, who works in Phoenix TV, 30 years old. The interview was taken in the coffee room on 29th August 2013. Please see the records of this interview and field notes in Appendices page 17.

\(^{181}\) It was from the interview of Lin Chen, who works in Phoenix TV, 32 years old. The interview was taken in the coffee room on 25th August 2013. Please see the records of this interview and field notes in Appendices page 15.
of hope or despair. The relationship between postfeminism and feminism is much more complicated. From the posts and comments on Luwei Lüqiu’s microblog, it can be inferred that there are feminist activities around the world; whereas women in some countries still suffer from sexual harassment; some people are willing to cheer for the success of women, while others may outpour their feelings of misogyny. Therefore, within the postfeminist media culture in this highly mediated society, feminism is not presented as ‘in retreat’, but rather is ‘co-opted, selectively taken up, derided, and entangled in complex ways’ (Gill 2016: 621). The moment when this thesis was approaching its conclusion, there were some ‘new’ situations emerging across the world. Therefore, I argue, it is necessary and critical to have a constantly updated understanding of the constant emerging new situation, or at least, some new features. There will be ‘a comforting illusion’, as Gill argues, ‘when the blurring pixels offer up a momentary glimpse of clarity’ (2016: 613-614).

As what I have illustrated before, this thesis has tried to interrogate how the mediated women journalists’ discursive practices have personalised and trivialised the real problem of gender politics in the neoliberal and postfeminist China. It is always focused on individual issues rather than the structural or systemic ones. To make matters worse, nothing has been found connecting with other inequalities located within the broader context of China. For example, in Lan Yang’s self-help autobiographies, the promotion of ‘self-love and self-esteem’, ‘being confident’, and so on, has been taken as a good solution to gender injustice. No one has ever attempted to connect it with the social and political transformation. All the psychologised discourses have also been entangled with Chinese traditional morality, Daoism and Confucianism, for instance, in contemporary China. What’s more, as this thesis has argued, the furious discussion about new femininity in media, with women journalists as the important embodiment, has been deployed by the Chinese government, as a political agenda, to distract viewers from the real issues in the system. It
also explains why the three women journalists are chosen as case studies in this thesis. Their discursive practices exemplify the trend of an unjust system. This is also one of the contributions this thesis has made to the research literature.

Simidele Dosekun argues that feminist cultural scholars in the contemporary society have not ‘sufficiently imagined, theorized, or empirically researched the possibility of postfeminism in non-western cultural context’, post feminism should be understood in the global scale (2015: 960). Jess Butler also criticises feminist scholars’ tendency to assume that ‘post feminism excludes women of colour, seems both overly simplistic and empirically unfounded’ (2013: 48). As Foucault argues, ‘[w]e must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies’ (1978: 100). In this sense, the difference between China and the West has been taken into account in the analysis of this thesis, so as to find the tension beyond the binary of the good/bad, Northern/Southern, and inclusion/exclusion. This thesis has explored how ‘nonwhite adopt, internalize, negotiate, and challenge hegemonic postfeminist conceptions of race, gender, and sexuality’ (Butler 2013: 50). It is the other one of the contributions this thesis has made to the research literature.

The exploration of ‘alternative femininity’ and new female subjectivity which I have attempted to do in this thesis, is a multi-faceted and complex project. Therefore, this thesis has had to decide to focus on certain aspects of examination and exploration of ‘new femininity’. Due to the limitation of time and space, it is impossible for a further and in-depth exploration of some issues. I will illustrate this limitation, as well as suggestions for further development in future.
In this thesis, the time which has been spent in the field work, was not very long. As I have explained in the methodology chapter, my previous experience as a woman journalist has helped me to get into their language circle much easier. One more reason was that the ethnographic approach in this thesis was employed as a supplementary method rather than the main approach. However, the limitation of the time did have the possibility of ‘missing’ some details in the fieldwork. For example, when I almost finished my field working, I found that except for the blog and microblog, Wechat has become one of the popular social media among the female journalists. The new social media which will influence the exploration of new female subjectivity, I suggest, could be one of the directions for future research.

As I have illustrated in the methodology chapter, in this thesis, I was primarily a researcher rather than a female journalist, during the ethnographic field working. I have put emphasis on others rather than myself. However, I also realized that my previous experience as a female journalist did influence the conduct of the participant observation and interviews, also the interpretation of the data. It was also a dialogue with ‘data’ and ‘others’ (Anderson 2006: 386). Ethnographic reflexivity has various definitions and it has been employed during the whole process of ethnographic research. In this thesis, it entails ‘self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others’ (Anderson 2006: 382). I suggest that the tension between the researcher and the researched could be explored further in future research.

There is some more suggestions on further research, which are shown as follows.

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182 Wechat is a mobile app designed and released by Tencent in 2011. It has multiple function, such as instant message, wechat payment service, news feeds, etc..
First, the ‘triangle contact zone’ which has been proposed in this thesis, is one potential space for exploring alternative femininity. The discursive practices of Luwei Lüqiu can be used as one approach to the construction and delivery of the contact zone, where she is a member as well. In the future research, it is feasible to analyse further the complex relationship among writing, lecturing and other discursive practices within the ‘triangle contact zone’, for revealing the process during which the interaction of those practices might change/interrupt the contact zone virtually and materially.

Second, how Chinese traditional Confucianism poses effects on the new female subject has already been examined critically in this thesis, such as the mediated ‘austerity’ in the case of Jing Chai, and the faking praising rhetoric in the case of Luwei Lüqiu. More research can be developed further on how the entanglement of Confucianism, neoliberalism and postfeminism systematically affects the exploration of new female subjectivity.

Last but not least, given the fact that China is still in the process of transformation from socialism to post-socialism, the further analysis of the entanglement of neoliberalism, socialism and nationalism, might also provide more diversity for the future research, which will function as a broader context.

