Women's Education in the Late Qing Dynasty: A look at Nüzi shijie (1904-1907)

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Women's Education in the Late Qing Dynasty: A look at *Nüzi shijie* (1904-1907)

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Content

Introduction

Today, men and women in China both receive the same education. However, this has not always been the case. Initially, when discussing the topic of women's education, the May Fourth Movement was often mentioned as the starting point for modern female education in China. However, this view of the May Fourth Movement as the starting point has changed. The reason for that is that women's education had already been an important point of discussion during the late Qing. The late Qing era (1895-1911) is known to have been a tumultuous time full of conflict, starting with the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895 and ending with the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. In this period, Chinese intellectuals and officials started the advocate for reforms, in order to save their weakened country. Women's education was one of the most important topics that came up. At that time, most Chinese women only received a traditional education at home. However, since 1844 some missionary schools for women had been established in China. During the late Qing era, Chinese reformers started to establish their own schools for women. While initially these schools were only privately owned, due to the Qing government not officially supporting public women's education, in the last few years of the Qing the government also started to establish their own schools for girls.

Much research has been done about not only the establishment of girls' schools in the late Qing, but also about how different groups of people, conservatives, reformers, radicals, both male and female, thought about the issue. In his book *Gender and Education in China: Gender Discourses and Women's Schooling in the Early Twentieth Century* Paul J. Bailey gives an extensive overview of the development of women's education in both the late Qing and early Republic. In addition to giving a historical overview of girls' schools, he also provides information on different reformers and conservatives and what their opinions were regarding this topic. Ida Belle Lewis gives in her book *The Education of Girls in China* an overview of how women's education changed from traditional education in the home, to public education in schools. Originally written in 1919, Lewis had access to many primary sources about statistics and stories of girls' schools, which provides a deep insight into the situation at that time. In *Different Worlds of Discourse* edited by Nanxiu Qian, Grace Fong and Richard Smith, multiple authors write about different topic about the debate surrounding women in the late Qing and early Republic. 'Talented women' (才女), women's education, women's periodicals and the new media were just a few of the topics that were discussed in the book, each delivering unique insights into the debate surrounding women. For the chapter about the new print media, the works of Christopher A. Reed *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-*

1937 and Charlotte L. Beahan, "Feminism and Nationalism in the Chinese Women's Press, 1902-1911" were indispensable. Reed describes in his book the development of the print press in Shanghai, which contributed to the rise of Shanghai as the publishing center in the late Qing, and Beahan talks about the relationship between nationalism and feminism in the new media, the women's periodicals.

When discussing women's education, the opinions of the famous conservatives, reformers and radicals, like Liang Qichao and Zhang Zhidong are widely known. However, these famous intellectuals were just a few of the people who were involved in the debate. To find out what other intellectuals, both male and female thought about women's education. Did they support the views of Liang Qichao or did their arguments differ. To do this I will do a case study of the women's periodicals *Nüzi shijie* 女子世界 (Women's world, from here on NZSJ). Nanxiu Qian did a similar case study in *Different Worlds of Discourse*, but she compared the opinions of women reformers in two different women's periodicals that were also published in the late Qing. NZSJ, which was published between 1904 and 1907, was the longest running women's periodical in the late Qing. Moreover, it was published during a time where women's education became increasingly important. By looking at the NZSJ, I want to research what the writers of the periodical thought about women's education. My research question for this thesis is thus, "To what extend extent are the mainstream ideas on women's educations in the late Qing reflected in the women's periodical *Nüzi Shijie* (女子世界)?"

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter gives a historical overview of women's education in the late Qing dynasty. It describes first briefly how traditional women's education worked, followed by a description of the missionary girls' schools that were established since 1844, and ends with an account of the Chinese-run schools that were established in the late Qing. The second chapter gives a brief historical account of the development of the print press and the new media in China. Chapter three is divided in two parts, the first part gives a detailed account of the views of intellectuals who were involved the debate surrounding women's education. Following this, the second part is a discussion of a variety of articles and essays published in NZSJ.

Women's Education in the Qing Dynasty

When talking about modern women's education, the May Fourth Movement and the following period were initially considered to be the start point, however, already during the late Qing women's education had already been important points of discussion. Moreover, while modern women's education started in the late Qing, this does not mean that before that time women did not receive any education. While different, before the rise of public education, women would receive an education at home. Before being able to discuss the implications of the reform movement for women's education, an historical overview of women's education in the late Qing should be provided. This chapter will only give an overview of the important events, the opinions or reasons of the reformers involved in the process will be described in chapter three. I decided not to include the reformers views in this chapter, because this chapter is purely to establish the historical background of how the education system for girls in the late Qing was.

