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Wanhong She

**MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE CHINESE
FIRST LADY: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE
NEWS MEDIA REPORTS**

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Resumo

Na longa história do desenvolvimento social humano, as mulheres sempre tiveram experiências únicas, que são não só determinadas pelo desenvolvimento da sociedade, mas são também um reflexo da mesma. Entre as muitas imagens construídas pelos *media*, a imagem das mulheres é uma das mais representativas e a sua existência é complexa e subtil. Esta tem sido, desde há muito tempo, uma voz da ideologia de estado na arena política e tem emergido gradualmente dos confinamentos do consciente coletivo nestes tempos de mudança, para se tornar uma voz dos valores sociais e culturais. No processo de construção e disseminação, as imagens das mulheres nos *media* estão em constante mudança e atualização, apresentado as narrativas mais populares e imaginações sobre género numa era em particular, e formando as bases da compreensão das pessoas acerca de si mesmas e do mundo.

As notícias *online* tornaram-se uma forma importante de aprender sobre coisas novas, graças ao rápido progresso da tecnologia dos *media*. Com o crescimento do *soft power* (poder brando) da China e o posicionamento político cada vez mais forte do país em assuntos internacionais em plano de fundo, a “Primeira Dama” representa um papel feminino unicamente atraente que, inevitavelmente, recebe atenção dos *media* chineses e estrangeiros. Partindo do contexto do rápido desenvolvimento dos novos *media* e da respetiva transformação social, esta dissertação debruça-se sobre notícias acerca de Peng Liyuan, a Primeira Dama Chinesa, no Sina.com e no “People’s Daily”. Estas notícias são a base de uma pesquisa sobre a imagem nos *media* da Primeira Dama chinesa, de forma a desencadear uma discussão sobre o papel das mulheres na sociedade sob a perspectiva dos *media*. Este estudo tem, também, a intenção de examinar a imagem nos *media* de Peng Liyuan, de forma a desencadear reflexões sobre o impacto da Primeira Dama na melhoria da imagem das mulheres na China. Os resultados desta investigação são um contributo para chamar a atenção para o problema dos direitos das mulheres e para a igualdade entre homens e mulheres.

Palavras-chave: feminismo; construção dos *media*; Primeira Dama; Peng Liyuan;
Sina.com; People's Daily

Abstract

In the long history of human social development, women have always had unique experiences, which are not only determined by the development of society, but also a reflection of it. Among the many images constructed by the media, the image of women is one of the most representative, and its existence is complex and subtle. It has long been a spokesperson of the state ideology in the official political arena, and has gradually emerged from the confines of the collective unconscious to become a voice of social and cultural values. In the process of being constructed and disseminated, the media images of women are constantly changing and updating, presenting the popular narratives and imaginations about gender in a particular era, and forming the basis of people's understanding of themselves and the world.

Online news has become an important way for people to learn about new things, thanks to the rapid progress of media technology. Against the backdrop of the country's growing soft power and China's increasingly strong political position in international affairs, the "First Lady" has a uniquely attractive female role that is bound to receive widespread attention from Chinese and foreign media. Based on the rapid development of new media and social transformation, this dissertation takes the news reports of Peng Liyuan, the Chinese First Lady, on Sina.com and People's Daily as a research basis to study the media image of China's First Lady, so as to trigger the discussion on the role of women in society from the perspective of the media. The study also intends to examine the media image of Peng Liyuan, in order to raise thoughts on the impact of the First Lady's role on the improvement of women's status in China. These findings are a contribute to raise awareness on the issue of equal rights between men and women and give women more protection of rights.

Keywords: feminism; media construction; first lady; Peng Liyuan; Sina.com; People's Daily

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Introduction

In modern history, there are various famous "first ladies", such as Krupskaya, the wife of Lenin, the supreme leader of the Soviet Union, who was not only Lenin's life partner but also Lenin's loyal follower and left a deep impression in people's mind as a strong revolutionary; Song Qingling, the wife of Sun Yat-sen, the pioneer of Chinese democracy, won the respect of the world for her elegant posture, loving heart and extraordinary political wisdom in following and trying to realize Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary aspirations; Hillary, the wife of United States (U.S.) President Clinton, had an interest in politics and used the power of the "first lady" to exert her political influence.

In political communication, national leaders are seen as representatives of a government or even the whole country (Zheng, 2013), and their participation in a series of foreign and domestic affairs becomes an opportunity to disseminate the image of the country and convey political signals, setting the media agenda and political agenda for domestic and foreign media and the public (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006, p. 90).

Media is an important way of establishing the image of the "the First Lady" (McCoy, 2009). Moreover, the media also construct the economic, political, and ideological values in social institutions through the news (Van Dijk, 1988). Taking the "first lady" as an example, it is clear that the level of attention given to them by the media reflects the ideological values constructed by "the first lady". In other words, the "first lady" is presented selectively by the media in public, in dress and makeup, speech and behavior, attitudes and emotions, which will become the attention of domestic and foreign audiences. The analysis of their media images also reveals the national image or national identity of the "first lady" as portrayed by the media (Mortensen, 2015, p. 45).

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Especially in China, where "the Party controls the media" and "the Party media is the Party" are rigid principles of media governance, the Chinese government has content dominance over the media, and the media are firm implementers of the Chinese government's intentions, with each news report having a strict news production process and being produced by highly ranked and qualified journalists (Xia, 2004). Moreover, each news report is gated by highly qualified and experienced news gatekeepers. Thus, the framework of the official media coverage of China's First Lady reflects the strategic communication intentions of the Chinese government and is an appropriate focus point for understanding its relationship with the country's image.

This dissertation is based on a combination of documentary and content analysis, analyzing and comparing news coverage of China's First Lady Peng Liyuan in Sina.com and People's Daily from 2013-2018. The research was conducted within the scope of the Master's in Journalism and Communication at the University of Coimbra, in Portugal, and is structured in five chapters.

The first chapter is dedicated to the changes of feminism in media communication, focusing on the origins of feminism, the development of feminism in China and the change of feminism in Chinese media communication.

The second chapter is about the relationship between the First Lady and media images. The origin, role and significance of the first lady are introduced, and the image establishment of the first lady in China in media image communication is problematized.

In the third chapter, we discuss the methodological strategy. Data analysis of news reports from Sina.com and People's Daily was performed. In our data analysis, an obvious theme emerged, that is, what is the media image of China's first lady Peng Liyuan? This prominent theme will lead the research thread of this article and inspire

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my in-depth thinking about the identity construction of the first lady of China in media reports.

The fourth chapter includes the results of the research and the analysis of the data.

Finally, chapter 5 presents a discussion that draws on the results of the study and relates them to the literature, promoting a reflection on the identity construction of China's first lady in media coverage from Sina.com and People's Daily.

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1. Changes in Feminism in Media Communication

Feminism refers to the social theories and political movements created and initiated to end sexism, sexual exploitation, sexual discrimination and sexual oppression, and promote the equality of sexes. It also focuses on the criticism of social relations as well as analysis of gender inequality and the promotion of rights, interests, and issues of women. Feminism aims to promote the awakening of women's self-awareness and separate the female spirit from the rigid cage of society. Although there were always feminists along History, such as Olympe de Gouges who died for her ideals in 1793, we can consider that first organized women raised the banner of feminism in 1880. Very early, feminists contested the image of women in the media. From the concept of feminism and its historical development stages, this chapter analyzes the characteristics of the female media image of female politicians and female representatives, so as to show the current status of feminist media image analysis and research, and finally elaborates the various stages and media images of feminist media communication changes in China.

1.1 Feminism

We can consider that the concept of feminism was introduced in 1880 by the first French suffragist society, and the term “feminism” became widespread in Europe when several movements emerged to defend the status of women in society. Carrie Chapman Catt (Hardesty, 1989) defines feminism as the rebellion against all artificial barriers to women's freedom imposed by law or custom; Simone de Beauvoir (1998, p.163) defines feminism as a doctrine that is independent of class struggle and dedicated to women's issues, and the goal of feminism is to draw the spirit of women out of the "Realm of Silence"(de Beauvoir, 1998, p.163). All these definitions of feminism show the awakening of women's self-awareness and their struggle against

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social injustice.

Rosemarie Putnam Tong, in the introduction to her article, *Introduction to Feminist Thought*, refers to the diversity of thought that emerged during the evolution of feminism. The first wave of feminism occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during which an anti-traditional, equal-opportunity liberal feminism emerged, a school of women who wanted to secure "fair rules of the game" and "certainty that in the race for social goods and services, no participant would be systematically disadvantaged; gender justice does not require that we award prizes to winners and losers" (Tong, 2002, p. 2). Before 1893, women did not have the right to participate and vote in any country in the world, and there was a large number of feminist movements, such as the 19th century women's suffrage movement and the National Organization for Women. These feminist movements were the beginning of women's quest for equal opportunity and the beginning of women's political power.

The second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, the women's movement was not only limited to the pursuit of basic civil rights, but also involved women's rights and interests in various fields, especially in the defense of women's family rights. This reduction from political demands to individual demands for family rights indicated the maturity of feminism, which began to move from the pursuit of basic political power to the pursuit of women's human rights. Feminism continued until now and began to differentiate. There were different voices within women, with moderate and restrained voices saying that they wanted to pursue the same social rights as men, and voices with radical indignation criticizing the repression of women because of differences in the structure of physical sex. There are also serious and deep voices discussing that the oppression of women is the focus of the Chinese feminist and the alienation of women by the capitalist system. The sound of these voices means that feminist schools have begun to diversify, and feminism adopted perspectives from liberalism, radicalism, and Marxism. In 1946, the United Nations established the Commission on the Status of Women, and within two years,

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the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly stated that "men and women of full age shall have equal rights upon entering into marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution" (Wen, 1995, p. 51). The issuance of this article means that at the level of the legal system, women have the same rights as men in marriages of both sexes.

The third wave of feminism occurred between the 1960s and 1980s and was dominated by postmodernist feminism. This first-class school subverted the various voices of earlier feminist schools and began to find new insights into women. Jacques Lacan, a representative of postmodernist, deconstructed the "symbolic order" in society (Lacan. J, 1985, p. 84). Inspired by him, feminists deconstructed the identification and evolution of the "patriarchal social symbolic order" of men and women through three periods of infant development, in which girls were excluded from this symbolic order due to their biological structure and are confined to the margins of society, becoming an agnostic group; Luce Irigaray, another representative of postmodernism, points out that women have to experience themselves differently, not as "superfluous waste" in the narrow marginal structure of men's world, but to build their own language and order (Irigaray, 1996, p. 74). Postmodernist feminists have different perspectives, but also share certain commonalities, such as their belief that women are located in the marginalized areas of society, that their linguistic identity is restricted and scorned, and that they aspire to put aside the gender binary, overcome phallicism, and break the existing rigidity and solidification of feminine thought to truly explore the infinite possibilities of women in multiple fields.

The term "Feminism" was introduced to China in the early 20th century, emphasizing the struggle for women's power and rights. Feminism began the process of localization in the midst of the trend of "East learning from the West". While Western feminism developed from the feminist movement, China showed a completely different situation, which came with the triumph of the Chinese democratic revolution and was characterized by a dependence on male power and a small-scale struggle for women's rights in a sphere of male enclosure. Feminism

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really developed after the reform and China's opening up to the rest of the world. Especially after the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, feminism quickly gained the attention of scholars. Feminist ideas have been integrated with many other disciplines, resulting in many marginal disciplines, and "feminism" has become one of the hot topics in Chinese academic circles. After that, with the innovation and development of theory and practice, Chinese women's theory researchers put forward that their core idea is not only to fight for women's rights, but also to pursue gender equality, eliminate women's oppressed status, and change political, economic and social life. A definition of Chinese feminism can be found in the Chinese English-Chinese Women and Law Glossary: Feminism as a theory and practice includes the belief in the equality of men and women and an ideology of social change that aims to eliminate economic, social and political discrimination against women and other oppressed social groups (Tan & Xin, 1995, p. 65-66).

1.2 Feminism and the image of the media

Feminism needed to spread farther through certain media, initially through the women's movement, newspapers, literature and various academic publications. In 1978, Gaye Tuchman, a famous American female communication scholar, co-authored a collection of essays entitled "Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Media" (Tuchman et al., 1978), which pioneered the study of "Gender and Communication" and gave birth to feminist writings. With the rapid development of the Internet as well as new media, information has exploded around the world, and the battlefield of feminism is shifting from book pages to electronic screens. The need for feminism to fight for rights is not only in terms of visible external rights, but also to break the stereotypical image of women portrayed by the dominant discourse makers, which in the 21st century is mainly shaped through the media.

There are two forms of media image, one is the image presented to the audience by the media organization itself; the other is the image reproduced on the

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media by people or things in society through the media (Cao, 2016, p. 8). It also means that the media image is shaped by human factors, and the media organization has become a kind of "cultural capital", and a kind of "social capital" based on social interaction (Yi, 2007, p. 43). Under the basic concept of gender equality, feminism has a variety of creeds, including liberal feminism, post-feminism, radical feminism, and black feminism. However, for a long time, news media about feminism have told the same story (Harp et al, 2018, p.123). Under the control of "Media Capital", the diversity of feminism has been singularized, and women's media presence has been restricted to certain characteristics, such as slim body, beautiful face, virtuous, gentle, good at housework and so on. These keywords represent the "standardization" of female images created by media organizations and the "objectification" of female images.