As Judith Butler argues in the preface of the 1999 version of ‘Gender Trouble’,

I particularly opposed those regimes of truth that stipulated that certain kinds of gendered expressions were found to be false or derivative, and others, true and original. The point was not to prescribe a new gendered way of life that might then serve as a model for readers of the texts. Rather, the aim of the text was to open
up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized. (1999: viii)

Following this thought, this thesis has made contribution to identify ‘alternative femininity’ in contemporary China, although, which is a fluid, chaotic, interrupted, self-contradictory, even self-questioning. It is still a fascinating world waiting for more exploration.
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Low Risk Research Ethics Approval

Read this first
You should only use this checklist if you are carrying out a low risk research project through Coventry University. This normally applies to:

- Undergraduate students.
- Taught postgraduate students.
- Members of staff evaluating service-level quality e.g. reviewing course delivery.

The term "project" applies to all research projects within Coventry University.

Introduction to research ethics

Respect
One of the important qualities of a good researcher is to respect the people and their opinions that may form part of your research project. This is underlined by expectations from various bodies involved in monitoring higher education in the UK. It is also expected by the society in which we live. There have been a number of recent cases in the Press where confidential data, and indeed both personal financial and clinical data, have been "lost" or misused in some way. People who contribute their views to your research need to feel comfortable about what will happen to the information they give you, especially if your project is looking at an area which is confidential. As a general rule all research data should be treated confidentially and should not be discussed with colleagues, or participants referred to by name or in a demeaning manner.

Respect also implies that you have taken the time to think through the research, to ensure you have good internal and external validity for the questions, and that the information you ask for will fulfil your research objectives. Are you asking the right people the right questions? It is disrespectful to waste people’s time with poorly planned research.

Risk
You need to consider your personal safety during the research project and the safety of any other people involved in it. The ethical approval process is intended to help you identify risks to you and to others. For example, would the research that you are carrying out:

- Endanger you by requiring data to be collected in unsafe places or by giving away personal data about yourself?
- Upset participants with research material that they may find distasteful or which may causes a violent reaction?
- Damage the participants’ job prospects by confidential data about them becoming known to others because your research makes it easy for them to be identified or because you accidentally leaking information about them?
- Be reported and presented in a way that protects you and your participants from potential criminal or legal action?

Most risks can be minimised by taking sensible precautions. For example, if you are meeting people who you do not already know, you should always do so in a public place and let your Supervisor or a friend know who you are meeting, where you are and when you will return. Similarly, if you need to tell your participants how they can communicate with you, use your University email address, not your personal one. Is there a risk to the participant in taking part in the research? For example, are you are distracting participants from doing their normal job, when their employer expects them to be doing something more important? You have to limit the risk for the participant, by making sure they will not experience any come back from their employer because they helped you with your project.
It is also not normal practice to post up a questionnaire on the internet. One reason why this is not a good idea is the fact that you may not know who is replying to your questionnaire, or whether their responses are valid or reliable. Remember, you are not allowed to send e-mail requests to staff, students or other people to participate in your research unless they have made a specific request.

Rights
As researchers we need to let those involved in our research understand what is expected of them, their rights including the right to withdraw from the research, and our obligations towards them and towards the data we collect about them. The responsibility for acceptable behaviour in this area lies with you and not with the University. Indeed, it is a disciplinary offence to misuse research data or to fail to abide by the University's Ethics policy.

This means that you must have ethical approval before you start your research project. If you do not do this, there will be disciplinary consequences for you and the research will be declared invalid. Special additional conditions may also apply to research carried out in your Faculty so check that you have followed those too.

Routes
The questions in the following checklist offers a guided pathway through the various issues surrounding your research that need to be addressed and researcher behaviour that would be expected from all of our students and staff. You will need to complete the checklist and receive approval before you begin to collect any data. It is not acceptable to produce it after you have collected your data or finished your project and you will be penalised if this occurs.

No living participants
The following diagram gives an overview of the routes through ethical approval. If there are no living participants involved in the research, then you are likely to be able to complete the Low Risk Research Ethics Approval Checklist and use Principal Investigator Certification (PIC) to state that there is no need for ethical approval. You still need to go through the checklist and answer the questions but the likely outcome is you can use the PIC declaration.

Living participants
Most projects, especially at undergraduate level, will involve using data that has already been collected which is called secondary data. In these cases, completion of the questionnaire is very straightforward.
Some projects might use a survey to collect anonymous data, i.e. data that cannot be traced back to named or identified individuals either from other students or from other groups of people. In this case, a participant information leaflet about the project needs to be prepared and offered to all participants in the study even though you will not take their contact details. The participant information leaflet needs to be pre-approved by the research Supervisor or the Faculty Research Ethics Leader before any data is collected and will need to be included in the dissertation or report. The participant information leaflet should be attached to the low risk ethics checklist.

Some projects might ask individuals to be interviewed to provide data. In these cases, the interviewees will need to provide what is called "informed consent". The researcher will need to make sure that all interviewees have completed informed consent forms before being interviewed and they will also need to be given participant information leaflets at the time when informed consent is requested. The informed consent form should be attached to the low risk ethics checklist.

This means more work because these two leaflets have to be drafted and approved by research Supervisors or the Faculty Research Leader before any contact is made and therefore before any data is collected so this method of research requires a long development time and very good advance planning. Data collected in this way has to be stored securely. Again, a conversation with your Supervisor or the Faculty Research Leader may be necessary to cover this. It also needs to be destroyed after the research is completed and again this will need to be confirmed. You will need to convince interviewees that the information that they share with you will be treated confidentially and show to us that this is the case. Finally, the findings from research conducted in this way are normally shared with research participants in two ways:

- Interview transcripts may be sent to interviewees for confirmation.
- Summary findings of the research project should be offered to all participants.

**Participant who can't give informed consent**

It is not normal practice to collect data for undergraduate or master level research projects from children under 18 years of age, the mentally ill or participants under medical supervision. There are special regulations and legal requirements about these groups which must be followed. If you are planning to use any of these groups as a source of data in your research then this must be specially cleared with your Supervisor and with your Faculty as participants from these groups cannot themselves give informed consent.

**Record keeping**

It is also not acceptable to record interviews without getting prior permission or consent from the interviewees (so this might form part of your informed consent form). You also need to provide details of how the information collected, whether it is confidential or not, how it will be used, stored and the disposal method. It is not a good idea to interview without seeking the prior informed consent of participants and having evidence of that consent, nor is it good practice to collect data and not "verify" by sending back transcripts of interviews to participants. Finally, the issue about the destruction of the data once the project is completed needs to be clarified.