While women's education was not formally acknowledged and regulated until 1907, that does not mean that girls did not receive education before this time. Traditionally, girls did not receive the same education as boys. While some girls, mainly those from well-to-do families, often attended the same classes as their brothers until they reached puberty, most girls only received some education at home or none at all.[1] According to Lee "the aim of traditional women's education was limited to the teaching of social ethics and family traditions with an emphasis on how to become a virtuous wife and good mother."[2] Confucianism was central in the upbringing and education of women. As Lewis mentioned in her book, "The standards of moral education were filial piety and obedience to the husband, submission to the desires of brothers and sisters-in-law, and humility of spirit."[3] These moral codes and social customs, which governed women's behavior in the past, were also called the 'Husband as Guidance' and the 'Three Obediences and Four Virtues' doctrines.[4] The main goal of the traditional education was to teach girls to become dutiful wives and mothers.[5] This education took place in the home, as such, most girls did not have the opportunity to go to school or to learn how to read and write.[6] However, this does not mean that there were no literate women in China's history. As

[1] Sally Borthwick, "Social Implications of the New Schools," in *Education and Social Change in China: The Beginning of the Modern Era* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 114.
[2] Wong Yin Lee, "Women's Education in Traditional and Modern China," *Women's History Review* 4, no. 3 (1995): 345. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029500200092.
[3] Lewis, Ida Belle, *The Education of Girls in China* (New York: Teachers college, Columbia University, 1919), 7.
[4] Lee, "Women's Education," 347.
[5] Idem, 353.
[6] Ibid.

mentioned above some girls from well-to-do families, often literati families, did receive an education which entailed more than moral behavior and household skills. They studied classical texts and literature compositions. These c*ainü* (才女), or 'talented women' showed their talents in their writings, often poetry, and passed this tradition to their daughters.[7]

Missionary schools

Still, it was not until the nineteenth century that girl's schools were to be opened in China. After the first opium war (1839-1842), China signed the Treaty of Nanjing (1842), the first of a series of unequal treaties with Western countries. As a result of these treaties, five port cities (Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, Guangzhou and Amoy) were forcibly opened for Westerners to live in, trade and the treaty also allowed the spreading of Christianity.[8] This led to the arrival of Western missionaries to these five treaty ports. According to Liu, "Missionary education was considered a practical instrument for establishing contact with Chinese and insuring a regular audience for Christian teachings."[9] As a result, missionaries started to establish schools, first in the five treaty ports and over the years also in other parts of China. Women's education was also on their agenda. In 1844 the first missionary run girls' school was established in Ningbo by Miss Mary Ann Aldersey. Another treaty that was signed in 1858 gave Protestant and Catholic missionaries official permission to spread their faith, and thus also establish schools, in the rest of China.[10] The number of girls' schools that were established by the missionaries differs between sources. According to Liu, between 1847 and 1860, 12 girls' schools had been established in the five treaty ports by Protestant missionaries, and by 1876 more than 2000 students were studying in at least 121 girls' schools.[11] Lewis mentioned that between 1849 and 1860 the number of schools increased from 3 to 12, and that the number of students increased from most likely less than 50 students to about 196 students in the schools.[12] However, according to Lewis there were only 38 protestant schools with just 524 students in 1877, this is much less than the number that Liu gives in their article. The cause for this might be that the

[7] Xiaoping Cong, "From "Cainü" to "Nü Jiaoxi": Female Normal Schools and the Transformation of Women's Education in the Late Qing Period, 1895-1911," in *Different Worlds of Discourse,* eds. Nanxiu Qian, Grace Fong, and Richard Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 117-118.
[8] Paul J. Bailey, *Gender and Education in China: Gender Discourses and Women's Schooling in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2007), 12.
[9] Xiaoyi Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern Schooling in Late Qing China (1840-1911)," *Education Journal* 37 (2009): 95.
[10] Lewis, *The Education of Girls,* 19.
[11] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern," 95.
[12] Lewis, *The Education of Girls,* 24.

numbers that Liu mentioned for 1876 also included the girls' schools that were established by Catholic missionaries, which Lewis did not include in her accounts.