Objectification is usually understood as a "derogatory term", implying that a group has an inherent way of speaking, thinking, and behaving that is morally or socially offensive, usually but not always, in the field of sex (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 249). However, although this is integrated into everyday life, its meaning is not always consistent. On the one hand, objectification is seen as reducing the "independence" of the person as an individual, neglecting her/his own emotions, feelings and will in favor of a third party, reducing her/him to a mere instrument (Papadaki, 2010, p. 23). It is no coincidence that women are sometimes walking towards a process of objectification, and as Heflick (2011, p. 573) put it, "it is this link between women's worth and their appearance that paves the way for the objectification of women." As a result, women's media image focuses on the female body or social interactions centered on the female body (Saguy et al., 2010, p. 180). These warning labels have become potential metaphors and innuendos, increasing the one-sided view of certain social groups towards objectifying female groups, and these hidden ideas have begun to guide and evaluate women's behavior, such as their perceptions of their dietary behaviors, and body image construction. With the use of

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technology and its impact on more detailed behaviors, female sexuality began to be expressed, and female images are not always gendered, but still reduced to a body that exists for the use and pleasure of others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). As third-party interests begin to test the "Standardized Feminization" template for everyday women, the discourse on the meaning of the media has also moved from "imposed by higher powers" to "direct". Some women even take pride in meeting the standards. And women themselves have become the perpetrators of objectifying women.

Among the multiple social roles of women, female politicians are more likely to appear in the media, because politicians are gender-biased, politics is traditionally a male field, and few women hold key positions in political institutions or departments. Taking the results of the 2015 U.K general election as an example, women accounted for only 22.6% of the total number of parliamentarians, but women accounted for 52% of the total population of the U.K. This means that the U.K ranks 65th among the 70 countries with the highest percentage of women in parliament, lower than Iraq and Afghanistan (O'Neill et. al, 2015, p. 294). Aksel Sundström and Lena Wängnerud's study of female politicians in 18 European national parliaments found that the proportion of women in local elections varies from country to country. In a sample of 18 European countries, the difference between the lowest and the highest proportion of women exceeds 10% (Sundström & Wängnerud, 2016, p.360). In Asian, African and American countries, where the women's movement started relatively late, this difference will only be greater. Additionally, the rarity and uniqueness of female politicians has received more media attention than the female politicians themselves. The descriptions of female politicians and feminism in the news media are related or even overlapping. Although female politicians and officials are rare, they are considered to be representatives of female populations (Rakow & Kranich, 1991). This can explain the tendency of news media to associate women in politics with feminism, as if women on the political stage inevitably embody the ideals and principles of feminism, and it can be said that the media image of female

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politicians is the image of feminism. There is a correlation between the public's understanding of feminism and the understanding of female media images, but these understandings and experiences are politically charged and are the result of social injustice (Barker-Plummer, 2010). As we have observed, the media image of female politicians is not far from that of entertainment stars. Various media review their personal lives, photograph them in evening dresses, and emphasize the desirability (or lack) of their words and deeds. The reports on clothing, hair, and temperament are in sharp contrast with their male counterparts. They tend to scrutinize their political stance, political views, and political work ability. Women are also disproportionately assigned to maternal and personal roles in the political framework system, and are constructed as the "other" in the norms of male politicians (Van Zoonen, 2006, p.287-301).

1.3 Changes in Feminism's Media Communication in China

The evolution of feminism in Chinese media communication has gone through four periods: the budding period, the aberration period, the development period and the new period (Li, 2013, p. 158).

Traditional Chinese culture has always positioned women as male appendages bound by various rules and regulations such as "Male Superiority to Female Inferiority" and "Ethical Norms", and they are a vulnerable group that has difficulty surviving independently in a patriarchal society. Therefore, there are almost no traces of the spread of feminist ideas in feudal China. With the development of history, the feudal system was disintegrated and the idea of democracy and freedom spread in China, which also led to the germination of Chinese feminist ideas, which was marked by the proliferation of female literature during the May Fourth New Culture Movement. In 1905, China's Beijing Women's News was launched, marking the entry of China's earliest female-themed publication into the historical stage, with the aim of "opening up the wisdom of women and the demeanor of the people". In

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January 1907, the "China Women's News", edited by the Chinese revolutionary heroine Qiu Jin, was launched and published. The main readers were women, with the aim of fighting for women's rights, independence and liberation (Yang, 2004, p. 7). The focus of the Chinese feminist movement starts from comparing women with men, and allowing them to enjoy the same privileges, so as to "become the common goal of women's liberation like men" (Wang, 1997).

After the founding of New China¹ in 1949, therefore, the image report of the "minist thinking began to merge with the trend of the times and moved towards a period of abnormality. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, there was an urgent need to resume post-war production and construction. In order to call for more productive forces, the female community also became a force for labor production. During this period, the media image of women began to be dominated by the government, and newspapers, magazines, films, and broadcasts were all completely controlled by politicians. In the process of representing women, women were more often framed in the setting of revolutionary production, and they were portrayed as "selfless and desireless", "a red heart toward the sun", "women can hold up half the sky". The image of women was "asexualized", "neutralized", and "masculine". This means that Chinese women had to undertake family tasks, production tasks, and moral model tasks during this period. Only by sacrificing their own time can they make full contributions to the family and society. With the development of China's economy and the fierce political revolution, this self-sacrificing "Iron Lady" female image was further promoted by the media as a model of struggle and a benchmark for personal worship. Female red guards embodied the messages "Dare to speak and dare to do" and "going to the mountains and going to the countryside". Investigating its root causes, Chinese women in the transformation period had not truly liberated their self-awareness and thoughts, and

¹ New China: At 3 p.m. on October 1, 1949, the founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China was held, and Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China and the Central People's Government from the Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Since then, China has ended its humiliating history of being invaded and enslaved for more than 100 years, and has truly become an independent and autonomous country.

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had not yet understood the meaning of the pursuit of feminism. They simply regarded "marriage freedom" as the core of women's struggle, and the male liberation revolution was a collateral revolution. There was no real women's liberation movement based on the awakening of women's consciousness. Scholar Yang Zhen said: "the women's movement in modern China is not so much a women's liberation movement as a men's liberation movement, or it is women who use the power of progressive men to shout for themselves as a disadvantaged group" (Yang, 2004, p. 8). In the process of the Chinese revolution, women's liberation became a secondary issue in the class struggle. The Chinese revolution failed to break the foundation of the oppression of women and therefore failed to achieve the goal of equality between men and women (Bao, 1995, p. 262).

In the 1980s, with the gradual implementation of China's reform and opening-up policy, Chinese feminism entered a period of development. During this period, the rapid development of China's market economy and the introduction of foreign feminist literary theories and art films received the attention and research of Chinese scholars in the field of literature and art. At this stage, the mass media not only did not completely abandon the traditional image of women, but also began to focus on the expression of women and the promotion of their authentic personalities, so that the traditionally praised virtuous women and independent women lived in harmony. The women called by modern civilization were intertwined and performed on the screen, rubbing, colliding and fusing with each other (Xu & Han, 2012, p. 25). The "World Conference on Women's Action Plan" pointed out that the main problems of print and electronic media in most countries are: failure to portray the different lives of women in the world today and their contributions to society in a balanced way; spreading of traditional female stereotyped roles; production of violent and degrading pornography; commercialization of the female body, etc. The essence of these problems is the portrayal of women from a male-centered cultural standpoint, a kind of gender discrimination. (State Council Working Committee on Women and Children,

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1995). It was this meeting that began to free Chinese feminism from the political influence of the deformed period, and began to treat women as women, making the pursuit of gender equality the main theme of the women's movement, and the Chinese women's movement also began to integrate with the world women's movement.

Entering the 21st century, with the acceleration of global economic integration and the rapid development of 5G on the Internet, the Chinese women's movement has entered a new era of diversified development. Feminist ideas and propositions have emerged, but aligned with the tide of the times. The Chinese official attitude towards women is straightforward. President Hu Jintao pointed out at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee: "building a harmonious socialist society is the ruling goal of the Communist Party of China; gender harmony is a necessary condition for building social harmony; every page of human social history is written by men and women. (Song, 2004, p. 44). In November 2012, the 18th National Congress of China included "adhering to the basic state policy of gender equality and safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of women and children" for the first time in its report, indicating that the Chinese government has incorporated gender equality into its national focus, and also expressed a strong will to mainstream gender awareness into social decision-making (Wang, 2018, p. 5). Subsequently, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a series of speeches on adhering to the Marxist outlook on women, emancipating women's minds, advancing the development of women's cause, and promoting gender equality. Chinese officials have a positive attitude, support women in safeguarding their rights and interests, and recognize a series of issues of gender equality from the official and legal levels. The Chinese government also advocates a Marxist outlook on women, but emphasizes that women should "pay attention to family building, women's rights and gender equality, and use the Internet to liberate women from all over the world and China" (Li, 2021), which essentially encloses women in the four walls of the family and affirms from an official perspective that women's world lies first and foremost in family building,

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which is itself a process of objectifying women. On the one hand, the media shows that women have the freedom to dress however they choose, but on the other hand women's bodies are excessively consumed. On the one hand, it has established a model of self-reliance for women in the workplace, but on the other hand, it has portrayed strong women in the workplace to rely on tricks. On the one hand, they deplore the oppression of traditional women, and on the other hand, they eagerly advocate women to lower their dowry and actively respond to the national "three-child" policy. Stimulated by new online media, women in China and even in Asia in general have begun to realize the cruel exploitation of women in the social context, and many emerging women have begun to fight gender injustice by "not marrying or having children". In 2019, Japan's fertility rate is 1.36, South Korea's 0.92, and China's 1.7, all far below the average birth rate of 2.3-2.5 (Fast Data, 2019), and the Asian fertility rate is currently declining at a rate visible to the naked eye.

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2. The relationship between the “first lady” and the media image

"First Lady" is a very special "position" among female politicians, and it is also one of the most eye-catching existence in the media. It can be said that the media image of the "First Lady" embodies the logic of a country's official mainstream media in shaping the image of women in the media. From the perspective of women themselves, the political role and benchmarking of the "first lady" is also an authoritative expression of the female media image. This chapter will introduce the origin of the title of the first lady and the role and significance of the first lady, in order to clarify the importance of the first lady as one of the female representatives, and finally analyze the status quo of the image of the first lady in the construction of media communication.

2.1 Origin of the First Lady

The title of "first lady" originated in the U.S. It is not an official title, nor an honorary title such as a Lord, but an informal title (Zhang, 2005, p.13). In people's first impression, the "First Lady" is always accompanied by the country's top leader, and in principle is considered to be the spouse of the country's leader by default; but in fact, there are different opinions about the origin of the "first lady". The first view is that the "First Lady" is the spouse of the leader of the country. In this view, the name "first lady" originated from the Secretary of State's wife. When the third president of the United States, Jefferson, took office, his wife had died 19 years ago, but with the increase in White House affairs and banquets, it was no longer normal that there was no hostess to entertain visiting female guests. Finally, Jefferson invited Dolly Madison, wife of the then Secretary of State James Madison, to take over as the mistress and assist in the White House affairs (Li, 2015, p.39). Later, after James Madison succeeded as president, Dolly Madison continued to manage the White House. After Dolly's death, President Taylor called her "our first lady for half a century". The second view states that the term “first lady” originated in 1861, when

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Mary Lincoln was called the "first lady" in the New York Herald Tribune and the Sacramento League. The third view is that the origin of "first lady" should be Lucy Hayes, who was called the "first lady of the country" by the media. She was the first "first lady" with a university degree. During her husband's presidency, she was a tireless advocate for equality. The fourth view is that the play "first lady of the Nation" made the term "first lady" popular, and that the play "first lady" made the term "first lady" acceptable to the general public (Robert & Ren, 2000, p. 35).

Regardless of the view, the "first lady" is the president's wife, relatives, or women who support the president's work, and the first lady's position comes from the president's position. With the development and change of the times, the "first lady" is now the president's wife by default, and has a special political status in the United States, because the first lady is not elected by voters, but achieves this position by being married to the president. This is not included in the formally established official system, and the U.S. Constitution does not mention this position. But in fact, the first lady's position has become an important part of the American political system. Although its existence has no written constitutional basis, the system is gradually formed and fixed through history and tradition (Ran, 2007, p. 67). Since the duties of the first lady are not regulated by law, the first lady system has developed along with social traditions and personal values. Each first lady's interpretation of the role of the first lady during her reign is different, and some tend to play traditional roles, while others pursue a more modern explanation, but in any case, the power behind the scenes is obviously there, although it is almost impossible to estimate accurately. Due to the nature of politics and the continuing controversy over women's participation in politics in American society, the first lady has to deny that she has any influence on the president and political influence, but in fact, what they do is closely related to politics. Political interests have been formed between the first lady and the president. They are husband and wife. They are also political partners, whether they like it or not.

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The title of "first lady" corresponds to the current political situation in China. The "First Lady" of the West is equivalent to the "Mrs. President" of China, and both are the wives of the country's supreme leader at a given time. Only the role and degree of influence of the two differ. In order to better investigate the media image of China's First Ladies, it is necessary to clearly define the concept and filter the identity of China's First Ladies. In this dissertation, we focus on the "first lady" after the founding of New China, and define the "first lady" as the spouse of a major Chinese leader who has traveled with him to other countries as the first lady (Zhao, 2013, p. 20).