All of this is intended to protect you. For example, if someone later says that they did not agree to being recorded or suggests that you have leaked confidential information about them. You need to be able to show that you have protected yourself and looked after any material very carefully.

In all cases the survey that will be used and the interview questionnaire or protocol needs to be signed off by Supervisors before they are used. It is also good practice to test them, not least to find out where the problems might be. In addition, when you write up your research, you can talk about the testing process as a demonstration of good practice, which for students may count towards your marks.
There are examples of informed consent leaflets and information leaflets on the Registry Research Unit Intranet.

**Remember**

(Figure showing a diagram of the relationship between Record Keeping, Respect, Good Ethical Research Practice, Risk, Routes, and Rights)

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Can I begin work before the project is ethically approved?**

*No.* Primary data collection cannot begin until you have established that your project does not need ethical approval using this checklist or you have received written approval from your Faculty Research Ethics Leader, Chair of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee or University Applied Research Committee.

**What will happen if I proceed without approval or falsely self-certify research ethics approval?**

Collecting primary data in the absence of ethical approval or falsely self-certifying the level of risk associated with a project will constitute a **disciplinary offence**.

- For **Students** – this means disciplinary action resulting in immediate failure in any module or project associated with the research and potentially dismissal from the University.
- For **Staff** – This means disciplinary action, which may potentially lead to dismissal.

If you do not have ethical approval, the University’s insurers will not cover you for legal action or claims for injury. In addition, you may be debarred from membership of some professional or statutory bodies and excluded from applying for some types of employment or research funding opportunities.

**What happens if the project changes after approval?**

If after receiving ethical approval your project changes such that the information provided in this checklist is no longer accurate, then the ethical approval is automatically suspended. You must re-apply for ethical approval immediately and stop research based on the suspended ethical approval.

**What about multi-stage projects?**

If you are working on a project which involves multi-stage research, such as a focus group that informs the design of a questionnaire, you need to describe the process and focus on
what you know and the most risky elements. If the focus group radically changes the method you are using then you need to re-apply for the ethical approval.

Is there any help available to complete this checklist?

Guidance can be found in the ethics section of the Registry Research Unit Intranet. You will find documents dealing with specific issues in research ethics and examples of participant information leaflet and informed consent forms.

Further advice is also available from:

- Supervisor (Students)
- Faculty Research Ethics Leader (Staff)

What is Principal Investigator Certification (PIC)?

If you answer No to all the questions in the low risk ethical approval checklist then it is likely that your project has a low ethical risk. You may sign the Principal Investigator Certification part of the checklist and proceed with your project using good ethical practices. If you are a student, your Supervisor needs to countersign to show they agree with your judgment. They may require some restrictions or changes to your project to reduce the ethical or other risks, which would be recorded on the PIC declaration.

What do I do with the completed checklist?

Students should discuss the checklist as it relates to the project with your Supervisor. Once s/he countsigns the PIC declaration at the end to say that this is a low risk project then you may begin your project. However, you must keep hold of the checklist and associated documents, as you need to bind it in to your final project report.

Staff should complete the checklist. If all your questions have “No” responses, then you need to sign the PIC declaration and you can proceed with your project. If you were unable to answer all the questions with a No, then you need to talk to your Faculty Research Ethics Leader. This may result in changes to your project or research design to maintain it as low risk. If this is the not the case then you may have to complete either seek approval through the Medium-High or NHS-Medical ethical approval routes before begin your project.

If you have any questions about the checklist or the questions on it, please consult your:

- Research Supervisor (Students)
- Faculty Research Ethics Leader (Staff).

Who are the Faculty Research Ethics Leaders?

Check the Registry Research Unit Intranet site for the most up to date list of Faculty Research Ethics Leaders.
Applicant Details

Name: Ye Jin  
E-mail: summileaf@163.com  
Department: Media  
Date: 18th Dec 2010  
Course: Culture Study  
Title of Project: Women Journalists, New Femininity and Post-feminism in Urban China

Project Details

Summary of the project in jargon-free language and in not more than 120 words:
The project explores how the subjectivities of women journalists are produced and played out in the Chinese context of media, globalization and gender and identity construction. Three influential female journalists will be used as case studies in order to explore the different though overlapped dimensions of China’s new middle-class female subjectivity. Critical discourse analysis, narrative analysis and autoethnography were drawn on as research methods in the thesis.

Participants in your research

1. Will the project involve human participants?  
   | Yes | No |

If you answered Yes to this question, this may not be a low risk project.

- If you are a student, please discuss your project with your Supervisor.
- If you are a member of staff, please discuss your project with your Faculty Research Ethics Leader or use the Medium to High Risk Ethical Approval or NHS or Medical Approval Routes.
### Risk to Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Will the project involve human patients/clients, health professionals, and/or patient (client) data and/or health professional data?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Will any invasive physical procedure, including collecting tissue or other samples, be used in the research?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is there a risk of physical discomfort to those taking part?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is there a risk of psychological or emotional distress to those taking part?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is there a risk of challenging the deeply held beliefs of those taking part?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is there a risk that previous, current or proposed criminal or illegal acts will be revealed by those taking part?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Will the project involve giving any form of professional, medical or legal advice, either directly or indirectly to those taking part?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered **Yes** to any of these questions, this may **not** be a low risk project.

- If you are a student, please discuss your project with your Supervisor.
- If you are a member of staff, please discuss your project with your Faculty Research Ethics Leader or use the Medium to High Risk Ethical Approval or NHS or Medical Approval Routes.
### Risk to Researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Will this project put you or others at risk of physical harm, injury or death?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Will project put you or others at risk of abduction, physical, mental or sexual abuse?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Will this project involve participating in acts that may cause psychological or emotional distress to you or to others?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Will this project involve observing acts which may cause psychological or emotional distress to you or to others?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Will this project involve reading about, listening to or viewing materials that may cause psychological or emotional distress to you or to others?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Will this project involve you disclosing personal data to the participants other than your name and the University as your contact and e-mail address?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Will this project involve you in unsupervised private discussion with people who are not already known to you?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Will this project potentially place you in the situation where you may receive unwelcome media attention?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Could the topic or results of this project be seen as illegal or attract the attention of the security services or other agencies?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Could the topic or results of this project be viewed as controversial by anyone?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, this is not a low risk project. Please:
- If you are a student, discuss your project with your Supervisor.
- If you are a member of staff, discuss your project with your Faculty Research Ethics Leader or use the Medium to High Risk Ethical Approval route.

