

Toward Better Gender Equality? Portrayals of Advertising Models' Occupational Status in Chinese Magazines

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ABSTRACT. This study assesses women's occupational status portrayed in Chinese advertising through a content analysis of 1,524 models in 12 Chinese magazines. Contrary to the authors' predictions, Chinese men were not more likely than Chinese women to be shown in working roles or less likely than Chinese women to be shown in Family roles. However, a gender bias was revealed in other subcategories of occupational status: Chinese men were more likely to be portrayed as High-level business executives and Professionals, less likely to be shown as Entertainers, and less likely to be shown as Models. As predicted, Western women were less likely than Chinese women to be shown in working roles, in Family roles, and more likely to be shown as Models. Overall, advertising portrayals of gender roles in the Chinese context reflected the coexistence of global consumer culture and Chinese local dynamics.

KEYWORDS. Gender role, occupational status, magazine advertising, China, content analysis

INTRODUCTION

This study examines through content analysis Chinese and Western women's occupational status (working vs. nonworking roles) in recent Chinese consumer magazine advertising. Because women's employment status is one of the major indicators of gender equality (United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM] 2000), this study will focus on the employment status of Chinese women portrayed in Chinese magazine advertising by comparing it to the portrayals of Chinese men and Western women. It addresses the lack of

research on women's representations in the world's most populated country (Cheng 1997). It also extends the body of work concerning how Western advertising conventions interact with the local dynamics of non-Western countries (e.g., Frith, Cheng, and Shaw 2004; Tan et al. 2013): in particular, whether a new pattern will emerge in a country with a strong Confucian patriarchal tradition and Communist promotion of gender equality (Cheng 1997).

Gender portrayals in advertising have been of interest to scholars since the early 1970s (e.g., Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976; Dominick and Rauch 1972). In the last few decades, this

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stream of research has proliferated, covering a wide range of countries and cultures (e.g., Arima 2003; Bresnahan et al. 2001; Cheng 1997). China constitutes 20% of the world's population, and 48.7% of it is female (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2013). However, gender portrayals in Chinese advertising have only recently attracted scholars' attention (e.g., Cheng 1997; Huang and Lowry 2012). Few studies have investigated factors associated with gender equality (Cheng 1997).

With the increasing integration of markets and cultures in the last few decades (Levitt 1983), scholars have been concerned about the impact of global consumer culture on non-Western countries (Tomlinson 1999). In particular, critics have observed the negative effects of the market economy on Chinese women's status in the workplace (Leung 2003; Wang 2006). It remained to explore to what extent the representations of women in Chinese advertising resemble those in Western countries (e.g., Furnham and Farragher 2000; Sullivan and O'Connor 1988) and to what extent they reflect Chinese local dynamics (Hooper 1998).

Advertising media are powerful socializing agents in defining the "appropriate" roles of men and women (Jhally 2009). Studies in the positivist tradition (e.g., Gerbner and Gross 1976; Suls, Martin, and Wheeler 2002) have well documented the adverse effects of media stereotypes on audiences (e.g., Martin and Kennedy 1994; Suls et al. 2002). Cultivation theory posits that repeated exposure to mediated information influences audience members' perceptions of social reality because of media's pervasiveness and inclination to stereotype people (Gerbner and Gross 1976; Morgan and Signorielli 1990). When viewers are repeatedly exposed to stereotypical portrayals of men and women in advertising, they are likely to perceive these portrayals to be real and normal. For example, frequently showing women as homemakers implicitly suggests that women's role in the domestic space is the norm. Likewise, showing Western women predominately in certain occupational/nonoccupational roles could shape Chinese viewers' perception and expectation of them in real life.

Social comparison theory states that human beings have the intrinsic drive to look for similar others to evaluate their own opinions and abilities, through both nonsocial means (objective, physical means) and through a comparison with other people, either within or outside of their immediate environment (Festinger 1954; Martin and Kennedy 1994). In an upward comparison, individuals compare themselves with others who are socially superior to them. Since Western advertising models in non-Western countries generally function as a status symbol (Belk and Pollay 1985; Mueller 1992), when Chinese women compare themselves to their Western counterparts, they are likely to perceive Western women as superior (Festinger 1954).

Chinese and Western women are compared in this study for the following reasons: First, gender portrayals are often complicated with racial representations. Stern (1999) argued that researchers studying advertising should not treat women as a homogenous group, ignoring their racial and class differences, national origin, and sexual preferences. Second, several studies have documented the large presence of Western models in racially homogenous East Asian countries (e.g., Huang and Lowry 2012; Morimoto and Chang 2009; Nam, Lee, and Hwang 2011). In some cases, the number of Western models was even larger than that of local Asian models (Cheng and Frith 2006; Nelson and Paek 2005). Third, Western models in China can be considered foreign imports. Comparison of Chinese and Western females reveals how their representations are related to the gender norms in their respective cultures (Cheng and Frith 2006).