At the beginning of the founding of New China, apart from the main tasks of restoring production and strengthening economic construction, the development of foreign affairs was also one of the main political concerns of New China, and there was no need for a spouse to accompany it. When the President visited a socialist country, China did not have the term first lady. It appeared with visits to non-socialist countries. Out of respect and courtesy needs, major Chinese leaders began to visit with their wives (Jing & Su, 2013, p.36). In the early days of China, the first lady was just a symbol of etiquette and did not have any special significance. But now, whether in China or abroad, the first ladies have become a group of people of international concern, and they have been active in the landscape of public and international diplomacy. The world has given birth to a group of world-famous first ladies who have made significant contributions to national diplomacy, cultural exchanges, charity and caring for disadvantaged groups, and have played an irreplaceable role. Judging from the comparison between the first ladies of China and the West, "Mrs. Xi Jinping Peng Liyuan" has a higher exposure, and is called China's "First" and "First Lady" by domestic and foreign media (Qi & Dan, 2017), so this article studies the media image of China's first lady, and will use "Peng Liyuan" as the research object. The development of the first lady reflects the process of women's rising status in the whole society, and the first lady also carries the society's expectations of women.

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2.2 The Role and Significance of the First Lady

Stereotypes are a major influence on the media image of female political leaders (Dickerson, 2003, p. 164). It was found in a study that in the public sphere, women have little voice, and in the private sphere, women are not considered to be exposed to and engaged in political affairs (Rakow & Kranich, 1991, p. 15). The emergence of female politicians is considered novel, and their behavior has received more evaluations and explanations due to their influence on the traditional image of women. Therefore, female politicians also have to endure the media's stereotype that women should not participate in politics (Gallagher, 2001; Ross, 2002; Sreberny & Van Zoonen, 2000; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996). As women, the main role of "first ladies" is to accompany national leaders to relevant events and to entertain other leaders or their wives as hostesses of the country. Therefore, they are mainly involved in building the image of the country and rarely share power with the leaders as independent political individuals, and there are no laws to limit whether and to what extent "first ladies" should participate in political decision-making (Wasserman, 1995). However, compared with top leaders' visits, which emphasize national interests and hard power diplomacy, "first ladies" emphasize the flexible image of the country (Li & Peng, 2019, p.110), and "first ladies" try to convey the message of their people to the society through their participation in public welfare and charity. They try to convey the friendship of their own people to the people of the country they are visiting (Hastedt & Eksterowicz, 2006, p. 58). As "first ladies" began to assume an independent role in public diplomacy, they attended major international cultural events and worked to promote social concerns such as public service, environmental protection, education and women's rights (Deaux & Lewis, 1984). It is undeniable that "first ladies" are still involved in issues related to women (Van Assendelft & Nye, 1998), and they are considered to be better suited for issues related to education, poverty, and health care (Heldman et al., 2005). The fact that the images of "first ladies" continues to be heavily exposed in the national media is evidence that "first

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ladies" are beginning to receive worldwide attention.

There is no legal regulation of the role and significance of the "first lady", but as an accessory to the national leader, the individual image of the "first lady" not only reinforces the international image of her husband (Erickson & Thomson, 2012), but is also as a constitutive element of the national image (Cinar, 2014, p. 482). The role of the "First Lady" in different countries is diverse. They gradually entered political decision-making from traditional etiquette roles, and began to use their status to influence the public sphere. From the initial role of accompanying visits or participating in activities, the role of the "First Lady" has become more and more important in the fields of healthcare, psychology, and education. The personal image of "first ladies" has become a focus of public attention, and some studies have analyzed the popularity of "first ladies" and the factors that mediate their influence (Garlick et al., 1992), but few studies have noted whether news coverage of female political spouses influences and creates the way people think (Gold & Speicher, 1996, p. 95). Subsequent studies have found that the focus has been less on the strategic thinking and political sensitivity of "first ladies" and more on their clothing, personalities, and family roles. Therefore, the first lady's clothing and demeanor in public activities may become the focus of attention of domestic and foreign audiences through selective media presentations, and become an important carrier for displaying national image or ethnic identity (Mortensen, 2015).

Dean Keith Simonton (1996, p320-325) in "President's wives and First Ladies: on achieving eminence within a traditional gender role" starts from a feminist perspective and analyzes First Ladies' personal power and significant political influence. The author believes that women's performance in three main areas determines their and the president's ability to gain a good reputation:

1. Her reputation as the president's political partner;

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2. She successfully established her own unique personality performance;

3. Her performance in fulfilling more traditional gender role responsibilities.

The first dimension encompasses the duties that women should perform in the political system of the first lady, such as accompanying travels, attending large-scale events, and other diplomatic concierge duties. For example, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy was a fashionable and beautiful person internationally during the Cold War, who made great contributions to ease the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union;

The second dimension is the outstanding achievements of women as independent individuals - such as their background in prestigious schools, successful careers, or outstanding contributions in a certain field. For example, Bill Clinton's wife Hillary Clinton graduated from prestigious schools and gave up high-paying jobs. In 1992, at the age of 46, Bill Clinton ran for president of the United States. Clinton's campaign even touted Clinton as a "buy one, get one free" choice: "Vote Clinton and you win two outstanding politicians to serve America, Clinton and Hillary" (Burns, 2008). Hillary has become one of the few "first ladies" to participate in politics as a decision maker.

The third dimension is the role of women as wives and mothers in the traditional gender division of labor. For example, George Walker Bush's wife initially kept a low profile, introverted, and appeared in public view only because of her identity. As a housewife she was severely criticized by the media for inaction in the position of the first lady. After that, she began to attend various fashion and public events without changing her face. She changed into old-fashioned dresses and wore sexy long skirts, which catered to the media (Wang & Gil Troy, 2005).

From the above three dimensions, we can find that to be a first lady, it is

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best to have both inside and outside values. At the same time, the influence of the first lady depends on the husband, and her influence is mainly influenced by the husband's various positions, privileges and tasks granted, and personal wisdom and charm. To some extent, they are close aides of the supreme leader and their "supporters" in public diplomacy. In general, the main role of the "first lady" at the national level is reflected in three aspects: strengthening international interaction with a diplomatic identity, enriching the image of national leaders as political partners, and enhancing the country's charm as a fashion spokesperson (Gao Ruipeng, 2015, p. 21-22). The institution of the first lady exists to become a symbol of a country's etiquette, a representative of its social image at home and abroad, and, moreover, a potential political influence.

In terms of media exposure, there is a big difference between Chinese "first ladies" and foreign "first ladies". In many western developed countries, the "First Lady" has often become the target of media attention and received a lot of media coverage, and has gradually begun to participate in various political and social activities, such as frequently accompanying heads of state on visits, receiving leaders of other countries, and participating in cultural image promotion, as well as participate in charitable activities.

These measures have greatly enhanced the soft power of the country's public diplomacy. Compared with the high-profile activities of the first ladies of other countries, the first ladies of China have always been regarded as low-key, and the public has rarely even noticed the existence of the first ladies. Within the scope of this study, the only Chinese "First Lady" who has appeared in diplomatic history since the founding of New China is Liu Shaoqi's wife, Wang Guangmei, who created a relatively moderate and open international image for China during the Cold War (Barboza, 2006). Although Wang Yeping, the wife of state leader Jiang Zemin, and Liu Yongqing, the wife of Hu Jintao, have appeared in the People's Daily on several occasions, they have generally done more ceremonial work in state diplomacy

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(French, 2013), after which China's first ladies began to recede behind the screen and maintain a relatively low profile in domestic and international media coverage. It was not until March 14, 2013, when Xi Jinping was elected President of the People's Republic of China, that Peng Liyuan appeared in the news media as the "First Lady". Peng Liyuan's appearance seems to break this Chinese tradition, as she actively participates in domestic and international activities, not only as the wife of the President in ceremonial visits, but also independently in international activities such as charity and cultural exchanges, which has triggered a lot of media coverage at home and abroad, and Peng Liyuan has been called China's "first" "First Lady" (Qi & Dan, 2017).

2.3 The Chinese First Lady Peng Liyuan

Born in the countryside, Peng Liyuan has loved literature and art since she was a child, and has an independent personality. She began to specialize in folk vocal music at the age of 14, and in 1980, she went to Beijing to participate in a cultural theatrical performance, causing a sensation. She joined the army at the age of 18 and became a literary soldier, with footprints all over the front line of border and coastal defense. In her art, she won many national awards including the "China Golden Record Award" and the gold medal at the 26th World Youth Gala, which was attended by 65 countries and where she ranked first in vocal music (Sina Entertainment, 2006). At the same time, she also has multiple social identities. Not only is she the youngest civilian general in the Chinese People's Liberation Army, she is also a member of the 8th, 9th, and 10th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a member of the Executive Committee of the All-China Women's Federation, the Dean of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Academy of Arts, and the artistic director of the Song and Dance Ensemble of the General Administration of China. After becoming a member of the CPPCC, Peng Liyuan has continued to appeal through proposals to raise women's voices and strengthen women's right to speak on social issues. Before becoming the First Lady, Peng Liyuan

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had already accumulated a high level of artistic achievement as a singer, having appeared on the Spring Festival Gala for 28 consecutive times. She is a popular singer in China because of her bright image, atmospheric singing style, and easy-going personality which are deeply loved by the public. Since her debut as the First Lady, every appearance has been met with admiration and has generated as much enthusiasm as that of her presidential husband. Wearing a dress with ethnic elements, she stepped out of the plane and took a photo with the wives of the G20 leaders in a blue embroidered cheongsam, giving the world a taste of her noble elegance. She gracefully sprinkled champagne on the Dutch national flower, the tulip, and confidently delivered an education-themed speech at the United Nations in English, astounded people with her ability. Since becoming the First Lady, she has conquered the world with her wisdom and poise, and has become a new business card that showcases Chinese culture, and reveals the atmosphere, elegance and traditional beauty of Chinese women.

2.4 Image building of the First Lady in media

Although the "First Lady" can display the image of the country, show the country's soft power, enhance the country's political public image, and become a role model for a new generation of society, from the perspective of feminism, the "First Lady" is not as glamorous as on the surface. The mass media have extremely high demands on the "first lady", especially the media in western developed countries which have complete freedom to report. However, the image report of the "First Lady" is often trivial and often impossible for them. For example, the media will criticize those first ladies who are very passive and purely housewives for their inaction; but for those who are too active and aggressive, the media will criticize them for going too far (Wang, 2005). Unlike the United States, which sometimes emphasizes the pluralistic role of the first lady, including her political roles, many countries simply emphasize the family role of the first lady. In Israel, media reports on the "first ladies" are carried out in a way that highlights their roles as mothers, wives

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and housewives, their fairy-tale love stories, their traditional professions as women, and even the way they give up their professions (Lemish & Drob, 2002, p. 135). This is a typical model of "the heroine in the play", perfect and self-sacrificing, but in reality, both men and women are complex, it is difficult to fall into the "trap", but there is always time to break free. If this media image is violated, the Israeli media will spare no effort to criticize and use a magnifying glass to observe the external image and internal privacy of the "First Lady".

As a socialist country under one-party rule, China's media image of the "First Lady" is closely related to political and current affairs, but it is no more than the image of a new woman with a smart and intelligent mind, a dignified and beautiful appearance, an amiable temperament and independence. China's "first lady" represents the image of China, so no official media or mainstream media would touch the red line of the country and report critically and privately on the representative of the country's image.

In general, news about the "first lady" portray four main identities: as an escort for the husband, as a icon for fashion, etiquette and social events, as a noble and helpful figure in charity work, and as a policy maker (Beasley, 2006). These job descriptions indicate that the "first lady" can only gracefully and appropriately display her due media image under the aura of her husband. Once she leaves this safe zone, she will be attacked, just like the first lady Hillary Clinton did. After she entered politics, and in the 2007-2008 democratic primary elections, she met with great malice from the media and the public.

During the 2007-2008 Democratic primary campaign, Senator Hillary Clinton was widely portrayed in all types of media as misogynistic and anti-feminist, and Hillary was often portrayed as a monster or cyborg, with the media amplifying the damage Hillary's entry into politics has done to society's way of thinking, arguing that there were boundaries between male and female, human and animal, organism

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and machine that she had dismantled. Such portrayal suggests a gender crisis in contemporary American culture that is exacerbated when women attempt to enter positions of power in the public sphere. Warner (1994, p. 3) argues that contemporary “monsters” have a special connection to feminists, who conservatives and moralists believe have undermined traditional gender role distinctions and are therefore scapegoats for "all social ills," as the embodiment of female power, and that women who are associated with politics are easily monstrified or deified. These two extremes are the scripts that the political arena wants - monstrification is the script of male normative standards, and deification is the script that men want women to think they have a voice in. Feminist media research shows that the media initially underestimates and devalues female political candidates and legislators, underrepresents them compared to male politicians, denies them honorable mentions, identifies them by name, family ties to male subjects, or uses unflattering gender portrayals that signal to the public that politics is ultimately "a man's game" (Ross, 2009), and the "first lady" system happens to be a particular derivative of this system. In a 2009 study, Carlin and Winfrey noted that the media tended to report on relatively trivial matters such as the appearance, presentation, marital status, childhood trajectory, lifestyle, family, appropriate dress and mannerisms in international social situations, and, at a more advanced level, "women's issues" such as public interest, legalizing abortion for women, caring for the disadvantaged, improving education and the environment, rather than the "male issues" of economy, national security and military affairs. It is as if "first ladies" are official patronage symbols for the underprivileged, rather than being equipped to be the face of policy makers and to pay attention to their political ideas and proposals.