### Informed Consent of the Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Are any of the participants under the age of 18?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Are any of the participants unable mentally or physically to give consent?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Do you intend to observe the activities of individuals or groups without their knowledge and/or informed consent from each participant (or from his or her parent or guardian)?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, this may not be a low risk project. Please:
- If you are a student, discuss your project with your Supervisor.
- If you are a member of staff, discuss your project with your Faculty Research Ethics Leader or use the Medium to High Risk Ethical Approval route.
### Participant Confidentiality and Data Protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Will the project involve collecting data and information from human participants who will be identifiable in the final report?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Will information not already in the public domain about specific individuals or institutions be identifiable through data published or otherwise made available?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Do you intend to record, photograph or film individuals or groups without their knowledge or informed consent?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Do you intend to use the confidential information, knowledge or trade secrets gathered for any purpose other than this research project?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, this may not be a low risk project:

- If you are a student, discuss your project with your Supervisor.
- If you are a member of staff, discuss your project with your Faculty Research Ethics Leader or use the Medium to High Risk Ethical Approval or NHS or Medical Approval routes.

### Gatekeeper Risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. Will this project involve collecting data outside University buildings?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Do you intend to collect data in shopping centres or other public places?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Do you intend to gather data within nurseries, schools or colleges?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Do you intend to gather data within National Health Service premises?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, this is not a low risk project. Please:

- If you are a student, discuss your project with your Supervisor.
- If you are a member of staff, discuss your project with your Faculty Research Ethics Leader or use the Medium to High Risk Ethical Approval or NHS or Medical Approval routes.

### Other Ethical Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30. Is there any other risk or issue not covered above that may pose a risk to you or any of the participants?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Will any activity associated with this project put you or the participants at an ethical, moral or legal risk?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered Yes to these questions, this may not be a low risk project. Please:

- If you are a student, discuss your project with your Supervisor.
- If you are a member of staff, discuss your project with your Faculty Research Ethics Leader.
Principal Investigator Certification
If you answered No to all of the above questions, then you have described a low risk project. Please complete the following declaration to certify your project and keep a copy for your record as you may be asked for this at any time.

Agreed restrictions to project to allow Principal Investigator Certification
Please identify any restrictions to the project, agreed with your Supervisor or Faculty Research Ethics Leader to allow you to sign the Principal Investigator Certification declaration.

| Participant Information Leaflet attached. |
| Informed Consent Forms attached. |

Principal Investigator's Declaration
Please ensure that you:
- Tick all the boxes below and sign this checklist.
- Students must get their Supervisor to countersign this declaration.

| I believe that this project does not require research ethics approval. I have completed the checklist and kept a copy for my own records. I realise I may be asked to provide a copy of this checklist at any time. |
| I confirm that I have answered all relevant questions in this checklist honestly. |
| I confirm that I will carry out the project in the ways described in this checklist. I will immediately suspend research and request a new ethical approval if the project subsequently changes the information I have given in this checklist. |

Signatures
If you submit this checklist and any attachments by e-mail, you should type your name in the signature space. An email attachment sent from your University inbox will be assumed to have been signed electronically.

Principal Investigator
Signed: Ye Jin  (Principal Investigator or Student)
Date: 16th Dec 2010

Students storing this checklist electronically must append to it an email from your Supervisor confirming that they are prepared to make the declaration above and to countersign this checklist. This email will be taken as an electronic countersignature.

Student's Supervisor

Countersigned:  (Supervisor)
Date: 2nd March, 2017

I have read this checklist and confirm that it covers all the ethical issues raised by this project fully and frankly. I also confirm that these issues have been discussed with the student and will continue to be reviewed in the course of supervision.
Appendices

In this Appendices, because of the limitation of the space and length of this thesis, I will provide those interviews and field notes from which I have extracted material that I have explicitly used and analysed in my thesis. I will provide other data and field notes I have collected from the interviews and participant observation that I have conducted for this thesis on a website, please see https://pan.baidu.com/ account: summileaf keyword:Hi85186226

I have used the blank font of the words which have been analysed in the thesis as a sign-posting.

Participant Observation

Extract 1

Date: 15th October 2015

Time: 14:00 am

Place: Lan Yang’s Dressing Room in the Sun Media

Activities: Lan Yang were preparing for the talking show, and producers, editors were all in the dressing room and discussed the schedule of the show with Lan Yang. I was also in the room, sitting in a couch, which is not very far from Lan Yang and her colleague.

Conversation:

Producer: We are still waiting for the stylist. Could we talk more in detail about the show?

Lan Yang: Sure. I do have some question about the interviews.

.... (all about the show and interviews)

Producer: Ok, I think that’s all from me for today. Anything more you would like to know? (she turned to other staff, and said) what’s wrong with the stylist today? She should be here five minutes before, traffic?
**Notes:**

It was not the first time I have saw Lan Yang dressed and fully make up in the company. Even if just for a week meeting with colleagues. Doesn’t she really feel tired to keep all things done, I mean regarding to her appearance. Is it something connected with ‘perfect’, self-discipline? Or is it because she was a celebrity now, she need self-branded as a high-lever woman? Keeping thinking...

**Extract 2**

**Date:** 28th January 2013

**Time:** 13:00 am

**Place:** an office room in news department of CCTV

**Activities:** After a meeting for programme, Jing Chai were having casual talking with her colleague. I was in the office room too.

**Conversation:**

**Female colleague:** Where did you get this new down jacket?

**Jing Chai:** You guess.

**Female colleague:** 300 RMB? Where did you buy it, you have to tell me firstly.

**Jing Chai:** What do you think of the quality comparing with last one we bought together in Yan Jing shoppingmall?
Female colleague: That is different, that is from a big shoppingmall. That is 1000 RMB.

Jing Chai: So you think this is much cheaper than that one,right?

Female colleague: It is different, you seemed to tell me you bought it from Shu Xin (a small shop).

Jing Chai: I don’t have so much money, you know I am just a woman from Shanxi (big laugh).