Gender Roles in Advertising

Gender stereotypes generally fall into four categories: personality traits, physical characteristics, behaviors, and occupational status (Deaux and Lewis 1984). Among those, occupational status is closely related to significant social change (Eisend 2010).

Previous studies suggested that advertising across different media tends to show women in an unfavorable manner: They were shown more often than men in decorative roles and were underrepresented in occupational roles (e.g., Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976; Sullivan and O'Connor 1988; Wagner and Banos 1973), were more likely than men to be shown in sexually explicit images (e.g., Reichert et al. 1999), and shown as younger than men (England and Gardner 1983).

Studies of U.S. magazine and television ads have found that women were more likely than men to be shown in nonworking roles, as dependent on others, and in domestic settings. When they were shown as working, they tended to be featured more often as low-level professionals and less often in autonomous roles (Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976; Bretl and Cantor 1988; Courtney and Lockeretz 1971; Dominick and Rauch 1972; McArthur and Resko 1975; Sullivan and O'Connor 1988; Wagner and Banos 1973). Further, when women were portrayed as nonworking, they were more likely to be decorative (e.g., Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976; Courtney and Lockeretz 1971). Similar trends were found in radio advertising and in the advertising of other Western and non-Western countries (e.g., Bresnahan et al. 2001; Cheng 1997; Furnham and Farragher 2000; Luyt 2011; Paek, Nelson, and Vilela 2011).

Women's Status in China

Previous studies suggest that gender inequality is deeply rooted in a country's historical and institutional conditions (Morris and Western 1999). Before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese women's oppression was institutionalized through all social structures: family, economy, education, culture, and the political system (Pearson 1995). Confucian doctrines had been dominant in China for more than 2,000 years. They had required Chinese women to follow the Three Obediences (obey her father as a daughter, obey her husband as a wife, and obey her adult sons in widowhood) and the Four Virtues (knowing men's superiority and women's

secondariness, being reticent, keeping herself clean and tidy, and being diligent in household work) (Croll 1995).

When the Communist Party rose to power in 1949, feudal ethics were officially abandoned; the state promoted gender equality as an integral part of Marxist principles (Leung 2003). In the following years, the number of women in the workforce, female government officials, and female role models promoted by the government have increased (Luo and Hao 2007).

Since the start of the market-oriented economic reform in the 1980s, Chinese women's employment status has shown further improvement in the following areas: First, with new types of business emerging, women's employment opportunities became diversified. Second, the Labor Law of 1992 protects women's equal employment rights except in the job categories that require extensive physical labor (Brown 2011). Third, the current proportion of Chinese women in the workforce is higher than the world average, and the majority of female workers are employed full-time (Cooke 2003). Fourth, married women do not have inferior employment status, which is different from the situation in other East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea (Cooke 2003).

However, the continuous improvement in gender equality since 1949 lost its momentum in the mid-1980s (Stockman 1994). Chinese women are still far from being equal with men in the workplace, in regard to the overall employment opportunities and job positions.

Working Role vs. Nonworking Role

After the state-arranged employment system was abolished in the 1990s, a larger proportion of women than men were laid off. Daycare facilities that once existed at the workplace were removed. Chinese women today have to bear a greater burden of childcare (Wang 2006).

With the financial success of many Chinese men in the market economy, the Confucian patriarchal social order "men are primarily outside the home, and women are primarily inside the home" (cited in Leung 2003, 360), was reintroduced. At the same time, the notion of

“middle-class housewife” (who stays at home to support her husband’s career and enjoys a wealthy lifestyle) has gained popularity and legitimacy (Hooper 1998).

In an analysis of Chinese TV commercials, Cheng (1997) found that men were more likely to be shown in working roles and less likely to be shown in family roles than women were. In addition, Cheng and Wan (2008) found that men were more likely to be shown in occupational roles in a random sample of subway ads in Beijing and Shanghai in 2003. Based on these studies and the current social environment affecting Chinese women’s employment opportunities, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Chinese men will be more likely to be shown in working roles and less likely to be shown in nonworking roles than Chinese women.

H2: Chinese women will be more likely to be shown in Family roles (a subcategory of the nonworking roles) than Chinese men.

Unequal Career Prospects

In spite of the government’s continuous promotion of gender equality since 1949, discrimination against women is by no means extinct in the Chinese workplace (Cooke 2003; Stockman 1994). The state focused mainly on increasing women’s share in the labor force quantitatively, not on improving the quality of their career choices and advancement (Cooke 2003). Statistics showed that only a small proportion of women were professionals or in managerial positions in all sectors, and a larger proportion were engaged in clerical and lower-level manual labor jobs (Cooke 2005).