3. Methodology and study description

3.1 Content analysis and thematic analysis

The "content analysis method" can be divided into two paths: quantitative and qualitative (Guan & Feng, 2017, p. 62). The quantitative content analysis method has the characteristics of objectivity, systematization, and quantification (Berelson, 1952), and can be used to analyze unstructured information such as the content of news reports, which can be processed in large quantities and systematically (Wang, 1989). In particular, content analysis is useful for presenting and comparing trends in the content of samples that have changed over time, especially when samples with large time spans need to be analyzed (Pellechia, 1997, p. 52). However, since quantitative statistics are somewhat detached from qualitative textual materials, it is difficult to grasp the logical relationships and textual semantics behind the data by using only quantitative approaches to analysis. Whereas the goal of the qualitative content analysis approach is to concentrate on analyzing the language of communication as textual content and textual contextual meaning (Bowers et. al, 1968; Rosengren, 1981; McTavish & Pirro, 1990), it can effectively compensate for the shortcomings of the quantitative content analysis approach.

Thematic analysis, on the other hand, helps the researcher to search for themes or patterns. It was developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and it is now widely used, namely in media studies.

Our study uses a combination of both methods to analyze 349 news articles searched on Sina.com's and 295 articles searched on the "People's Daily". As a sample of data collection, news are used for category construction and analysis research, using multi-dimensional scale analysis, using similarity or dissimilarity data between keywords, and distributing them to specific locations in the space in the form of points, intuitively showing the relationship between keywords; the distance between

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different keywords in the space shows the level of similarity, and highly similar keywords are clustered together (Guo et. al, 2012, p. 128), forming the high-frequency keywords under each category, and the frequency and percentage of these high-frequency keywords are counted, so as to help form the main themes of the news reports. These themes describe the media image of the first lady Peng Liyuan which were deductively derived from the high-frequency keywords analyzed.

Based on this, this study uses this combined quantitative and qualitative approach to operate. First, based on the existing literature and samples, meaningful class codes are established to use the textual quantitative statistics for data processing of the text; second, the qualitative content analysis path is applied to return from the textual quantitative statistics to the textual essence of the sample materials to explore the deeper meaning of the text, thus forming a mutual complement and supporting evidence.

3.2 Research subjects and sample acquisition

This study uses the reports on Sina.com and People's Daily about Peng Liyuan's first visit with Xi Jinping since she became the "first Lady" as the sample for data collection. The sample was collected from March 2013 to March 2018.

For "New Media", I chose Sina.com's report on the "first Lady" as the main research body for the following reasons: First, Sina.com has a wide coverage, with a number of regional websites, and is the largest Chinese portal in the world; second, as a private website, Sina.com has a variety of news sources, and its "audience-centered" communication philosophy is more in line with the development law of global communication concepts; Sina.com contains news, blogs, microblogs and other channels, and as a comprehensive network platform, both the first lady's reports and the report's effect on the audience's response can be extracted from it. com contains multiple channels such as news, blogs, and Weibo. As a comprehensive network

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platform, both the first lady's report and the audience's response to the report's effect can be extracted from it. With the help of Sina.com's advanced search function, the results were limited to the keyword "First Lady Peng Liyuan", and the news reports containing this keyword were the sample for the study. This keyword was chosen because this dissertation's purpose is to study the media image of the first lady from a feminist perspective, and I hope to obtain a sample of her appearing in the reports as an independent person; secondly, it is convenient to obtain a more precise and valid sample, such as typing "first lady" will bring up a large number of samples about the first ladies of the world that are not related to the study; thirdly, this keyword not only makes the data target very clear, but also helps define the valid time period of the sample. After capturing the data, a total of 439 news items were obtained, some of which merely mentioned the First Lady and made it difficult to carry out the next image analysis, so all invalid samples were eliminated for this dissertation. Due to the existence of both completely duplicated and incomplete stories, the final valid sample size was 349 stories and 523 images from 226 of them as the object of the Sina.com section.



Figure 3.1 - Keyword search display on Sina.com

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In terms of newspaper media, this dissertation selects the news reports of People's Daily as the object of analysis comparison because: First, the People's Daily has assumed the role of the mouthpiece of the Party's public opinion since its birth, and the news it publishes are authoritative and with highly credibility. Secondly, as one of the most influential newspapers in the world, the People's Daily has set up 38 domestic and 32 foreign correspondent stations, and has a wide range of news collection channels and a large circulation of 3 million copies per day. In the graphic database of the People's Daily, the search method is "title + text", the keyword is "Peng Liyuan", and the sample search time is "March 14, 2013 - March 7, 2018". The final sample consisted of 295 news reports and 280 pictures in 295 reports.

Figure 3.2 - Schematic diagram of advanced search of the "People's Daily" graphic database

There are two different forms of news report category formation: one is developed based on theories or past research results; the other is constructed by the researcher himself (Lu, 2004, p. 20). This study will determine the analytical categories of the research reports based on a combination of the two forms of category

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formation. First, in the analysis sample, 30 reports were randomly selected for pre-coding (15 reports from Sina.com; 15 newspapers from People's Daily), and after pre-coding, the analysis categories were initially determined, and the content analysis of all the research samples was conducted using such categories as criteria. This thesis considered and modified the previous paths of content analysis, and established the following operable categories to analyze the texts: (1) report content (2) title setting (3) picture report type (4) keyword frequency analysis.

These sources were analyzed on Excel software. In the first spreadsheet, the images in 349 reports and 226 reports from Sina.com were classified and analyzed. In the second spreadsheet 295 news reports from People's Daily were classified and analyzed along with 280 images from 295 reports. The category of word frequency was obtained by using the jieba split word database for the content of Sina.com's reports: visiting diplomacy, external image, public welfare and charity, and family life, respectively.

In our data analysis, a clear themed emerged, which was the question of how we define the media image of China's First Lady Peng Liyuan. This prominent theme will lead the research thread of this dissertation and inspire me to think deeply about the construction of China's First Lady's identity in media coverage.

4. Analysis of Chinese First Ladies' Coverage in the Media

This dissertation takes "First Lady Peng Liyuan" as the research object of media image analysis, and selects one of China's largest new media platform representatives - Sina.com, and the traditional official paper media "People's Daily" as the news report search database. According to the principle of classification of news, four categories were selected: report content, title setting, photo report type, and word frequency analysis; "First Lady Peng Liyuan" was used as a keyword for advanced search, and frequency statistics and frequency calculations were performed on the keywords that appeared, and finally the internal reasons for the identity construction of the first lady Peng Liyuan's media image were described.

4.1 Statistical analysis of data

4.1.1 Analysis of coverage content

Sina.com is a multinational new media information dissemination platform, including new media forms that provide users with information and services through computer networks, mobile phones and other terminals. Individuals with media expertise have gradually begun to express their opinions through the Internet. This has shown the audience a sign of the arrival of the personal media stage (Zeng, 2015, p.10). Therefore, Sina.com's reports are more extensive and detailed. The current Sina.com reports on Peng Liyuan mainly cover six aspects: external image, personal achievements, visits and diplomatic performance, family issues, public welfare deeds and social welfare. As for the People's Daily, as a traditional official paper-based media, its report content has to be reviewed for many times, and the report content is more cautious and authoritative. Therefore, there are fewer reports on the president's

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wife Peng Liyuan, and the scope of the report is relatively narrow. This data is mainly from escorts, participation in three aspects of public welfare and cultural undertakings.

Table 4.1. - Sina.com reports on Peng Liyuan by category

Coverage	Frequency of coverage	Percentage
Social benefits	108	30.95%
Diplomatic travel	102	29.22%
External appearance	85	24.36%
Public Charity	29	8.31%
Personal Achievements	16	4.58%
Family life	9	2.58%
Total	349	100%

Table 4.2 - Reports on Peng Liyuan in the People's Daily by category

Coverage	Frequency of coverage	Percentage
Social benefits	25	73.90%
Diplomatic travel	218	17.63%
External appearance	0	8.47%
Public Charity	52	0%
Personal Achievements	0	0%

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Family life	0	0%
Total	295	100%

From the classification and frequency distribution of the reports on Sina.com (as shown in Table 4.1 above), the agenda of “new media” reports on Peng Liyuan is more personal and grounded. In addition to the official reports on social benefits, public welfare and charity, and diplomatic trips, it also covers the external image, personal achievements and family life, which are closer to the real image of the First Lady. These last three items together account for 31.52%, and only the external image of Peng Liyuan accounts for 24.36%. Judging from the selection of the report content of the People’s Daily (see Table 4.2 above), most of the reports on Peng Liyuan are her visits as the escort of high-level foreign exchange activities, followed by reports on her specific diplomatic itinerary. It can be seen that the official media "People's Daily" mainly shaped Peng Liyuan's diplomatic image and national image, followed by reports on culture, public welfare and charity activities, and other "Peng Liyuan" reports only account for a small part (8.47%).

4.1.2 Analysis of title settings

News headlines are the most important and freshest content in the news, and prompt readers with the most concise text. A good news headline can not only introduce the news content concisely, but also evaluate the news content on behalf of the editor. A good news headline has a distinct ideology. It can not only suggest the news content to readers, but also help readers understand the nature and meaning of the news content (Chu & Zhou, 2006, p. 89). News headlines can refine the essence of the report content, and can also arouse readers' interest in reading more quickly. In

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this study, the concept of “First Lady” was used as the basis, and the status of “President’s wife” was used as the classification mark. The frequency of news reports was categorized into four groups, namely, "headlines based on Peng Liyuan", "headlines based on President Xi Jinping’s spouse", "headlines with both Xi and Peng", and "other related headlines." The results are shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 below.

Table 4.3 - Frequency distribution of news headline settings on Sina.com about Peng Liyuan

Title Settings	Frequency of coverage	Frequency of coverage
Under the heading of Peng Liyuan as an individual	129	36.96%
With the title of President Xi Jinping's spouse	47	13.47%
Xi and Peng share the title	21	6.02%
Other	152	43.55%
Total	349	100%

Table 4.4 - Frequency distribution of news headline settings about Peng Liyuan in People's Daily

Title Settings	Frequency of coverage	Frequency of coverage
Under the heading of Peng Liyuan as an individual	23	7.80%
With the title of President Xi Jinping's spouse	196	66.44%
Xi and Peng share the title	10	3.39%

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Other	66	22.37%
Total	295	100%

In terms of headline setting, Sina.com's headline setting is more flexible, with more lively and diverse wordings, closer to the habits of young people. From Table 4.3, it is obvious that the most news searches for other headlines of "Peng Liyuan" account for 43.55%, and 129 personal reports of "Peng Liyuan" account for 36.96%, which reflects the preference of "new media" for Peng Liyuan in headline setting. In addition, the combined headlines of the President's spouse and the two of them only account for 19.49%, which is less than the average number of "other" headlines. According to Table 4.4, the number of reports in People's Daily with the headline of President Xi Jinping's spouse is 196, accounting for an overall ratio of 66.44%, or more than the general overall, while the number of reports with Peng Liyuan's personal headline accounts for only 7.8%.

4.1.3 Picture report analysis

Compared with text news, picture news can stimulate the audience's "intuition" and "emotion" through "visualization" and "plot". They are more conclusive and persuasive than text news. Photo news are an important part of news reporting, an important growth point for news value presentation, and a useful supplement for news value realization (Xiao, 2006). At the same time, photo reports are an important supplement to text reports so that audiences can better understand the subject of the report, and because there is no language boundary, any audience can easily and conveniently understand the news, which is more suitable for international communication in the global communication environment. A sample of 523 images from Sina.com and 280 images from People's Daily was selected to investigate the types of photo coverage of the First Lady, Peng Liyuan. Based on the concept of "First Lady" and the status of "President's wife" as the classification mark, the types

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of pictures were divided into "Peng Liyuan alone", "Xi Jinping alone", "Xi and Peng together", and "other photos", as shown in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 below.

Table 4.5 - Statistics of 523 photo reports on Sina.com

Image Type	Frequency of coverage	Frequency of coverage
Peng's solo photo	213	40.72%
Xi Jinping's solo photo	15	2.87%
Photos of Xi and Peng together	98	18.74%
Other photos	197	37.67%
Total	523	100%

Table 4.6 - Statistics of 280 photo stories in People's Daily

Image Type	Frequency of coverage	Frequency of coverage
Peng's solo photo	16	5.72%
Xi Jinping's solo photo	113	40.36%
Photos of Xi and Peng together	128	45.71%
Other photos	23	8.21%
Total	280	100%

The 523 pictures on Sina.com, consisting of a variety of types of photos, reflect the flexibility of the new media to report on the first lady. Peng Liyuan's personal activities appeared in 40.7% of the photos, which is different from the official media, which mainly reports on Xi Jinping. Analyzing the photos of the People's Daily, most of them are group photos taken of Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan

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on their trips, which reached 45.7%. In second place are Xi Jinping's photos on foreign affairs. Peng Liyuan's photos on foreign affairs are even less than “others”.

4.1.4 Analysis of high-frequency keywords in four types of reports

Since the media image of the first lady Peng Liyuan in the "People's Daily" is relatively official and singular, the keyword frequency search statistics are difficult to obtain, and the collected data is small and unrepresentative, so this section is based on the “new media” Sina.com database. According to what is described in section 4.3.1, four representative categories were selected: diplomatic reports and charity reports directly related to the duties of the first lady, external image reports related to Peng Liyuan, and family life reports. Among them, the most frequent words are in Search in each category. Through frequency statistics analysis of the first lady Peng Liyuan’s keywords in the media image, we can understand the identity construction model of the first lady in Chinese media reports.