Notes: it was not usual when Jing Chai talked about personal stuffs with colleague, it might because of this colleagues is from her own team, they are always go out for interviewing together. Does she really not own much money (it does not mean to be dig out her private life)? Why she said, I am a woman from Shanxi, although I know this province is not a wealthy one, and people do self-mockery sometimes. Is it something connected with femininity? What the image is she self-represented?

Extract 3

Date: 18th February 2013

Time: 16:00 am

Place: editing room in news department of CCTV

Activities: Jing Chai was watching her programme with producers and editors in the editing room. I was also in the room.

Conversation:

Jing Chai: I don’t like this clips, to be honest, it is too much, you know what I mean. The rhythm of the interview is not all right for me now.

Producer (female): I am partly agree. I like this part from here to here. Others could be changed a little bit.

Editor (male): I like your interview this time actually. It is powerful, touched, and I can feel it. You know what I mean.

Jing Chai: (smile) Don’t say something so nice to me again. I know I was not good enough, there is always so many I would like to do. Just sometimes, I couldn’t feel it. Not like Yansong (another male journalist-from me). He always know what he did. When could I become like him.

Editor: Don’t be so modest. You have done well. I heard it from other producers.

Jing Chai: Come on. (she pat gently on this editor’s shoulder-from me)

Notes: Does she show her softy? Why? Why mentioned Yansong Bai? Is there anything with ‘affective femininity’?
Extract 4

Date: 20th February 2013

Time: 15:00 am

Place: office room in news department of CCTV

Activities: The whole staffs were together watching through all the episodes of the last year, and discussed about the reason what this program should be improved. They also invited some commentator from other media. I was also in the room.

Conversation:

Commentator: Every producer I talked in the program wants to work with you, and I should learn from you.
Jing Chai: You could be the one very shortly, if you want to. Jing Chai responded immediately (blinking her eyes, and flapping the commentator’s shoulder).
Commentator: I couldn’t do that. I am not you (laughed loudly and contentedly).
Jing Chai: It is actually nothing special, you know. You have already have the ability.
Commentator: I am not as talkative as you. And keeping digging, too difficult..
Jing Chai: It is also really hard for me sometimes, you know. It is not easy, I have spent more than five years to gradually get something maybe. I am still working on it.

Notes:
Again, similar situation like two days before? Could it be coded as a feature? What does she self-represented? Anything with ‘womenliness as masquerade’?

Extract 5

Date: 6th August 2013

Time: 10:00 am

Place: office room in Phoenix TV

Activities: Luwei Lüqiu and her colleagues were waiting for the morning meeting in
Phoenix TV.

Conversation:
Female colleague: What a hot day today, isn’t it?
Luwei Lüqi: It is indeed. It will be a hard day, several places needed to go.
Female colleague: Sure, I wear a pair of running shoe, you see, it is much convenient.
Luwei Lüqi (look down to her shoes): you mentioned shoes, I just find you seems take on a new dress? You look great today.
Female colleague: Thank you. But don’t you think it is a little bit weirdo, dress with running shoes (smile). I have to attend a press conference this morning, I don’t have place to change the dress you know, so put it on now will be good choice.
Luwei Lüqi: I totally understand. I did before. You look really good with the dress.

Notes:
It is not a common thing that Luwei Lüqi talks about appearance/clothes with female colleagues. Does she just be nice? Or something else?

Extract 6

Date: 10th August 2013

Time: 17:00 am

Place: meeting room in Phoenix TV

Activities: Luwei Lüqi and her colleagues were talking about today’s news report and had a short break at the moment.

Conversation:
Luwei Lüqi: This could be today’s top news, what do you think? (all about the news...)
Luwei Lüqi: Let’s take a short break, shall we?
Xiaojun Guan: Sure, tied. How have you been recently? You look much thinner than last time we met.
Luwei Lüqi: I didn’t lose weight, but thank you. You look thinner, too.
Xiaojun Guan: Really, I don’t think so. If I feel tired, I will keep eating. Never lose weigh. They both smiled.
Notes:
After reading Luwei Lūqiu's books, she does write some specifically about the beauty/appearance. Maybe she is not so careless as she said about the appearance? And it is in the workplace. I have found similar senarios before. Coding?

Extract 7

Date: 18th August 2013

Time: 12:00 am

Place: dining hall in Phoenix TV

Activities: Lin Chen, Xiaojun Guan (Luwei Lūqiu’s female colleagues, and participants of my interviews conducted for this thesis) and I went to lunch together.

Lin Chen: Dear, you are much more beautiful than last time we met.
Xiaojun Guan: You are so sweet. Actually you are the one who looks gorgeous wearing this dress.

After lunch, Lin Chen had to leave early, since she got a news reporting to finish. Xiaojun Guan walked with me back to office, and she asked, ‘do you think the dress is not so fit for Lin Chen?’ I smiled and said nothing.

Notes:
Is it something about girlfriendship in feminized workplace. Is it anything connected with femininity? Why has it happened?
Semi-structured Interviews

1. Lan Yang’s case

Main structure of the interviews:
(1) How long have you been working here? How long have you been working with Lan Yang?
(2) What do you think of Lan Yang?
(3) Why do you think Lan Yang will be ‘successful’, if in general idea?
(4) Have you read Lan Yang’s autobiographies? Micro-blog?
(5) How did you define a woman? A good woman?
(6) Have you thought about ‘femininity’?
(7) What do you think of the job?
(8) Did you marry? Will it be an issue considering of the family and work?

Extract 1

Da Jun: 30 years old. Married, One child

Date: 9th November 2015

Time: 14:00 am-15:20am

Place: Office room in Sun Media

Conversation (excerpts):

Me: Thank you for accepting my interview. As I have discussed with you before, it will be recorded, and just for the research. You name will be used pseudonym in the thesis. Ok? So shall we start?
Da Jun: Ok.
Me: So how long have you been here?
Da Jun: About 7 years, so long. (she smiles)
Me: How long have you been working with Lan Yang?
Da Jun: About 5 years. I start from an assistant, and then join in the program, you know, we have different department. It is a big company.
Me: Right. It is. So why did you decide to come to this company?
Da Jun: They came to my university to recruit new members, you know, it is Lan Yang’s company. Many lecturers in my university have mentioned Lan Yang before. She has been like a model for female journalists, especially young girls. Many of my classmates wanted to join the company.
Me: What do you think of Lan Yang?
Da Jun: She is so perfect in her life and work. You know, she has her own career, a beloved husband, a lovely boy and girl. My dream.