Chinese women’s concentration in lower-level jobs can be explained by Chinese social values and state policies regarding promotion. As Cooke (2005) observed, Confucian values still dominate social expectations of men and women in the family and society. Little tolerance exists in China for a wife having a more advanced career than her husband, and a wife’s primary responsibilities are at home to support

her husband. It is the norm that the husband’s career takes precedence over the wife’s (Korabik 1994).

The Chinese notion of gender relationship in the workplace also creates barriers to mentoring, an essential mechanism in career progression (Cooke 2005). Since a smaller number of Chinese women are in high-level managerial positions, female candidates oftentimes have to look for male mentors for their career advancement. However, a close work relationship between a male supervisor and a female subordinate is highly prone to accusations of sexual liaison, which is almost a taboo in the Chinese culture. Therefore, males in senior managerial positions tend to choose male candidates to promote, even when qualified female candidates are present (Cooke 2005).

Gender inequality in job positions has been found in previous studies of Chinese advertising. In Cheng’s (1997) study of Chinese TV commercials, men were more likely than women to be shown in high-level business executives or professional roles. Siu and Au (1997) reported that men were more likely to be shown as top executives, and less likely to be shown as clerical staff than women in a 1992 sample of Chinese TV commercials. More recently, Paek and colleagues (2011) found that in Chinese TV commercials, women were more likely than men to be shown as office workers and housekeepers and less likely to be shown as professionals in a 2002 sample. Based on the current practices in the workplace and previously mentioned empirical studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Chinese men will be more likely to be shown as High-level business executives and Professionals than Chinese women.

Women as “Flower Vase”

Critics suggested that the traditional values of femininity returned to Chinese society after the start of the economic reform in the early 1980s, a view promoted by the changing official gender discourse and the growing beauty industry (Johansson 2001). In its effort to encourage

consumption for economic development in the past three decades, the Chinese state shifted from promoting androgynous-looking women to promoting the idea of the “modern Chinese woman,” in which “modern” means investing in one’s beauty (Johansson 2001). A large number of state-endorsed beauty and modeling contests have become a big revenue source for the government, the media, and corporations (Xu and Feiner 2007).

Even in the decades dominated by socialist ideologies, the Confucian expectation that men be talented and women be pretty was never eradicated (Cooke 2005). The growing emphasis on Chinese women’s appearance is further promoted by a burgeoning cosmetic industry in China (Evans 2000; Luo 2012). In 2008, the industry had total sales of \$19 billion, with an average growth rate of 15% in the previous 5 years (Crowther 2010).

The changing ideas of femininity and beauty have been reflected in advertising. In the 1980s and 1990s, the popular calendar posters (similar to Western pin-ups in the 50s and 60s) commonly featured clad young Chinese ladies (Evans 2000). Hung and Li (2006) analyzed a representative sample of Chinese magazine ads from 2004 and found that the majority of ads showed women as “urban sophisticate” (44%) and “flower vase” (28%), both of which reflected conventional feminine qualities. Luo and Hao (2007) analyzed the covers of *Women of China* magazine (from 1956 to 2003) and reported an increase in the number of women wearing makeup, trendy clothes, and suits.

Among the previously examined occupational and nonoccupational roles, Entertainer and professional athlete (Courtney and Lockeretz 1971; Cheng 1997) and Model (Ferguson, Kreshel, and Tinkham 1990; Sexton and Haberman 1974) emphasized one’s body and appearance. In a study of Chinese commercials, Cheng (1997) found that women were more likely to be shown as entertainers and in decorative roles. Because professional athlete and entertainer are two distinct professions in current Chinese society, this study considered them as separate categories. After finishing coding, the authors found professional athlete was not present in the sample. Based on this literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Chinese women will be more likely than Chinese men to be shown as Entertainers.

H5: Chinese women will be more likely than Chinese men to be shown as Models.

Western Women as Symbols of Status and Universal Beauty

Previous studies of Western models in Asian settings indicate that Western models generally function as a status symbol (Belk and Pollay 1985; Mueller 1992). In societies with a fast-growing economy and great status mobility, such as China, status appeal is expected to increase in advertising (Belk and Pollay 1985). Since showing Western women in everyday working roles can potentially shorten their social distance to Chinese viewers, decreasing their symbolic value and making their appeal less universal, it is reasonable to speculate that they are more likely to be shown in nonworking roles.