(1) Analysis of high-frequency keywords in foreign diplomatic reports

Peng Liyuan's visits and diplomatic activities accounted for 29.2% of the media reports on her. The media focused on her active participation in diplomacy, and instead of the first lady's ceremonial accompaniment, Peng Liyuan's perfect blend of personal strengths and public diplomacy became the focus of media coverage. In the media reports on her diplomatic activities, diplomatic art and music, “the Netherlands”, “singing”, “calligraphy”, “positive energy”, and “pandas” have all become keywords, among which the “positive energy” transmitted by diplomatic activities accounted for 46.19% of the word frequency, and the singer experience accounts for 23.31% (as shown in Table 4.1 below).

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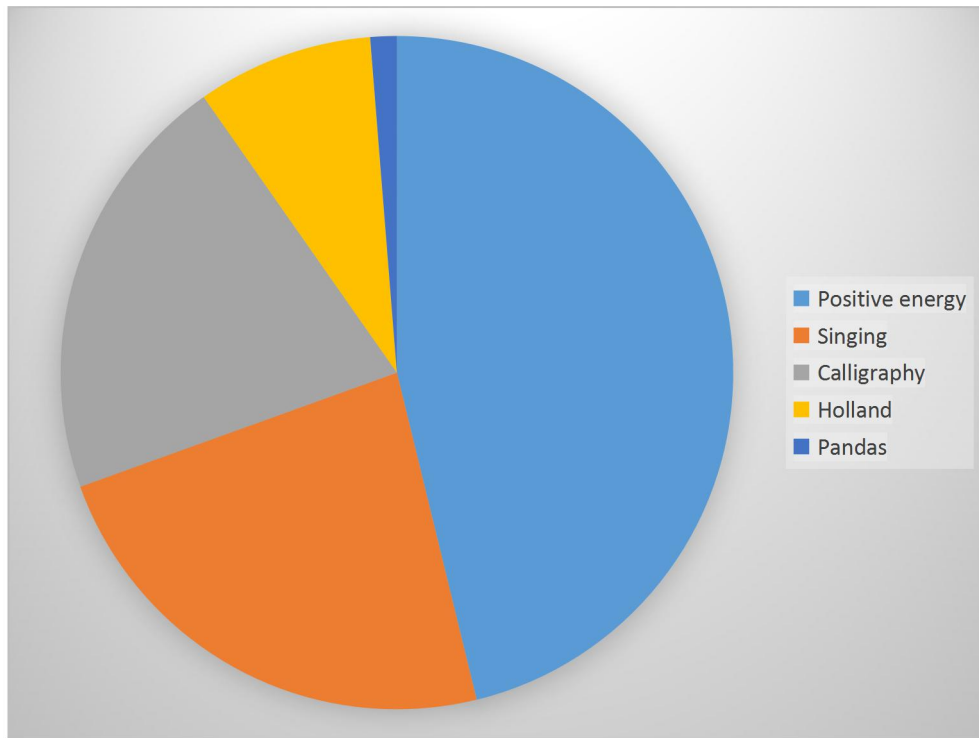


Figure 4.1 - The proportion of keyword frequency distribution in diplomatic reports of Peng Liyuan's visit

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Table 4.7 - The proportion of keyword frequency distribution in diplomatic reports of Peng Liyuan's visit

Words in diplomatic reports	Number of word occurrences	Number of reports	Percentage of word frequency
Positive energy	109	75	46.19%
Singing	94	59	23.31%
Calligraphy	86	49	20.76%
Holland	38	11	8.47%
Pandas	6	4	1.27%

In March 2013, President Xi Jinping was invited to pay state visits to Russia, Tanzania, South Africa and the Republic of Congo. Peng Liyuan made her debut on the international stage as the "First Lady" of China, exuding infinite charm in her every move, demonstrating the elegance of Chinese women and giving a new life to Chinese first lady diplomacy with her unique personal charm, expanding a new style of diplomacy and improving the country's image, which was noticed by the international community (Zhao & Cheng, 2013).

In March 2014, the first lady of the U.S. Michelle Obama visited China for the first time with her mother and daughter at the independent invitation of Peng Liyuan. This was the first time that a Chinese First Lady invited the wife of another country's head of state in an independent capacity, and the first time that a U.S. first lady visited China independently. This meeting was a milestone since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. (Cai, 2014).

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The interaction between the two first ladies, who walked closely together and talked about education, women, national culture, public charity, family and other topics, injected warmth into the U.S.-China relationship. Michelle Obama visited the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, and the Terracotta Warriors, learning Tai Chi and practicing calligraphy with Chinese students; Michelle Obama delivered a speech describing American education, and the interaction between the two ladies enhanced the two countries' mutual cultural identity and friendship between the two peoples.

During her visit to South Korea in 2014, Peng Liyuan said that Xi Jinping resembled the hero of "You From the Star" (a South Korean TV series) when he was young (Liu, 2014), a move that immediately attracted people's attention. The phrase "You from the Star" became a hot topic in both countries, an instance that made the public realize that the original supreme leader or first lady also paid attention to Korean dramas and popular entertainment, and their image has subsequently become more approachable.

On September 28, 2015, during her visit with Xi Jinping to Lincoln Center for the Arts and The Juilliard School in New York City (Ma, 2015), Peng Liyuan not only talked with foreign friends about the achievements of cultural exchanges between China and the U.S., but also taught the singing techniques of Chinese folk songs, giving the world a glimpse of the charm of Chinese music. First Lady Peng Liyuan is talented in music, calligraphy, and recitation, and these elements have been incorporated into her diplomatic activities, with music diplomacy, calligraphy diplomacy, fairy tale diplomacy, flower diplomacy, and light diplomacy being enjoyed by the world and the media over the years. Through soft diplomacy, Peng allowed the world to understand China more deeply, enriched China's image in the world, and showed the world the "Liyuan style" full of Chinese charm. Take music as an example. Peng Liyuan's identity as a singer overlaps with that of the first lady, and music plays an important role in Peng Liyuan's diplomatic activities. She sang "Cranberry Blossoms" herself, enjoyed music performances from various countries, had friendly

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exchanges with music students, was presented with national musical instruments and CDs, combining her personal characteristics with national diplomacy.

(2) Analysis of high-frequency keywords in public welfare reports

Even before being respected by the public as the "First Lady", Peng Liyuan was passionate about philanthropy. "Education", "charity", "women", "children" and "female" are the most frequently used words in the reports about her charity activities (Figure 4.2 below).

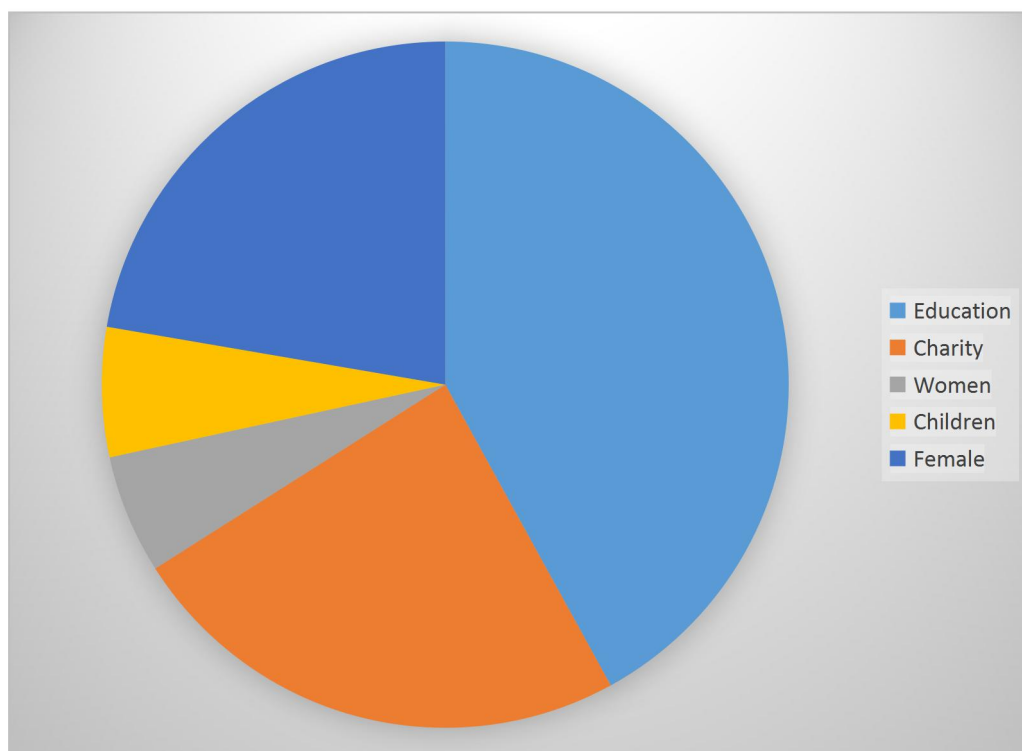


Figure 4.2 - The proportion of high word frequency distribution in Peng Liyuan's charity reports

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Table 4.8 - The proportion of high word frequency distribution date in Peng Liyuan's charity reports

Words in public charity reports	Number of word occurrences	Number of reports	Percentage of word frequency
Education	40	11	42%
Charity	27	9	24%
Women	6	3	5.6%
Children	7	4	6.1%
Female	21	16	22.3%

Among them, “education” accounts for 42% of the word frequency, and charity accounts for 24%. Media reports show that Peng Liyuan’s theme in all the proposals of the two sessions of the previous year is centered on children, and she spares no effort to promote social concern and protection for disadvantaged children. In 2006, she was appointed by the Chinese Ministry of Health as an "AIDS Prevention Advocate"; in March 2007, she became a "Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Ambassador"; in 2009, she was hired by the China Tobacco Control Association as a “Tobacco Control Ambassador”; and in 2011, she was appointed by the World Health Organization as a “Goodwill Ambassador to Combat Tuberculosis and AIDS”. In a video, she runs hand in hand with children affected by the disease on the playground, plays piano, draws and sings with them, bringing them closer to the real world. After becoming an AIDS Goodwill Ambassador, she shouldered this "special mission" and went to Africa, Europe, America, Australia and other places to fulfill her duties as a Goodwill Ambassador. Children and education, according to specific statistics of word frequency, are issues of great concern to Peng Liyuan. In the past two years, Xi Jinping has made 11 trips, accompanied by Peng Liyuan on 8

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occasions. Peng attended 26 events alone, 11 involving children or schools, and 10 involving culture (Qiu, 2015).

The promotion of women's emancipation and the guarantee of equal rights for women is another issue of public interest in which she is involved. In 2014, UNESCO awarded her the title of "Special Envoy for the Promotion of Girls' and Women's Education". In 2015, she attended the high-level conference "Every Woman, Every Child", where she stressed on several occasions the importance of women's liberation and education. On January 18, 2017, as the WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Tuberculosis and AIDS, she attended the renewal of her Goodwill Ambassadorship and the award ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland. (Du, 2017). These deeds demonstrate her philanthropy and sincere concern for human society, as well as her inner qualities and moral integrity. Peng Liyuan carried out public welfare activities at home and abroad, actively focusing on children, women, and other disadvantaged groups, spreading the kindness and great love spirit of Chinese women to the world.

In 2018, Peng ranked 65th on the Forbes' list of 100 most influential women, (Mi, 2018) with comments that she actively promotes education in rural China and international women's education, and responded to the World Health Organization's campaign against AIDS and tuberculosis.

(3) Analysis of high-frequency keywords in external image reports

With the help of word frequency analysis tools, the top five keywords in the media reports on Peng Liyuan's personal image are: "*Daqi*" (an untranslatable word with a meaning close to "grandeur" or "magnificence" or "special atmosphere"), "stylish", "beauty", "dignified", and "elegance", which shows that when the media constructs Peng Liyuan's personal image, they all give affirmation to her external appearance and internal temperament. As shown in Figure 4.3 below, "*Daqi*" is the most frequently searched word in the external image reports, accounting for 32.29%,

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followed by the word "stylish", accounting for 28.57%.