.........(please see more on the website)

Me: What do you think of the company, especially you have been here more than five years?
Da Jun: I think it is a good one basically. Of course, no job is perfect. Media job is really tied only when you are your own boss, you might have a little bit more choice... but may be not. Lan Yang is always so busy.
Me: Do you think you have the ability of owning your company, since you have said that be your own boss.
Da Jun: Me? Never got happen. I am just a normal girl. I have heard that Lan Yang could hardly build the commercial brand without her husband. Zheng Wu gave his wife the most powerful support. He provided start-up capital for the 'Sun Media’ I heard, and stood by Lan Yang whenever the channel was confronted with financial difficulties. It seems that when you develop to a higher level, you might have the chance to meet a much better man for a marriage, and embrace a second chance in life to conquer all of your ‘female insecurities'. You know what I mean.
Me: I think I get what you said.(I smile).

.........(please see more on the website)

Me: So you have married, one child?
Da Jun: Yes. Being a working mother, you know...(she smiled)
Me: Hard? When did you have a baby?
Da Jun: About three years ago. Not very long, just proper time maybe. Lan Yang often told us that to be a mother is a wonderful experience. Every woman should think about it, and it might ‘open up a new world for you'.
Me: What do you think of what she said?
Da Jun: You know, she did really well. But she is different.
Me: In which way?
Da Jun: She has a lot of helpers. Not every one has the courage to be a mother.
Me: Why? Is it a normal thing for a girl?
Da Jun: some of my colleagues had to quit the job when they were pregnant.
Me: Why?
Da Jun: you can’t go out for reporting, you probably can’t edit program, for the baby’s safety. Every year new girls coming...

.........(please see more on the website)

Me: Lan Yang is always so elegant every time I saw her.
Da Jun: She is, isn’t she? (she became excited about this topic). She is pretty, she is a hostess. You know, make-up, beautiful dress. But she deserved that. She works really hard. So busy every day.

Me: How about you? Did you spend time on your own appearance?

Da Jun: Not every day. But most of working time. I will. You know, It definitely happened to me before. Sometimes I spent one hour to choose clothes, shoes, and even accessories for the next day.

Me: An hour?

Da Jun: I have to. Others all do this.

...........(please see more on the website)

Me: Is it a strategy of the company, you know, Lan Yang started doing online live broadcasting now?

Da Jun: Yes, it is. We have to. Younger girls never watch TV again. They are on social media.

Me: Are you fine with it? You know, live online.

Da Jun: It did cost time. But we all know what we posted on the social media is not the normal life. We always choose what we would like to show and we want to get positive feedback from others. No one in my Chinese online community likes to be judged as a failure. Just live with it.

...........(please see more on the website)

Notes(excerpts):
Da Jun was a talkative woman, and she was nice and frankly to me. (maybe most of women journalists are outgoing, after all, they have to communicate with others). I can tell she basically fond of the job in the company, whereas holding ambivalent attitudes to many things. For example, Lan Yang is her life and career model, whereas, through her speaking tone and facial expression, I could notice her envy towards the achievements of Lan Yang and the means by which Lan Yang achieved it. So what is the features I could code from her interview? Is she also self-exploring as a female journalist? Think about it.
Extract 2

Bing Zhu: 42 years old. Married, One child

Date: 20th November 2015

Time: 14:00 am-15:00am

Place: Office room in Sun Media

Conversation (excerpts):

Me: Thank you for accepting my interview. As I have discussed with you before, it will be recorded, and just for the research. You name will be used pseudonym in the thesis. Ok? So shall we start?

Bing Zhu: Sure.

Me: How long have you been to the company?

Bing Zhu: About 8 years. It was my second job. Before this, I was working in my hometown. After I got my master degree, I knew Lan Yang through other friends. She asked me to write books together with her. And then I joined the company.

Me: So what do you think of Lan Yang? Since you have known for a long time and wrote books together.

Bing Zhu: She works so hard, you know no one will success easily. She is always so energetic and elegant. Some times I feel tired, and she still sent me her scripts late into night. You know, how busy she is.

Me: I understand. I have saw this during those days.

Bing Zhu: Right. It is not the busiest time for her even. She is a perfect model for women. You know, she has a girl, a boy. As I have written in my book.

Me: Yes, I have read them.

..........(please see more on the website)

Me: So you had a child, as well? I found many of girls working here have children.

Bing Zhu: Yes, it is our company culture. You know, when one have, another also have. (she smiled). It was not the same situation, when I got my first internship in CCTV in 2003, 90% of my female colleagues did not have babies, and some of them even did not intend to have. To be childless was even a trendy idea within the news department, and a symbol that distinguishes independent, self-controlled women from other traditional professional women, not to mention full-time housewives.

Me: You said so well.(I smiled), like you have written it down.
Bing Zhu: I myself actually want to write a book about female journalists as well. You know, it is interesting. Just between you and me, I am thinking maybe it is time to try something new. You know, now there are so many new girls in the company, I have lost my advantage in such place. And **there is a lot of pressure in the workplace as a woman journalist**, you did before.

Me: Anything specifically in your mind?
Bing Zhu: Not yet. Still need time.

.........(please see more on the website)

**Notes(excerpts):**
Bing Zhu is a woman who is really mature in her mind. As she worked with Lan Yang for writing. She said Lan Yang is very strict with the job. It is not easy to work with her. However, I can tell she regarded Lan Yang as her guider in the career, and she gave Lan Yang high praise. I should read their book and cross-reference with the interview. The childless trend she mentioned is interesting. Mothering is a topic they both would like to talk. And also Lan Yang makes good balance between working and family, Bing Zhu also wrote it into their book. Is it time that ‘perfect’ could be a main theme for the thesis now? Anything else?

2. Jing Chai’s case

**Main structure of the interviews:**
(1) How long have you been working here? How long have you been working with Jing Chai?
(2) What do you think of Jing Chai?
(3) Have you read Jing Chai’s autobiography? Her blog?
(4) How did you define a woman? A good woman?
(5) Have you thought about ‘femininity’?
(6) What do you think of the job?
(7) Did you marry? Will it be an issue considering of the family and work?