A number of studies have found a brand origin–model origin congruency—Western models are used more often by Western brands (e.g., Huang and Lowry 2012; Morimoto and Chang 2009), while Asian models are more often used by local Asian advertisers. Since many Western brands tend to use standardized advertising strategies (Frith et al. 2004), their ads may carry the cultural values of Western societies to China. Considering that Western advertising in general was more likely to show women in nonworking roles (e.g., Furnham and Farragher 2000; Sullivan and O’Connor 1988), it is reasonable to predict that Western women in Chinese ads would follow the same suit.

Examinations of Western models’ occupational status in non-Western advertising have been scant. Focusing on Chinese brand advertising in magazines, Huang (2011) found Western models (both men and women) were more likely to be featured in nonworking roles than Chinese models. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Western women will be more likely to be shown in nonworking roles and

less likely to be shown in working roles than Chinese women.

The growing culture of beauty in China is highly influenced by the images of Western women and the globalized beauty standards built around them, such as fair skin, large breasts, straight nose, and sharp chin (Johansson 1998; Li et al. 2008; Luo 2012). Rather than looking at Western women as peers fighting for gender equality in the workplace and at home, Chinese women see them as carriers of international high fashion and universal standards of beauty (Luo 2012).

Among the beauty standards influenced by the West, light skin has gained great popularity in recent years, although the appreciation of light skin has a much longer history. The Chinese saying "One white covers up three ugliness" has been in existence since ancient times (Bray 2002). Since the opening of the Chinese market in the early 1980s, the ancient Chinese ideal of white skin is repackaged by the beauty industry to meet the globalized beauty standards. Global skincare giants such as Unilever, P&G, and L'Oreal have all launched their skin-lightening products in China. As of June 2014, more than 38% of newly launched global beauty brands in Asia promised lighter skin. While Unilever's Dove brand encourages women to love their natural skin through the "Real Beauty" campaign in the U.S., its Pond's brand offered a line of products called "White Beauty" in Asia (Doland 2014). Some aesthetic clinics and beauty salons in China even provide skin-whitening injections (Hua 2013). Advertisements for these products boosted the aesthetics of light skin, which in turn promoted the physical attractiveness of Western White models.

In addition to their lighter skin tone, Western women are also considered to be more "sexy" (Johansson 1998). While the Confucian values required women to suppress their sexuality, and women were encouraged to dress like men during the Cultural Revolution, being "sexy" is now a desired quality (Johansson 1998). Many Chinese advertisers utilized White models to sell breast enhancement products and lingerie, with the assumption that Western women have larger breasts and will sell their products better. Some

even claimed that their products were favored by Western celebrities (Huang 2010; Johansson 1998).

Empirical studies of Asian advertising have found different portrayals of Western and Asian women on a number of variables. Western women were shown in higher levels of nudity (Huang and Lowry 2012), more likely to be shown in the Sensual/Sexy beauty type (Cheng and Frith 2006), in seductive dress (Frith et al. 2004), in revealing clothes or as nude (Nam et al. 2011) than local Asian models. Overall, Western women in Asian advertising are stereotyped as sexual or physically attractive in ads that are "body" oriented (Frith et al. 2004; Johansson 1998, Zhou and Belk 2004). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Western women will be more likely to be shown as Models than Chinese women.

Johansson (2001) observed that the Chinese official media promoted the idea of the "oriental woman" in the 1990s, which was constructed as the opposite of the individualist, hedonistic Western women who do not sacrifice their personal freedom for their families. The essence of the "oriental woman" is her role at home, devoting herself to her husband and child. In addition, Western advertisers may have also brought the stereotypes of Western women in their home countries with them. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: Chinese women will be more likely to be shown in Family roles than Western women.

METHOD

Sample

In order to cover a wide range of magazine categories and readership, three titles in each of the domestic women's magazines (*Bosom Friend*, *Female Friend-Campus*, and *Shanghai Style*), international women's magazines (*Elle*,

Cosmopolitan, and *Bazaar*), men's magazines (*Esquire*, *Men's Health*, and *For Him Magazine*), and news magazines targeting both men and women (*Life Weekly*, *China Newsweek*, and *New Weekly*) were included in the study. The selection of magazine titles within each category was based on their large advertising spending (Li 2007; see the appendix for details). Because of the lack of domestic men's magazines, all three men's magazines were the Chinese versions of the international title. Because of strict state control over news publication from non-Chinese publishers, no news magazine of foreign origin was present in 2009. Therefore, all three news magazines were Chinese domestic publications. Although no domestic men's magazines and no international news magazines were included in the sample, the magazines chosen represent the status quo of the Chinese magazine industry and magazines available to readers. In addition, the price of the sampled magazines ranged from 4.5 Chinese yuan to 20 Chinese yuan, targeting readers with a wide range of income. Magazine issues were selected through a stratified random sample of four months (February, June, August, and November) in 2009. All ads that occupy at least one-third of a page with one or more realistic adult models were selected.