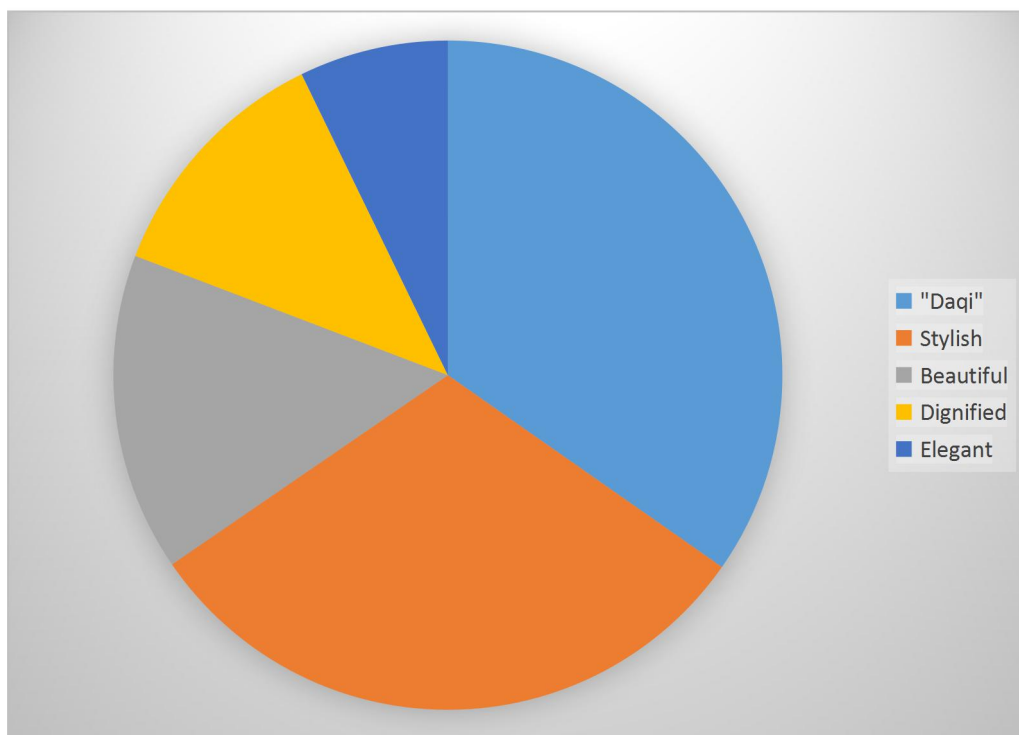


Figure 4.3 - The proportion of high word frequency distribution in Peng Liyuan's external image reports

Table 4.9 - The proportion of high word frequency distribution date in Peng Liyuan's external image reports

Words in external image reports	Number of word occurrences	Number of reports	Percentage of word frequency
“Daqi”	71	42	32.29%
Stylish	52	21	28.57%
Beautiful	25	17	14.29%
Dignified	20	9	11.16%
Elegant	13	7	6.7%

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Her painstaking childhood schooling, her steady and atmospheric singing voice, the honors she has received in her career, the social positions she has continuously held and her active efforts in the public sphere have all become the focus of media coverage of her personal achievements, outlining a First Lady of China that has caught the world's eye. The public is delighted to see that the first lady not only possesses independent and confident personality traits and independent artistic achievements, but also is more frequently active in public affairs and became an active promoter of public affairs. Fitting both the fashionable characteristics of contemporary women and the traditional national family roles, Peng Liyuan can be said to be the best interpretation of the beauty of modern and contemporary women.

(4) Analysis of high-frequency keywords in family life reports

With the help of word frequency analysis tools, text analysis shows that the top five words in the media reports about Peng Liyuan's family details are: "us", "family", "daughter", "love" and "parents". Among them, the word "family" accounted for 67.98% and the word "us" accounted for 14.29% (as shown in Figure 4.4 below), It was love at first sight when the two met, and after their marriage, they were separated for a long time due to their work. But Xi Jinping did not ask his wife to give up her career, nor did she ask her for family affairs; while Peng Liyuan balanced career and family, she continued her artistic career and was very supportive of her husband's work (Wang, 2007). After that, this "first family" perfectly illustrates the essence of the pursuit of family harmony and happiness in traditional Chinese culture. The husband carries the lady's bag when she gets off the plane, holds an umbrella for her, and turns around to hold her hand when she logs into the higher cabin, reflecting the husband's love and care for his wife and highlighting the male's respect for women; the wife wears high heels and walks off the plane holding her husband's hand, reflecting the wife's dependence and trust on her husband. The duo

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wears couple's outfits with common elements, shares a dessert, swings together, smells flowers together, and their every move well illustrates the harmony between husband and wife. The love story between them is a good story, in line with the current concept of equality between men and women, and has become a "national couple" loved and sought after by the people.

From time to time, Peng also will share details and anecdotes about her daughter's education. In one interview, she joked that she had once required her daughter to practice piano for one hour every day. The very simple remark made the public understand that the First Lady is also such a mother who cares about her children, instantly narrowing the distance between her and the public.

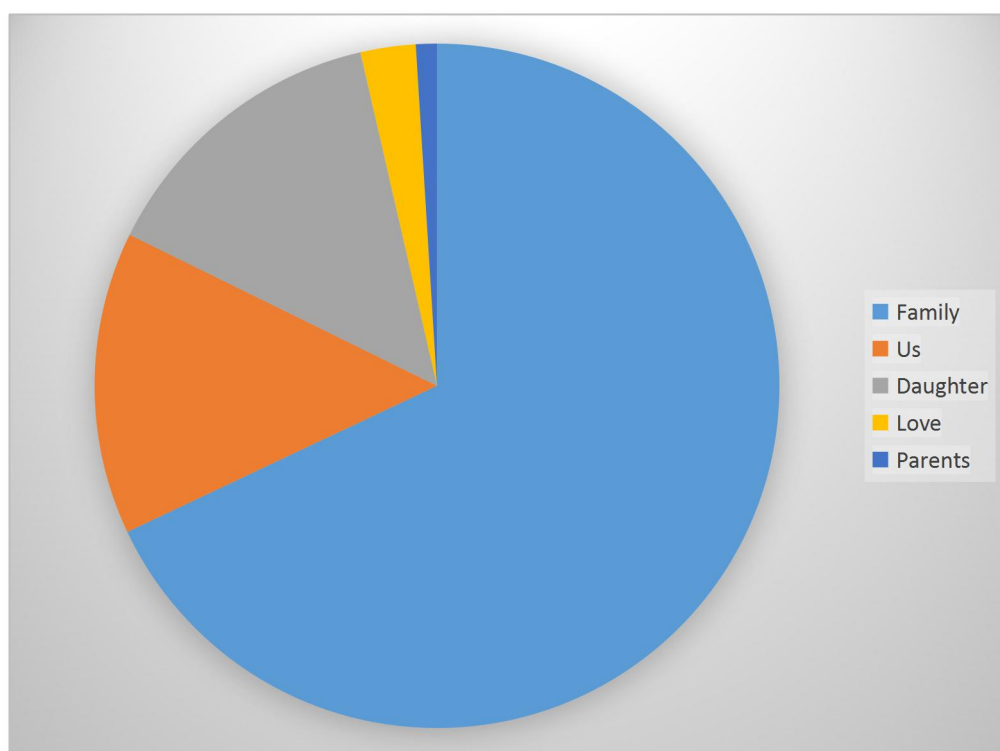


Figure 4.4 - Percentage distribution of high word frequency in reports of Peng Liyuan's family life

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Table 4.10 - Percentage distribution of high word frequency in reports of Peng Liyuan's family life

Words in family life reports	Number of word occurrences	Number of reports	Percentage of word frequency
Family	26	8	67.98%
Us	14	6	14.29%
Daughter	13	5	14.14%
Love	8	4	2.6%
Parents	7	4	0.99%

Using the word frequency search of People's Daily as an auxiliary, we can see there are two main types of image constructs for Peng Liyuan.

The first is a ceremonial presence as the leader's companion. In contrast to the "strong" political diplomacy of the head of the state, the partner of the leader has weakened the ideology of the Chinese top political leadership, which has been criticized by many Western countries for its seriousness. The First Lady, as a flexible force in foreign affairs, can actively complement the head of state's diplomatic activities.

Second, as a supporter of public diplomacy, she promotes international exchanges. Compared with the tense atmosphere of leaders negotiating for the sake of national interests, diplomacy between First Ladies is much more relaxed, making also up for the aspects that many leaders have no time to take care of during their visits, such as culture, education, charity and other related fields.

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4.2 Research findings

First, the focus of the coverage content is different between official and new media. The coverage of new media is wide, with prominent coverage of Peng Liyuan. The official media has prominent coverage of the summit diplomacy, but the image of the First lady is not too obviously portrayed in a more serious style. The focus of Sina.com's report is on the physical appearance. Compared with traditional media paying attention to Peng Liyuan's performance in public diplomacy activities, the online media pays more attention to the physical image and clothing during Peng Liyuan's visit. On the one hand, Peng Liyuan expresses the importance of Chinese traditional culture and support for local brands through her outfits, which is worthy of recognition. But on the other hand, the official media finds it necessary to prevent the coverage of the First Lady from being too entertaining. As the official media, "People's Daily" still focuses on promoting the government's policies and the important foreign affairs activities of the state leaders, supplemented by other content. Judging from the main contents of the reports, the shaping of the image of the "first lady" mainly revolves around her participation in foreign affairs, cultural exchanges and charity work, and little attention has been paid to the enthusiasm of the new media for fashion reporting, which is related to the seriousness and political nature of the official media. Through the topic setting of her cultural, charity and public welfare trips, the value of the "First Lady" is embodied. But the overall coverage is not very large.

Second, the language style of the reports is different. The lively language style of Sina.com reports is not only reflected in the setting of headlines, but also in the codification of content. Some screenshots of the headlines are as follows:

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<https://news.sina.com.cn> > [xlw](#) > [doc-ihmutuec6004094](#) ▼

彭丽媛会见巴总统夫人出席艾滋病防治宣传活动 - 新浪新闻

2018年12月4日 — 原标题：**彭丽媛**会见巴拿马总统夫人卡斯蒂略 并共同出席艾滋病防治公共宣传活动新华社巴拿马城12月3日电（记者王卓伦）当地时间3日中午， ...

<http://news.sina.com.cn> > ... > [习近平出访美洲专题](#) ▼

特多女总理称赞彭丽媛风度翩翩与其英语交谈 - 新浪新闻

2013年6月1日 — 习近平出访美洲#【特多女总理赞**彭丽媛**风度翩翩】特立尼达和多巴哥女总理比塞萨尔说：“中国第一夫人风度翩翩、而且很美丽。**彭丽媛**能够讲英语，我们是用 ...

<http://news.sina.com.cn> > ... ▼

彭丽媛弯腰轻吻印度男孩(图) - 新浪新闻

2014年9月18日 — 【**彭丽媛**手把手教印度学生练书法】2名印度女学生用毛笔学着写“温故知新”。看了一会，**彭丽媛**主动上前用手握着一位女生的手，帮助矫正手腕姿势， ...

<http://news.sina.com.cn> > [xlw](#) > [doc-ifykpya3311752](#) ▼

习近平彭丽媛欢迎金砖和受邀国领导人及配偶 - 新浪新闻

2017年9月5日 — 原标题：习近平和**彭丽媛**欢迎金砖国家和新兴市场国家与发展中国家对话会受邀领导人及配偶、嘉宾新华社厦门9月4日电（记者侯丽军、刘娟）国家主席 ...

<http://news.sina.com.cn> > [国内新闻](#) ▼

彭丽媛为荷兰郁金香命名不用自己名字(图) - 新浪新闻

2014年4月24日 — 4月22日，在北京国际鲜花港万花馆大厅，展台正中的一簇郁金香，吸引了众多游人驻足。这盆由荷兰远道而来的花，有着偏紫色的、微微褶皱的花朵， ...

<http://news.sina.com.cn> > [国内新闻](#) ▼

彭丽媛或带女儿出席迎接米歇尔母女晚宴 - 新浪新闻

2014年3月21日 — 应中国国家主席习近平夫人**彭丽媛**邀请，美国总统奥巴马夫人米歇尔昨日抵京，开启为期一周的访华之旅。这是米歇尔第一次来中国，也是美国第一夫人首次 ...

<http://news.sina.com.cn> > ... ▼

微博涌现十余个“第一夫人”粉丝团 - 新浪新闻

2013年3月30日 — 晨报96101热线**新闻**(记者彭小菲)近日，初登国际舞台的中国“第一夫人”**彭丽媛**，凭借着端庄优雅的气质和时尚亮眼的着装，一亮相便引起全球媒体的关注。

<http://news.sina.com.cn> > ... > [习近平出访美洲专题](#) ▼

英报：中国第一夫人闪耀拉美赢得更多粉丝 - 新浪新闻

2013年6月4日 — 英国每日邮报关注了中国第一夫人**彭丽媛**在随国家主席习近平出访加勒比时展现的风采，称这位歌唱家在拉美赢得了大量新粉丝。以下是文章概要：中国第一 ...

The translation is as follows:

Peng Liyuan meets with wife of Panama's President to attend AIDS awareness campaign - Sina News December 4, 2018.

Trinidad and Tobago's female PM praises Peng Liyuan's poise, speaks with her in English - Sina News, June 1, 2013

Peng Liyuan bends down to kiss Indian boy (photo) - Sina News September 18, 2014

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Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan welcome leaders and spouses of BRICS and invited countries - SINA News September 5, 2017

Peng Liyuan names Dutch tulips without using her own name (Photo) - Sina News, April 22, 2014

Peng Liyuan may bring daughter to greet Michelle Obama's mother and daughter at dinner - Sina News March 21, 2014

More than a dozen "first lady" fan groups emerge on Weibo - Sina News March 30, 2013

China's first lady shines in Latin America, wins more fans - Sina News June 4, 2013

People's Daily has a more serious language style, and reports on its foreign affairs activities in a moderate manner. Due to the editorial policy of the official media, Xi Jinping is still the main focus in the headline setting of the reports. Judging from the headline settings, Peng Liyuan's image is still attached to that of the leader's wife and is more rigorous. Part of it reads as follows: "Accompanied by the Dean, Peng Liyuan appreciated the wonderful vocal and instrumental performances by award-winning students and alumni, visited the Museum of Musical Instruments, viewed the manuscripts of Mozart, Chopin and other music masters collected in the library, and exchanged views with faculty and students. Peng Liyuan said that music, as a noble art form, transcends national, ethnic, historical and cultural boundaries. The Royal Conservatory of Music has cultivated many world-class artists", (People's Daily, 2015) "President Xi Jinping's wife Peng Liyuan attended the meeting" (People's Daily, 2014) and other such phrases.