**Extract 1**

Yunhuan Fan: 35 years old. Married, One boy and One girl

Date: 22th February 2013

Time: 15:00 am-16:00 am
Place: meeting room in CCTV

Conversation (excerpts):
Me: Thank you for accepting my interview. As I have discussed with you before, it will be recorded, and just for the research. You name will be used pseudonym in the thesis. Ok? So shall we start?
Yunhuan Fan: No problem. You know, I have another assignment to go today. So it might not last very long. Sorry.
Me: Ok. I understand. Let's start with your job, we almost met every time when I am here. I can see you are very busy.
Yunhuan Fan: You know what it is. You were one of us before. Today's news is tomorrow's history.
Me: Yes, but it seems that I was not so 7-24 on, when I was in the industry. It has changed. At time, being a journalist is something you could be pride, now...
Yunhuan Fan: It changes a lot. Did you remember when we were in the university, lectures always said, journalist should be your dream, especially being a war journalist. Remember?
Me: Yes, I did. (I smiled). and now...
Yunhuan Fan: It is just a job, you know. Not everyone talks about professionalism anymore. Even you work really hard, you don’t earn much.
Me: Yes...
Yunhuan Fan: For me, in this stage, the family is much more important than my job, and that's why I had a second baby. Don't laugh at me. Seriously, it is the case.
Me: Sure, how would I laugh at you. I have seen by myself during these days.
Yunhuan Fan: I am trying not to busy. Still after a long journey for reporting, I feel exhausted.

..........(please see more on the website)

Me: Let's talk about Jing Chai a little bit. What do you think of her?
Yunhuan Fan: She is not so talkative actually. She is not like Quanling Zhang (another female journalist in CCTV-from me). Quanling likes to stay with us. But Jing Chai don’t.
Me: Really?
Yunhuan Fan: Let me tell you something. Yes, she work very hard, and she got the talent. Jing Chai really reads a lot of books, and she seems to be very knowledgeable. I remember on one occasion when we were playing in a Karaoke, she stayed alone in the corner and read a book that I had never heard before. Can you imagine? (she looked around when she talked the story).

..........(please see more on the website)

Notes(excerpts):
Yunhuan Fan is my schoolmate, we knew each other when we were in the university. Therefore, I can tell I had more resonance with her when we were talking. This must be
careful when I read the data. May be it is the way she talked, she always asked me some questions. Also because of this, she told me some inside story about Jing Chai, and Jing Chai’s relationship with other colleagues. Yunhuan Fan also complained something in her job to me. Does it become a therapeutic interview, to some extent? Be careful and think about it.

Extract 2

Lan Gao: 37 years old. Married, One child

Date: 26th February 2013

Time: 11:00 am-11:50am

Place: meeting room in CCTV

Conversation (excerpts):

Me: Thank you for accepting my interview. As I have discussed with you before, it will be recorded, and just for the research. You name will be used pseudonym in the thesis. Ok? So shall we start?
Lan Gao: Yes, let’s begin. How long it might take. Still a lot things need to do, you know, and I need go to pick my child this afternoon. Mother, you know.
Me: It will not be very long. Thank you. I know you are busy. It is not easy, isn’t it?
Lan Gao: No one is easy, look at you. Stay here and do your research, I saw you many times.
Me: Yes, thanks. I am interested in this study. I would like to know what is going on here?
Lan Gao: I see. You work very hard. For me, work is just work, and personal life is quite important. I am thinking to have another baby in the next one or two years. You know, it seems that everyone would like to have two children nowadays.
Me: Really, why two?
Lan Gao: It will be great if you have one boy and one girl. Perfect. But one more boy is fine with me. Single child is too lonely, like us. Growing up with no brothers and sisters. Too much pressure, you see. We have to take care of at least four elder people in our family.
Me: Will it affect your job, if you have another baby?
Lan Gao: It will. But you are a woman as well, you know. Woman belong to family eventually. Don’t work too hard. Being a journalist, worn out.
Me: Right.

..........(please see more on the website)

Me: I saw you didn’t wear make up today. You don’t like it?
Lan Gao: Usually, I don’t have much time in thinking about clothes, you know. But sometime, I still need to cheer myself up by putting on nice dress. I was almost late for this morning’s meeting. I forgot to prepare today’s clothes last night, and it was time consuming to dress properly. I am so embarrassed. (Laugh loudly)

.........(please see more on the website)

Notes(excerpts):
It seems that Lan Gao is a woman who doesn’t care about anything. She enjoys her life. Beautification for work seems emergent again, something needed to be paid attention to. She holds very traditional views of being a woman, who she thinks should return to family eventually. She read Jing Chai’s blog, and she likes what Jing Chai has written, and her language and narration, which is different. Lan Gao invited me to express more of my ideas of some questions, which were interesting. And think about it.

3. Luwei Lüqiu’s case

Main structure of the interviews:
(1) How long have you been working here? How long have you been working with Luwei Lüqiu?
(2) What do you think of Luwei Lüqiu?
(3) Have you read Lüqiu Luwe’s autobiography? Her micro-blog?
(4) Do you know ‘Rose in the War’?
(5) How did you define a woman? A good woman?
(6) Have you thought about ‘femininity’?
(7) What do you think of the job?
(8) Did you marry? Will it be an issue considering of the family and work?

Extract 1

Lin Chen: 32 years old. Married, no child

Date: 25th August 2013

Time: 13:00 am-14:30 am

Place: coffee room in Phoenix TV

Conversation (excerpts):
Me: Thank you for accepting my interview. As I have discussed with you before, it will be recorded, and just for the research. You name will be used pseudonym in the thesis. Ok? So shall we start?
Lin Chen: Sure.
Me: How long have you been here?
Che Lin: About 7 years.
Me: What do you think of your job?
Lin Chen: It is hard to say in one word. It is a challenging and exciting job, obviously. At the same time, it is a time-consuming, really touch job, it seems that you are always chasing next news. Sometimes exhausted, even feel depressed.
Me: I see, how many female journalists in your program, you know?
Lin Chen: Twenties, at least.
Me: Anything different, being a female journalist?
Lin Chen: Not so much, for me. But...You have to admit that you have some advantages as a woman journalist, since sometimes you can show your weakness, and no one will blame you.
Me: Weakness?
Lin Chen: Most of the time I don’t agree with that. (she changed her tone, when she found that I showed interest on this topic). I mean, too dangerous to go, sometimes.