A total of 1,524 models (986 female and 538 male models) in 973 ads (170 ads in domestic women's magazines, 415 ads in international women's magazines, 109 ads in men's magazines, and 279 ads in news magazines) were

coded for this study. Results showed that 37.2% ($n = 567$) of the coded models appeared in international women's magazines, followed by 35.6% ($n = 542$) in news magazines, 15.9% ($n = 242$) in domestic women's magazines, and 11.4% ($n = 173$) in men's magazines (table 1).

Coding Scheme

The unit of analysis in this study is individual model. Following previous studies (Huang and Lowry 2012; Knobloch-Westrick and Coates 2006; Piron and Young 1996), a model is defined as an adult man or woman, excluding illustrations of human beings and animated characters, body parts (e.g., hands, legs, eyes, lips, torsos, and so on) of human models, blurred human images, large crowds of people, and human models appearing on packages, book covers, or on the screens of digital devices (e.g., a computer screen). Following Huang and Lowry (2012), whenever more than one model appears in a single ad, up to four models were analyzed based on their relative size. If more than one model ranked fourth in size, one of them was randomly selected. Although the maximum number of four models is somewhat arbitrary, it is based on the observation that most ads in the sample have four or fewer discernable models. Since many ads showed several models equal in

TABLE 1. Sample Overview: Distribution of Model Gender and Race in Each Magazine Category ($N = 1,524$)

		Female		Male	
		Chinese	Western	Chinese	Western
Domestic women's magazine	Count	158	69	11	4
($n = 242$, 15.9%)	% within category	65.3	28.5	4.5	1.7
International women's magazine	Count	126	375	24	42
($n = 567$, 37.2%)	% within category	22.2	66.1	4.2	7.4
Men's magazine	Count	18	26	44	85
($n = 173$, 11.4%)	% within category	10.4	15.0	25.4	49.1
News magazine	Count	159	55	250	78
($n = 542$, 35.6%)	% within category	19.3	10.1	46.1	14.4
Total		461	525	329	209

Note. Percentages did not add up to 100% due to rounding. Numbers in the cells are counts and percentages of models.

size and equally positioned within the ads, this study did not distinguish primary from secondary model(s). All models were coded according to the following seven variables: occupational status (working/nonworking), High-level business executive and Professional (present/absent), Entertainer (present/absent), Family role (present/absent), Model (present/absent), origin (Chinese/White), and gender (male/female). While High-level business executive and Professional and Entertainer were two subcategories of the working roles, Family role and Model were two subcategories of the nonworking roles. Please see table 2 for the operational definitions of each variable.

Procedure

After the codebook was finalized, a set of 50 Chinese ads not included in the sample was used to train a second coder, a male native Chinese speaker who did not know the hypotheses of the study. The first author coded all 1,524 models. Following Wimmer and Dominick's (2006, p. 167) suggestion concerning the required number of models for calculating intercoder reliability, a random sample of 153 models (about 10% of the sample) were selected and coded by the second coder. Using Cohen's Kappa, intercoder reliability was 1.0 for model origin, gender, High-level business executive and Professional, and Family role, .95 for working status, .89 for Entertainer, and .96 for Model. All reached good reliability levels (Neuendorf 2002).

RESULTS

Gender Difference

H1 predicted that Chinese men would be more likely than Chinese women to be shown in working roles. Among the 461 Chinese women, 51.0% ($n = 235$) were shown as working, and among the 329 Chinese men, 48.0% ($n = 158$) were shown as working. Although a higher proportion of female models were shown as working, the difference was not

statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 790) = .7$, $p = .4$. H1 was not supported (table 3).

H2 predicted that Chinese men would be less likely than Chinese women to be shown in Family roles. As shown in table 4, 8.7% ($n = 40$) of Chinese women and 11.2% ($n = 37$) of Chinese men were shown in Family roles, $\chi^2(1, N = 790) = 1.4$, $p = .2$. H2 was not supported.

H3 predicted that Chinese men would be more likely than Chinese women to be shown as High-level business executives and Professionals. Table 4 shows that 5.2% ($n = 24$) of Chinese women and 11.9% ($n = 39$) of Chinese men were shown as High-level business executives and Professionals, $\chi^2(1, N = 790) = 10.7$, $p < .01$. H3 was supported.

H4 predicted that Chinese women would be more likely than Chinese men to be shown as Entertainers. As table 4 shows, 38.2% ($n = 176$) of Chinese females and 16.1% ($n = 53$) of Chinese males were shown as Entertainers, $\chi^2(1, N = 790) = 45.4$, $p < .001$. H4 was supported.