Thirdly, the types of pictures reported are different. The pictures selected by Sina.com in its news reports on Peng Liyuan are diverse. Not only is Peng Liyuan the protagonist, but they can also show her charm, and the selection is wide and

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representative. The People's Daily, on the other hand, uses more photos of Xi and Peng on official occasions, or photos of Xi Jinping's state visits, which are sometimes not connected to the content of the report.

Fourth, the word frequency reports show the media image construction of Peng Liyuan. Chinese media portrayed Peng Liyuan with a personal image of elegance, fashion and beauty, a positive and wise diplomatic image, a public charity image and family image of "good wife and mother".

5. Discussion: Reflections on the Construction of the Chinese First Lady's Identity in Media Coverage

5.1 The "First Lady" media image "fever" in the Chinese media perspective

While the number of news reports on the First Lady in the official media People's Daily has remained above 10 per year, Sina.com has been less consistent in reporting on Peng Liyuan, from 132 reports in 2013, to 78 in 2014, to 49 in 2015. However, the media coverage also provides a glimpse of the high level of activity of the "First Lady". From 2013-2018 news reports about "first ladies" in Sina.com and People's Daily, China's "first lady" Peng Liyuan has a high exposure rate. We can see that China has started to pay attention to the construction of the media image of "first ladies" and the positive role of "first ladies" in political communication in recent years, driven by the officials, Chinese media of all types began to actively spread the positive image of "Peng Liyuan" as the first lady, igniting the fervor of "China's First Lady".

What kind of image does the Chinese media portray of the "First Lady" Peng Liyuan? From the word frequency data on diplomatic foreign visit reports, we can see that Peng Liyuan's artistic charm and positive energy during foreign visits were conveyed and became important labels for the construction of her media image. Peng Liyuan's public diplomacy role was highlighted by the media, who portrays her as an active undertaker of this role. With her outstanding personal performance, Peng not only adds luster to the image of Chinese women, but also becomes a window for the world to know China. Her performance in diplomatic and public events fully demonstrates the subtlety and elegance of Chinese culture and conveys the goodwill and friendliness of the Chinese people, matching the image of a civilized and responsible great power that China wants to build. Peng Liyuan is gradually becoming the face of the country's image, injecting positive power into the communication of the country's image.

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From the analysis of the content of Sina.com's reports in Chapter 4, we can see that the media audience pays much attention to the external aspects of Peng Liyuan's appearance, matching clothes, and image temperament, as well as her singing career and singing strength, but there is little mention and discussion of Peng Liyuan's status as a female politician as a member of the CPPCC. I think that Sina.com is consistent with the mainstream media in disseminating valuable news reports about Peng Liyuan's impact on China as the "First Lady", and there are no unique, negative, or even critical reports about her, thus the online media focus on the embodiment of the national value of the "first lady" in the construction of the image of the "first lady", prevent the image of the first lady from being too entertaining and prevent the image of the first lady from being damaged, thus endangering the national image. People's Daily, as the official media, has a more official and singular media image of First Lady Peng Liyuan.

The role of Peng Liyuan as the First Lady is not only playing the role of a political accompaniment of the top leader, but also playing an active role in culture, art and public welfare, becoming an ambassador of public charity, an ambassador of traditional culture exchange, and focusing more on her positive social influence as a woman, which shows that Peng Liyuan's role as the First Lady is richer, more three-dimensional and more vivid in the media. Thus, in the new media era and the new era of China's political development, Sina.com and People's Daily's construction of the media image of the First Lady has undergone a transformation from a "face-like" portrayal to a "vivid" presentation.

However, if we only analyze the news reports of Sina.com and People's Daily that focus on the First Lady, we can see that Sina.com's reports on the media image construction of China's First Lady Peng Liyuan focus on diplomatic visits and external appearance, while People's Daily focuses on the image construction of China's First Lady Peng Liyuan, mainly on her participation in foreign affairs, cultural exchanges and charity work, but not much attention is paid to the new media's passion

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for fashion reports.

Peng Liyuan has been active on the international diplomatic stage many times as an independent woman, attracting the attention of the world and making the world more aware of Chinese women, greatly playing the diplomatic advantage of the "first lady". However, despite her independent stance, the First Lady is still far from the political center and does not occupy a central political position in this male-dominated society. Although in contemporary China, women are beginning to step out of the home and gradually participate in social production practices, becoming an important part of socialist development and construction by participating in the management of state affairs, women are participating in all political activities with a male mindset, defending their own interests and power, and working for the welfare of the general public of women. However, there are many problems in the process of women's participation in politics, such as the marginalization of women's power, the weak awareness of elected women, and a weak social effect. Therefore, behind the "first lady" boom in China, Chinese women as a whole lack awareness and have not been fully liberated by feminism.

5.2 China's "First Lady" Peng Liyuan and the Progress of Chinese Feminism

5.2.1 Analysis of the Progress of Chinese Feminism from the Perspective of Chinese History

The word frequency data from the public welfare reports Chinese media portrayed Peng Liyuan as an atmospheric, stylish and beautiful individual, an active and wise diplomat, a philanthropic figure and a "virtuous wife and mother" family figure. In 394 reports in Sina.com and 295 reports in People's Daily, there are almost no derogatory or critical words. After reading through 689 news reports, I am left with the impression that China's first lady "Peng Liyuan" is perfect in all areas of news coverage. Not only does she have no flaws, but they make her career in these areas almost flawless, if not near perfect. The only news that can be searched on the homepage are news from mainstream political media such as Sina.com, CCTV.com, Military.com and People's Daily. The layout, content and headlines of these news are all extremely uniform. This also shows that the Chinese government and the official media need a role model. "Almighty," "perfect," and "can do no wrong." Words that also reflect that the media image of China's "first lady" is an poster image. The media image building of China's "first lady" Peng Liyuan is a symbol of China's soft power at home and abroad.

The majority of the female audience's interest in China's "First Ladies" began when Peng Liyuan accompanied President Xi Jinping on his state visit. During this period, the number of news stories about China's First Ladies reached a new high in terms of coverage and public reading. Many women who had never followed political news began to follow the stories. Most of the women interviewed said that they were impressed by the almost perfect image of Peng Liyuan in the media and that it gave them a sense of pride. From their interest in reading news about Peng Liyuan, they have gradually developed an interest in national politics and China's development. They believe that Peng Liyuan's image as China's "First Lady" is gradually changing

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some of the stereotypes of Chinese women in the international community and spreading the image of Chinese women as confident, generous and elegant.

The status of women in a country is an important indicator of a country's civilization, and the degree of women's development is an important criterion of a modern power. The socialist visionary Fourier once said that "the emancipation of women is always the natural measure of the general emancipation of a nation" (Wilson, 2002). Xue Chong, a history scholar at Suffolk University, also said, "The cultural essence of the first lady is the respect for women" (Xue, 2016, p. 52). It is not easy for the Chinese women's movement and the status of women in China to achieve what it has today, given the importance that China attaches to the status of women in society and the protection of their rights at the level of the legal system, the intensity of media campaigns, and the attitude of official leaders towards women's issues (Watson, 2000). China attaches great importance to the social status of women's groups and the protection of their rights at these levels, from the formulation of the legal system, the intensity of media publicity and the attitude of official leaders towards women's issues, and it is quite hard for the Chinese women's movement and women's status to achieve what they have today.

In the long history of China, since the slave society, women have been at the bottom of the hierarchy, and ordinary women were not even as valuable as cattle and sheep, which were sacrificial animals. In the transition to the more civilized feudal society, Chinese women were bound by feudal ethics for a long time due to the strict hierarchy, and the rules of behavior adhered to the "three obediences and four virtues", which refers to women obeying their fathers before they marry, their husbands after they marry, and their sons after their husbands die. The "four virtues" refer to women's morality, women's speech, women's appearance, and women's merit (Yang, 2001, p. 41).

The norm of "three obediences" explained that in feudal society women could not

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survive independently throughout their lives and had to live through their fathers, husbands and sons, and the norm of "four virtues" explained that women had to abide by the social norms of women's morality, be careful with their words, and be able to do female tasks such as embroidery. The "four virtues" code of women's moral standards, which were increasingly stringent in feudal society as the times changed, even to the detriment of women's health in order to gain the perverse aesthetics required by the male community, undoubtedly illustrated the low social status of feudal women. During this long period of history, women were almost completely excluded from politics. With the establishment of New China and the liberation of women's consciousness, women gradually gained equal rights to education, employment and other basic rights, and the overall life quality of women was improved. When beauty became the measure of women's value, the image of women was gradually detached from the reality of life and the inherent prescriptiveness of the work, and became a commodity, a package, a selling point, a decoration, and a valuable security, according to Yang Jian, the author. "When the image of women filtered by men's eyes is pushed to the audience, when men appreciate women's appearance and body with great interest and achieve hidden sexual satisfaction in their imagination, women become the carrier of commercial culture in men's eyes, and are consumed and auctioned for an aesthetic" (Yang, 2006). The flourishing of mass media in the context of market economy has further contributed to the diffusion and spread of this trend and idea. The media seems to exploit only the natural attributes of the female body, but ignore the social position and social value that women should have as social roles. Today, with the rapid acceleration of global integration, Chinese feminism has been brought into line with the world, women's values are gradually recognized, women are gradually entering the political arena, and the number of female politicians is gradually increasing every year, and a variety of factors in Chinese society have fueled the public's expectations for the "First Lady" of China.

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5.2.2 The extent of Chinese women's participation in national politics

The headline setting shows that Sina.com's focus during news coverage of the First Lady is not on her being the President's spouse and joint coverage of the two, but on obtaining information of the First Lady herself, and news coverage of her participation in other causes or activities, which also indicates that the news platform and readers are more focused on Peng Liyuan personally, and less on her political media image as the President's spouse or First Lady. The language style of the People's Daily reports is more serious, with mostly moderate coverage of her foreign affairs activities. This indicates that the serious official media's coverage is still dominated by Xi's state visit and the duties of the first lady.

As international political news focuses on China's "first ladies", the enthusiasm of Chinese women for political participation should increase. China's "first ladies" have traditionally kept a low profile, which is closely related to China's political and cultural traditions. The high-profile appearance of China's First Lady Peng Liyuan is clearly not a personal act, but is inextricably linked to the new thinking or diplomacy of the Chinese foreign service. In the environment where the country's image is becoming increasingly important, it has become a challenging and difficult task for foreign affairs agencies to apply new ideas or methods to win international support and understanding of the Chinese government (Ma et al., 2016). Undoubtedly, Peng Liyuan has accomplished this task well, portraying the diplomatic image of the "First Lady of China" in a dignified, atmospheric and perfect manner, combining the beauty of traditional Chinese women with the beauty of new age independent women. The transformation of the First Lady's media image reflects the affirmation of women's value in Chinese society and represents the strong public opinion that China is eager to integrate into the core of the world and win international respect.

The state uses laws to protect women's rights and interests, such as the Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (2021-2030) released in 2021, which

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seriously states in the guiding ideology section on the first page that "we should implement the basic state policy of gender equality, continuously improve the institutional mechanism for promoting gender equality and women's comprehensive development, and promote gender equality as a common code of conduct and value standard for the whole society to follow". These policies promote women's social status and strengthen women's social rights and interests, which is in itself a manifestation of respect for women.

5.2.3 Chinese media's active construction and promotion of Chinese women's image

The media assume an important function of social construction, and modern society has been accompanied by the rapid development of mass media. The images of nations, leaders and first ladies are to a large extent shaped and constructed by the media. The rise of television media has unveiled the mystery of first ladies of various countries, while the rapid development of online media has greatly enriched the image of first ladies and facilitated the dissemination of their images (Shi, 1998, p. 150). American public opinion scholar Walter Lippmann's "two environments" theory believes that the public actually lives in two worlds: one is the real world called "first experience environment", and the other is called "second experience environment", which is mainly influenced by the media and forms the overall impression and evaluation of it (Lippmann, 2006, p. 8). It is difficult for the general audience to directly contact the first lady first hand and observe her real-world performance up close, and they mostly get the information about the first lady from the media, in which the media is the communication bridge between the general public and the first lady. With the change of information technology and the popularity of the Internet, the online media gradually becomes the mainstream information channel for people to receive messages, and the online media becomes an important carrier to influence the image of the first lady.

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In the analysis of Chapter 4, the data on physical appearance reports shows that I think the media is extremely positive about Peng Liyuan's outward appearance and fashion sense. Media coverage of Peng Liyuan is relatively balanced in terms of distribution of topics, personal achievements and social effects are both given importance. Her childhood schooling experience, her steady and atmospheric singing style, the honors she has received in her career, the continuous social positions she has held and her active efforts in the public sphere have all been the focus of media coverage of her personal achievements, outlining a First Lady of China that has caught the world's eye. The public is delighted to see that the First Lady not only has independent and confident personality traits and independent artistic achievements, but also is more frequently active in public affairs and becomes an active promoter of them. Fitting both the fashionable characteristics of contemporary women and the traditional family role that conforms to the expectations of the nation, it can be said that Peng Liyuan is the best interpretation of the beauty of modern and contemporary women.