(please see more on the website)

Me: Let’s talk about Luwei Lüqiu.
Lin Chen: Sure, that’s why you are here, aren’t you? Rose in the war.
Me: Everyone called her this title?
Lin Chen: We don’t call her that too much now, but still it is her most well-known tag. She was brave out there. Did you watch the news clips? I bet you have.
Me: Yes, impressive.

(please see more on the website)

Me: I find that some comments online said Luwei Lüqiu is not a beautiful woman in conventional sense.
Lin Chen: (she smiled and said nothing)
Me: What do you think of those comments?
Lin Chen: Why did you ask this question? Is it important?
Me: To some extent, it is. After all, you need to face the audience. You know now it is a image-mediated society.
Lin Chen: I think she is a nice woman. Actually, she is very soft one, not as sharp as she is on TV.
Me: Ok. I am not saying she is not nice. She is nice to me. Just heard from some other friends.
Lin Chen: Although Luwei Lüqiu is not as beautiful as other celebrity women journalists, she is very smart and works really hard. Sometimes, I even believe that it might be the public comments which always focus on her non-conventional beauty that make her work even harder.
Me: I see. Thank you for your honesty.

........(please see more on the website)

Me: Do you wear make up when you are working?
Lin Chen: Sometimes. You know, this is a job you will meet different people every day. You need to show your respect, right?
Me: Sure. How long it will take you usually?
Lin Chen: It depends. Like today, I will think about it a little bit longer time. (she smiled)
Me: why?
Lin Chen: To take your interview, of course. (she laughed) I was joking.
Me: (I smiled)
Lin Chen: You know, my female colleagues and I often talk about our embarrassing experiences in the morning. Although we are in the rush for work, we still can’t bear one last ‘flaw’ of the appearance, and try to make it better using the lash curler one more time. While showing confidence in our appearances, we at the same time are ‘looking at’ each other judgmentally in the whole process from the top to toe.
Me: Looking to each other from top to toe?
Lin Chen: (she laughed) I might have been a little bit exaggerate, but it is true. Don’t you think? Don’t tell me you never look at other women.
Me: Let me think..

........(please see more on the website)

Me: Any thought about future?
Lin Chen: I heard that Luwei Lüqiu has a thought of changing something.
Me: About ?
Lin Chen: You know, she has gotten her master degree, and she has been a visiting scholar in America, I heard she might want to go abroad again.
Me:Really.
Lin Chen: That is why she is so successful, you know. People who are smarter than you always working harder than you. (she smiled)
Me: It makes sense. How about you?
Lin Chen: (thinking for a while), I am considering I might quit my job in the media, and like you, I want to go back to my home city and have a job, maybe in a university. My parents have discussed it with me for a long time. For them, this job is too tired for a woman and it is time for me to have a baby. How cruel it is!

........(please see more on the website)
Notes(excerpts):
Lin Chen is a smart woman, and she was cautious about what she had said. She didn’t say directly about what she thought, especially talking about Luwei Lüqiu. What she said about her resigning the job, and go to a university, making me thinking about myself. It is almost similar route I have taken. Has it become a common sense for women journalists nowadays? Why did they make the choice? Always pursuing self-development? Her ideas about beauty is interesting too. What’s more, it is ‘timing’ so important? Keeping read Luwei Lüqiu’s autobiographies, and think about it.

Extract 2

Xiaojun Guan: 30 years old. Married, no child

Date: 29th August 2013

Time: 15:00 am- 15:40am

Place: coffee room in Phoenix TV

Conversation (excerpts):

Me: Thank you for accepting my interview. As I have discussed with you before, it will be recorded, and just for the research. You name will be used pseudonym in the thesis. Ok? So shall we start?
Xiaojun Guan: Yes. Of course.

Me: How long have you been here?
Xiaojun Guan: About 4 years, not very long. But I like it. Although sometimes it is too tied. You know. (She smiled)

Me: I know, but you are still young.

........(please see more on the website)

Me: What do you think of being a female journalist?
Xiaojun Guan: What do you mean? It is not quite different as a journalist, regardless of your gender, at least in this company. Have you ever heard about this saying: ‘a woman working like a man, a man working like an animal’. (she smiled)

Me: Yes, I have heard about that.

........(please see more on the website)

Me: I find that some comments online said Luwei Lüqiu is not a beautiful woman in conventional sense.
Xiaojun Guan: I have read those comments online as well. It is fine, she doesn’t need to be praised of her appearance. (Xiaojun Guan use ‘she’ instead of call her name directly-from me)

Me: Really. What do you think?
Xiaojun Guan: Me, does it matter?
Me: Just for research, you know.
Xiaojuan Guan: Ok. Just between you and me, I think Luwei Lüqiu actually does mind what others talk about her non-conventional beauty. After all, no woman would dislike being praised as beautiful, isn’t it?
Me: Might be.

........(please see more on the website)

Me: Do you wear make up when you are working?
Xiaojun Guan: Interesting question, why do you notice this detail.
Me: It might tell me something.
Xiaojun Guan: Ok. If you ask. You know, I don’t even bother washing my face when I am home, but to go to the company and other working meeting is my ‘dress up’ day. Actually, I talked with Luwei Lüqiu about this topic before.
Me: Really? What did she say?
Xiaojun Guan: Every one does it, doesn’t it? Normal for me, for her. You live in others’ world, to some extent.
Me: interesting. Could you please explain more?
Xiaojun Guan: Just at least for me. I care about others’ comments. Actually, many times I feel a little bit hard and awkward to say so many praising words, especially to my boss or truly close friends. But, you know, nowadays everyone does it. Surrounded by people who are good at it, you have to learn those ‘life skills’ especially if you have a female boss.

........(please see more on the website)

Notes(excerpts):
Xiaojun Guan is also an outgoing woman. Her comments about Luwei Lüqiu’s appearance was ambivalent, on one hand, she said, Luwei Lüqiu don’t need to be praised of her appearance, one the other hand, she thought every woman care about appearance. Conventional beauty and self-recognition? She also talked about make up in working place, need to be coded.