H5 predicted that Chinese women would be more likely than Chinese men to be shown as Models. As is shown in table 4, 21.9% ($n = 101$) of Chinese women and 11.2% ($n = 37$) of Chinese men were shown as Models, $\chi^2(1, N = 790) = 15.1$, $p < .001$. H5 was supported.

Racial Difference

H6 predicted that Chinese women would be more likely to be shown in working roles and less likely to be shown in nonworking roles than Western women. As is shown in table 5, 13.9% of Western women ($n = 73$) and 51.0% of Chinese women ($n = 235$) were shown as working, $\chi^2(1, n = 986) = 157.0$, $p < .001$. H6 was supported.

H7 predicted that Western women would be more likely to be shown as Models than Chinese women. Table 6 shows that 65.1% ($n = 342$) of Western women and 21.9% ($n = 101$) of Chinese women were shown as Models, $\chi^2(1, n = 986) = 185.4$, $p < .001$. H7 was supported.

TABLE 2. Operational Definitions of Variables

Occupational status ^a	
(1) Working roles	The model is shown as working in an office, in a store, on a construction site, and so on. It includes the situation where the profession of the model can be determined, and where the profession of the model cannot be determined (e.g., We could not determine whether a model wearing a suit is a high-level business executive or a lower-level manager, due to lack of other information). A model's specific profession was determined by the outfit of the model (e.g., a nursing uniform), a name and job title that appeared next to the model in the ad, or the setting of the ad (e.g., an adult in a classroom with young students would be determined to be a school teacher).
(2) Nonworking roles	The model cannot be coded as working.
High-level business executives and professionals	<i>High-level business executives</i> Including Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operations Officer (COO), and Chief Financial Officer (CFO), president and vice president of business organizations, and division chief officer. Models who fall into this category were identified by the ad copy, which specified their job titles. <i>Professional</i> People who have specialized knowledge related to their occupations, including doctor, lawyer, scientist, professor, writer, musician, conductor of an orchestra, and so on.
Entertainer	People who work in the entertainment industry, including actor, actress, singer, and dancer. Models in this category are mostly well-known celebrities, and their names appeared in the ad copy.
Family role	The person is shown at home, with other family member(s), such as wife, mother, husband, and father. The person is suggested as a husband, wife, son, daughter, and other family roles, even when the person is shown alone (e.g., a young female buying a gift for her mother, but the mother is not shown in the ad).
Model ^b	The person in the ad is simply there presenting the product or as spokesperson, and no context is introduced through the copy or visual (usually with a wallpaper/fictional background), as in the situations of many luxurious brand clothing ads.
Model origin	
(1) Chinese	People from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. South Korean and Japanese models were identified by their names that appeared in the ads or their real-life celebrity status. Many of these models are well-known, real-life celebrities who appeared in Korean TV dramas or movies popular in China. If Asian-looking models are not from South Korea or Japan, they are assumed to be Chinese.
(2) Western	Whites of European or North American origin, with Native Indians excluded.

^aThe dichotomy of working and nonworking role is adopted from several previous studies of print advertising (Cheng 1997; Courtney and Lockeretz 1971; Ferguson et al. 1990; Sexton and Haberman 1974).

High-level business executive and professionals, entertainer, and family roles were adopted from Courtney and Lockeretz's (1971) and Cheng's (1997) studies. High-level business executive/professionals and entertainer were two subcategories of the working roles; family role was one of the subcategories of nonworking roles.

^bModel is adopted from two content analytic studies of U.S. print advertising (Sexton and Haberman 1974; Ferguson et al. 1990). It was one subcategory of nonworking roles. Model is also similar to "decorative role" in Courtney and Lockeretz's (1971) study.

H8 predicted that Chinese women would be more likely to be shown in Family roles than Western women. As is shown in table 6, 8.7% ($n = 40$) of Chinese women and 1.7% ($n = 9$) of Western women were shown in Family roles, $\chi^2(1, n = 986) = 25.2, p < .001$. H8 was supported.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Using a sample of recent Chinese print ads, this study contributes to the body of research on gender portrayals in advertising of non-Western countries (e.g., Arima 2003; Nam et al. 2011). It also provides insight into how

TABLE 3. Cross-Tabulation between Gender and Occupational Status for Chinese Models (N = 790)

	Female		Male	
	Count	% within females	Count	% within males
Working roles	235	51.0%	158	48.0%
Nonworking roles	226	49.0%	171	52.0%
Total	461	100%	329	100%

Note: $\chi^2 = .7$, $p = .4$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$.