From the word frequency data of the family life reports, the media portrayal of Peng Liyuan's family role focuses on reflecting her ordinary aspects as a wife, a mother and a family member, portraying the model of an ordinary Chinese family through the reports on Peng Liyuan's love when she was young, the details of her family after marriage and the daily routine of educating her daughter, establishing Peng Liyuan's family role as a virtuous wife and mother and achieving a balance with Peng Liyuan's other roles. While constructing the image of the first family, the media conveyed family harmony everywhere. Through media portrayals, the general audience is made aware that the top leader's family is just like millions of ordinary families. The first family is no longer cold, mysterious and unattainable, but grounded, friendly and referable.

We can clearly depict the media image of First Lady Peng Liyuan. Whether in diplomacy, family, external image, public welfare, etc., the First Lady of China shows

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positive energy, which indicates that Chinese officials and media are willing to shape the positive image of public women.

5.3 Limitations of Chinese Feminism from the Perspective of the "first lady"

5.3.1 The low level of political participation of Chinese women

From the data analysis of the image of philanthropy in Chapter 4, the high frequency words are education, charity, women, children, female, I think that Peng Liyuan attaches great importance to the issue of children's education and the care of disadvantaged and marginalized groups. The media coverage of Peng's philanthropic actions has portrayed a loving and kind first lady, conveying her humanitarian spirit. While it cannot be ruled out that some of the public service causes and titles are incidental to the "first lady" position itself and have an element of performance, in terms of actual results, Peng Liyuan has indeed done real work for the world's children and disadvantaged groups, and her public service image is deeply rooted in people's hearts. From the analysis of the photo coverage data, Sina.com is more diversified in the types of images of "First Lady" Peng Liyuan, complementing the construction of her image. The People's Daily, on the other hand, uses more pictures of Xi and Peng on official occasions, or pictures of Xi's state visits, which are sometimes not related to the content of the report, indicating that the official media still focus on political themes in their news coverage, highlighting state visits and rarely mentioning the diplomatic activities of the wife. This also suggests that the official media still needs to be more transparent and developed in covering the wives of leaders, and the theme should be more humane and people-friendly. This also reflects the fact that Chinese women are still on the periphery of politics, and that their external presence is limited to non-political matters: accompanying trips, caring for poor children in Africa, etc. Even when accompanying the President, they hardly participate in any political discussions (Zhang, 2017,p. 60).

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None of the political involvement from Peng Liyuan's first lady status indicates that Chinese women are extremely uninvolved in politics. And as a news audience, the majority of women's political interest remains at the level of reading political news, while their actual participation in political activities has not increased. Further analysis reveals that this disparity between women's awareness and action is due to the reinterpretation of the first lady"-related press. Although Peng appears frequently in political news, her status is still as a subordinate. As a result, her presence raises the political attention of female audiences, but does not substantively stimulate their political participation; rather, it creates a "hesitant" state of political participation (Liu, 2011).

In the political sphere, women are mostly on the periphery of the political power system, and their position in the power structure is relatively low, with fewer women in senior positions and above. The proportion of women in key leadership positions or at the top is low. The number of successful women is mainly in the shape of a pyramid, decreasing from the bottom to the top, the closer to the center of political power, the lower the rate of women's political participation, and the further away from the center of political power, the higher the rate of women's political participation. Even when women enter the top decision-making sphere, their rights are marginalized and they do not have a voice in all political decisions, which makes it difficult to truly achieve equity and protect women's rights. In addition, women's positions are gendered in the structure of political rights. They are subconsciously considered to be disadvantaged, their positions are labeled as gender-specific, and their gender is used as a criterion for measuring their positions, rather than their abilities and achievements, which seriously affects the effective exercise of women's political rights.

The "family-oriented" concept limits women's participation in social and especially political life, or rather, this concept of confining women to the private sphere promotes the development of men in the public sphere. The different division

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of labor between the public and private spheres has also shaped the different definitions of "success" for men and women: for men, success in a career is considered true success, while for women, success in a family is considered true success(Wang, 2008). This perception essentially limits women's activities in the public sphere, narrowing the definition of female success. Most female audiences agree that a stable job is necessary for modern women to be successful. They emphasize Peng's role as a singer and affirm that her role as a singer has contributed greatly to the work of the current "First Lady".

The dramatic news coverage of China's "First Lady" has made many women think about what it means to be "successful". In the news or in pictures, Peng Liyuan's calm demeanor, elegant clothing, and graceful physique are a combination of all the good qualities of traditional Chinese women. These qualities do not affect the definition of Peng Liyuan as a successful woman. Therefore, the news about Peng Liyuan has made the women's community realize that femininity is not a disadvantage for women to be successful, but rather a stepping stone to success.

5.3.2 Chinese women have a low sense of self-identity

Chinese women's social status is rising, as is their awareness of equality. In their study, scholars Xie Chen and Park Hongyuan selected 12 female readers of People's Daily for in-depth interviews to understand their views on China's First Lady Peng Liyuan and how she has influenced China, and their findings showed that they showed three major commonalities when interpreting news about China's "First Lady", namely, political hesitancy, shifting perceptions of success, and ambivalent self-confidence (Xie & Park, 2016, p. 80). These three major commonalities show the attitudes of female news readers. On the one hand, the news about China's "first ladies" is like a spiritual baptism for women, which makes them pay more attention to political news, rethink the definition of successful women, and improve their self-confidence. At the same time, the media image of China's "First Lady" has raised

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Chinese women's self-awareness and led a group of outstanding politician women, elite women leading in various industries and independent women of the new era to appear in the mass media, so that women's groups can find a direction to strive for. On the other hand, Chinese women's attitude toward politics makes them hesitant and hesitant, and they oscillate between self-confidence and inferiority (Yu, 2014, p. 8), because "Peng Liyuan" and the above-mentioned outstanding women are only the best of the female group, who are highly educated, have a good family environment, and have a sense of self-growth and in contrast, China has a large population and a large proportion of ordinary women are still living in social difficulties, and there is a large gap between the actual status of women in China and the ideal high ground constructed by the media.

This also shows that the majority of the Chinese women's self-confidence as a group is treading water. While national self-confidence has been strengthened, women's self-confidence as a group has not been boosted as much as expected. Male judgment and male affirmation are still the goals that many women focus on and chase. Most women, although very concerned and fond of the news related to First Lady Peng, prefer to talk about Peng with men or their husbands. It is not difficult to find that they want to talk about the news about the First Lady with their male friends or boyfriends or husbands, not only as a gesture of "raising eyebrows", but also to get the attention and affirmation of men to the news about Peng Liyuan and get satisfaction from it. In short, they want men to share their interest in the development and success of good women.

In essence, this is a reflection of a lack of self-confidence. Self-affirmation and appreciation do not bring them sufficient satisfaction, but rather the recognition and affirmation of the male public is the most important criterion for them to measure their value. The news about the "First Lady" has strengthened women's confidence in the country, but it has not had a significant impact on the self-confidence of women themselves as a group (Wang, 2004).

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It is important to strengthen women's consciousness of their participation in politics. Women's consciousness of their role is to fulfill their social responsibility, historical mission and obligation in life, and to have an objective view of their status, value and role. By participating in social or natural transformation, women will realize their own characteristics and realize their own values and needs, and strengthen their sense of competition and political participation, so that they can consciously and actively raise their sense of subjectivity, promote their comprehensive development, and form the overall advantage of women's political participation.

5.3.3 Patriarchal Society's Bondage to Chinese Feminism

Patriarchal ideology has been a very important system maintained throughout the the development of Chinese society. Although women have been given many freedoms and rights in today's society, the basic male dominated social form has not been fundamentally shaken. In ideological theory, the media is still seen as a hegemonic institution that attempts to shape patriarchal thought into a generally accepted consciousness, and even to transform this ideology into common sense(Van Zoonen, 1994). Through the female audience's interpretation of the news about the "First Lady" in the People's Daily, it is clear that the social status of Chinese women is increasing and their awareness of equality is growing. However, this does not conceal the plight of women in society at large. For example, their political consciousness is still full of hesitation in translating into political action, and they still do not have sufficient self-confidence in their own group. It can be said that the construction of women's identity in the new era in China still has a long way to go.

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Conclusion

The media image of China's First Lady is a personal image of magnificence, fashion and beauty, an image of active and wise diplomacy, an image of charity and a family image of "good wife and good mother", and the identity of China's First Lady is constructed by the media as an "internal and external" woman. The media has constructed the identity of China's First Lady as an "all-around woman", an independent woman with self-identity and talent, even if we know that this is very much crafted as an image and that it corresponds to the very limited functions when she may perform politically. Because of this, the emergence of "First Ladies" may have a positive effect on the awakening of women's self-awareness and may help to break the stereotypes of women in the public and society. The First Lady is the most visible woman in a country, and she has a leading role for women. This may be beneficial to the future development of Chinese women. Even in its very scripted and limited role, the promotion of the media image of China's First Ladies may contribute to the further development of Chinese feminism and to the development of women's movement.

Because women are influenced by feudal ideology and social culture, they have learned a mentality of inferiority, weakness, dependency, and a hesitancy, and they are less aware of competition and dare not fully express themselves. Especially in rural areas, the rate of women's political participation has increased compared to the past, but the awareness of women's election is very weak, and the election only remains formal, but does not enter into the substantive stage of the election.

At the same time, we do not forget that the media image of China's first ladies also shows the obvious disadvantages of officialization and schematization, which do not help the representation of women politicians in practice and cannot address the gap between the ideal media image of women and the actual status of women. The news about China's "First Ladies" has been a spiritual baptism for women, making

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them pay more attention to political news, rethink the definition of successful women, and raise their self-confidence in the country. However, this does not conceal the current plight of women in society at large. For example, their political consciousness is still full of hesitations in translating into political actions, and they still do not have sufficient self-confidence in their own group. It can be said that the construction of women's identity in the new era in China still has a long way to go. This also needs to be discussed in the future.

This uses the news of People's Daily and Sina.com as a sample for analysis, and the diversity of media choices seems to be very narrow. In terms of vertical comparison, this dissertation does not compare the media images of China's "first ladies" with those of other countries.

The study of "first lady" first emerged in the West, but the attention to "first lady" in China started later, so we can learn more from the experience of the West through comparative study, so as to better serve the image construction of "first lady" in China. As for the research angle, this study tries to analyze the media image of the "first ladies" in order to find out how much importance the country attaches to the national image and the diplomacy of wives, and also hopes to link the changes of the media image of the successive "first ladies" with the history of China in order to find the reasons for them. However, these issues are of profound political and historical complexity, some of the documents are confidential, and some of the topics are politically sensitive, so it is difficult to conduct a comprehensive and deeper analysis due to the limitation of space, research capacity and availability of materials, and our thinking has focused on the impact of first ladies on women's groups and feminism, ignoring the complexity of feminism.

First of all, while we should actively promote the institutionalization of "First Lady' diplomacy" and give full play to the advantages of this diplomacy, we should also understand that the role she plays is quite scripted and limited and we should

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learn to look beyond that. Internationally, "first ladies" often appear in the diplomatic arena, but always in a "secondary role", accompanying the top leaders, with clear boundaries on the functions they perform, and not challenging the top leaders' dominant diplomatic position. Thus, the public is reluctant to see "first ladies" with political power, and most of them believe that top leaders and their spouses should work together to shape the image of the media rather than share power (Troy, 2000). China's successive "first ladies" have followed the same pattern in their diplomatic activities, appearing mainly in escorting, obligatory, and ceremonial roles, and rarely in policy roles, offering policy advice or participating in political decision-making. On the one hand, this "role" has made the "first lady" a success, making her closely linked to culture and the arts and social welfare, but on the other hand, the established framework has also limited the "first lady"'s role in international affairs. However, this role should not be a substitute for the importance of women's political role in society at large.

Second, therefore, we should remember that women's overall education and cultural knowledge determine their ability to participate in politics, which directly affects their political status. In the case of China, women's political participation is an important manifestation of socialist democratic politics, and on the basis of relevant policies, women should learn relevant knowledge and improve their comprehensive abilities and education level. Since the level of education directly affects women's perceptions of political behavior and attitudes, the more educated women are, the more they will be involved in politics. We should increase women's access to education and broaden their knowledge through education development, increase girls' access to education by gradually achieving universal primary education, and increasing enrollment and transition rates, provide multiple channels and levels of in-service and continuing education to bring about a substantial change in the educational status of women, strengthen women's ideological and political education, such as the study of the Marxist concept of women, socialist market economy,

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ideology and politics, to improve women's political awareness and ideological and political level, and thus improve the overall qualification of women.

Third, culture has an important impact on the social and political life of the country. Due to the shackles of traditional Chinese feudal culture, the culture of male power remains in all areas of social life, hindering the development of women and making it difficult to achieve gender equality. In contemporary China, the overall socio-economic development of the country culture should provide the conditions for establishing the basic state policy of gender equality and broaden the space for women's development. By building and improving gender culture, we will be creating a favorable environment for women's political participation. Advanced gender culture is the ideological reflection of the correct understanding of social values and the equal relationship between men and women, and it can effectively promote and realize the harmonious development of gender equality by fairly evaluating the influence and role of women in social and economic development. In contemporary China, gender culture focuses on the joint development of female and male cultures, emphasizing the harmonious development of both genders to promote the progress and development of society as a whole, but this means to break the misconceptions of the traditional female culture, to advocate respect, tolerance and equality, and recognize the role and status of women in social life, politics and economy.

Perhaps one day we can also discuss how the media can portray a “First gentleman' diplomacy” too.

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