Western advertising conventions and gender representations (e.g., Frith et al. 2004; Tan et al. 2013) interact with Chinese local dynamics. Since the social and cultural environment of China has been changing rapidly in recent years, follow-up studies on Chinese print ads will reveal how advertising follows or reflects the changes in society. While content analysis offers the frequencies of different occupational roles, survey research is needed to find out how consumers respond to those portrayals.

Although China is touted as a country in which women “hold half of the sky” (Cheng 1997), the progress made in women’s employment status suffered a backlash in the past few decades of economic reform, and advertising portrayals were expected to reflect men’s better employment status in real life. However, results from this study failed to support the prediction that men would be more likely to be shown in working roles (H1). On the contrary, a higher percentage of Chinese women (51.0%) were shown in working roles than Chinese men (48.0%), although the difference was not statistically significant. In a similar fashion, Chinese women were not more likely than Chinese men

to be shown in Family roles as predicted (H2). Both findings also contradict previous studies on Chinese advertising (Cheng 1997: TV commercials; Cheng and Wan 2008: subway ads) and most studies on Western and other non-Western advertising (e.g., Bresnahan et al. 2001; Courtney and Lockeretz 1971; Paek et al. 2011). These unexpected findings first suggest that global consumer culture that selectively promotes certain values, including those related to gender roles (Evans 2000), may be diluted by local cultural dynamics. In particular, China has a strong imprint of Communist ideology and a short history of a market economy. As Appadurai (1990) noted, instruments of globalization are oftentimes “absorbed into local political and cultural economics” (p. 307). Second, the results suggest that advertising is not a mirror reflection of the society but sometimes works as a lagging social indicator (Kim and Lowry 2005). In this case, the earlier Communist promotion of gender equality by encouraging women’s participation in the workforce and men’s role at home (Hooper 1998) may still play a role in gender representations. Third, although earlier studies (e.g., Cheng 1997) of

TABLE 4. Cross-Tabulation between Gender and Roles for Chinese Models (N = 790)

	Female		Male		
	Count	% within females	count	% within males	
High-level executive & professional	24	5.2%	39	11.9%	$\chi^2 = 10.7^{**}$ ($df = 1$)
Entertainer	176	38.2%	53	16.1%	$\chi^2 = 45.4^{***}$ ($df = 1$)
Family role	40	8.7%	37	11.2%	$\chi^2 = 1.4$ ($df = 1$)
Model	101	21.9%	37	11.2%	$\chi^2 = 15.1^{***}$ ($df = 1$)
Other working & nonworking roles	137	29.7%	183	55.6%	
Total	461		329		

Note: $***p < .001$, $**p < .01$. Percentages did not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 5. Cross-Tabulation between Model Origin and Occupational Status for Female Models (N = 986)

	Western		Chinese	
	Count	% within Western	Count	% within Chinese
Working roles	73	13.9%	235	51.0%
Nonworking roles	452	86.1%	226	49.0%
Total	525	100%	461	100%

Note: $\chi^2 = 157.0$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$.

Chinese advertising showed different results, they were based on other types of media and did not differentiate Western models from Chinese ones. Further studies on Chinese magazine and TV advertising need to be conducted before generalizations can be made.

When Chinese men and women were compared for the three subcategories of working and nonworking roles, however, a gender bias was revealed as predicted (H3, H4 and H5): Men were more likely to be shown as High-level business executives and Professionals (H3), less likely to be shown as Entertainers (H4), and as Models (H5). While Chinese men dominated highly respected professions, Chinese women were primarily shown as Entertainers (78.2% of the working roles and 38.2% of all roles) and as Models (65.3% of nonworking roles and 21.9% of all roles), whose body and appearance are conventionally emphasized. In the 1970s, the degendered appearance of Chinese women and the lack of commercialization of women's bodies impressed Western observers (Barrett 1973). China's advertising today seems to be joining forces with global advertising in reinforcing the stereotypes of women as being physically beautiful (Cheng

and Frith 2006). Domestically, it also reflects the changing official gender discourse that promotes the commercialization of femininity (Hooper 1998). As cultivation theory states, these portrayals can lead Chinese consumers to expect more men to hold job positions associated with a high income and high social status and that being physically beautiful is of paramount importance to women (Morgan and Signorielli 1990).

This study also showed a racial difference between Chinese and Western women. In particular, Western women were more likely than Chinese women to be shown as nonworking (H6) and as Model (H7). Western women's high concentration in nonworking roles (86.1% vs. 51.0% for Chinese women) and in the Model category (65.1% of all roles) is similar to what has been found in Western advertising (e.g., Ferguson et al. 1990; Sullivan and O'Connor 1988), suggesting that when Western advertising models travel across cultures, they may carry certain stereotypes in their home societies with them. Since Western brands are generally more likely to use Western models (e.g., Huang and Lowry 2012), they contributed to the preservation of Western stereotypes in

TABLE 6. Cross-Tabulation between Model Origin and Roles for Female Models (N = 986)

	Western		Chinese		
	Count	% within females	Count	% within males	
Family role	9	1.7%	40	8.7%	$\chi^2 = 25.2^{***}$ ($df = 1$)
Model	342	65.1%	101	21.9%	
Other working & nonworking roles	174	33.1%	320	69.4%	$\chi^2 = 185.4^{***}$ ($df = 1$)
Total	525	100%	461	100%	

Note: $***p < .001$.

Chinese advertising. As is reported in table 1, the majority of Western female models were found in women's magazine (444 out of 525, 84.6%). The commonly featured fashion products and cosmetics in women's magazines may have also contributed to Western women's portrayals in the Model category. In addition, since the Model category coded women whose appearance and body were used to speak for a brand, Western women's higher concentration in this category suggests the level of commercialization of female bodies may vary for different races in China (Frith et al. 2004).

Chinese women were also more likely to be shown in Family roles than Western women as predicted (H8). According to cultivation theory, repeated exposure to these portrayals may perpetuate the stereotypes of Western women of being individualist, hedonistic, and physically beautiful among Chinese viewers (Johansson 2001; Morgan and Signorielli 1990). These stereotypes may also have potential influence on Chinese consumers' self-perceptions. Images of glamorous Western women may elicit an upward social comparison among their Chinese counterparts and promote the notion that White women are physically superior, which in turn may lower Chinese women's self esteem (Martin and Kennedy 1994).

This study has several other limitations. Although the authors tried to include ads in a variety of magazines, they utilized a purposive sample, so caution needs to be taken when applying the results to other magazine titles and categories. In addition, since TV enjoys a wider audience and generates a much larger advertising revenue than magazines do in China (Yu 2005), one cannot see a complete picture of Chinese women in advertising without examining TV commercials. Further, this study did not differentiate the primary and secondary model(s) as many studies on TV ads have done (Furnham and Paltzer 2010). A cross-examination between relative importance and occupational status may catch more nuances in gender role differentiation when more sophisticated coding categories are available. Lastly, this study did not differentiate magazine type and product category. It is quite possible

that certain products and magazines showed more stereotypical roles than others.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1. Sampled Magazines

Magazine name	Retail price in Chinese yuan ^d	Publication frequency
International Women's Magazine ^a		
<i>Elle</i> (世界时装之苑)	20	monthly
<i>Cosmopolitan</i> (时尚-伊人)	20	monthly
<i>Bazaar</i> (时尚芭莎)	20	monthly
Domestic Women's Magazine ^b		
<i>Bosom Friend</i> (知音)	4.5	three times/month
<i>Female Friend-Campus</i> (女友-校园)	6	monthly
<i>Shanghai Style</i> (上海服饰)	6.5	monthly
Men's Magazine (international) ^c		
<i>Esquire</i> (时尚男士)	20	monthly
<i>Men's Health</i> (时尚健康-男士)	20	monthly
<i>For Him Magazine</i> (男人装)	20	monthly
News & Current Affairs (domestic) ^c		
<i>Life Weekly</i> (三联生活周刊)	12	weekly
<i>China Newsweek</i> (中国新闻周刊)	10	weekly
<i>New Weekly</i> (新周刊)	15	twice/month

^aAccording to Li (2007), *Bazaar*, *Elle*, and *Cosmopolitan* were the top three women's magazines in terms of advertising spending in 2002–2003.

^bThe domestic women's magazines were selected based on the sample in Hung and Li's study (2006). *Shanghai Style* was the top ranked domestic women's magazine in advertising spending. According to Frith and Feng (2009), *Female Friend* and *Bosom Friend* are two early established domestic magazines and popular among female readers.

^cBased on Huicong Research (www.hcr.com.cn), a leading Chinese market research company, *Life Weekly*, *China Newsweek*, and *New Weekly* were the top three news magazines in advertising revenue. *Esquire* and *Men's Health* were the top two men's magazines in advertising revenue. <http://info.huicong.com/2010/01/13111287524.shtml>, <http://info.huicong.com/2010/01/11104687331.shtml>, and <http://info.huicong.com/2010/01/13111287544.shtml> (accessed January 5, 2010). The third men's magazine, *For Him Magazine* (*FHM*), was included based on a report by Bosi Data Research Center, in which *FHM* ranked third in brand value among men's magazines. <http://www.bosidata.com/jiaoyushichang1204/E547750CE7.html> (accessed July 1, 2012).

^dOne Chinese yuan equals about .16 U.S. Dollar.