While the establishment of these missionary run girls' schools was the first step towards the later reform movement, they initially did not enjoy much support from the Chinese. Initially the missionary schools initially catered mainly to the poor and it was only after the 1880s, when they expanded the curriculum, that the attendance to the schools rose. According to Lewis, while there had only been 38 Protestant schools with 524 students in 1877, nineteen years later, in 1896, the number of Protestant girls' schools had risen to 308 schools with 6798 students.[13] In addition to the Chinese-language instruction courses in simple Christian and Confucian texts, training in needlework and embroidery, missionary schools over time also started to teach other subjects such as English, science, history and physical education.[14] Along with the rise in the number of students in the girls' schools mentioned above, the schools also started to ask tuition fees in the 1880s. Initially, the schools did not ask for tuition and provided the students with food and uniforms. In return some schools required the students to do work for them in order to help support the school financially, for example a Presbyterian school in Shanghai required students to "work at spinning, weaving, making and mending clothes, knitting, crocheting, [and] embroidering."[15] However, over the years the missionary schools slowly started to attract more students from upper class families, whose parents were able and willing to pay for their daughters education. The McTyeire School for girls, which was established in 1892 in Shanghai, marked the turning point for this change in attendance. Now missionary schools no longer only catered to only poor girls, but also attracted daughters from upper-class families. In order to not alienate potential students and their families, the mission schools continued to emphasize that they were aiming to train 'model homemakers'.[16]

The missionary schools had a profound impact on Chinese society. According to Cong, the missionary schools significantly influenced women's education in two different ways:

> First, missionary schools brought the issue of female education, formerly confined within the domestic domain, to the public realm and heartened Chinese gentry elite to push previously existing female education into the public domain. Second, certain aspects of the missionary schools for girls were adopted by the Chinese gentry when setting up their own girls' schools; for example, some courses of missionary schools

[13] Ibid.
[14] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 12.
[15] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern," 96.
[16] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 13.

were introduced into the curriculum of Chinese girls' schools, and these schools also hired foreign teachers to teach these courses.[17]

To add to this, Chiang argues that, through the education of Chinese men and women, the missionary's schools promoted Western ideas and beliefs, like gender equality, which later on helped further the emancipation and also the empowerment of Chinese women.[18] These Western ideas undermined the traditional Confucian beliefs that "a woman without talent is a woman of virtue" and "an educated woman is a worthless woman."[19] Lastly, a more practical impact of the missionary schools was that these schools produced teachers who would then later be capable to teach in the new schools that were being established.[20] The missionary schools continued to exist and grow even after Chinese-run girls' schools started to be established. When we look at the numbers on the Protestant missionary schools, we see that in 1896 there were 308 Protestant schools with 6798 students, which increased to 16.910 students in an unknown number of schools in 1910.[21] When looking at the number of students in the Catholic missionary schools, we see that in 1912 there were 49.987 students attending these schools.

Chinese-run girls' schools

The first Chinese-run girls' schools appeared in the late 1890s. While some Chinese (male) literati had already been discussing the topic of women's education, it was not until after the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 that the debate became more widespread. Fueled by a sense a national humiliation after losing against Japan, discussions about China's weakness and its possible causes arose. Women's education, or to be more clear the lack of women's education, was quickly seen as one of the causes of China's weakness. The reform movement that occurred due to this insight led to the 'Hundred Days Reform' of 1898 in which emperor Guanxu put forward reforms in many areas.[22]

Already before the start of the 'Hundred Days Reform' the first Chinese-run girls' school was established in Shanghai in May 1898.[23] This first Chinese girls' school was established by a group of male and female reformers. It was called "China's girls' school," but it was also called "Mr. Jing's Girls' School" (*Jingzheng nü xue* 经正女学) after the principal,

[17] Cong, "From Cainü to Nü Jiaoxi," 124.
[18] Chiang, "Forces for Change," 125.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Lewis, *The Education of Girls*, 22-23.
[21] Idem, 24.
[22] Meribeth Cameron, *The Reform Movement in China 1898-1912* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), 38.
[23] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 21.

and one of the founders, of the school, Jing Yuanshan (1841–1903).[24] When it was established the school only had 16 students, however the number of students increased to 70 in the second year.[25] According to Bailey, students had to be "well-behaved girls from 'good households' (*liangjia guixiu*) in order to maintain the school's reputation", and the curriculum was not only limited to reading and writing but also included other courses like "history, art, law, psychology, pedagogy, spinning and weaving skills, and drawing."[26] While this school was indeed a modern school, it was still established on the basis of Confucianism.[27] The school had to close its doors in 1899 as a result of the failed 'Hundred Days Reform'. Following the failed 'Hundred Days Reform', the establishment of girls' schools slowed down because of a renewed sense of conservatism. This, however, did not mean that it completely came to a halt.

The Boxer Uprising (1900) was the catalyst for a renewed reform effort by the Qing government, now led by empress Cixi. This event led to a change in attitude towards the adoption of learning from the West. People started to acknowledge that "[…] in order to continue to exist in the new world, [China] must adopt its (the West) methods and standard, […]."[28] Empress Cixi issued a series of edicts in 1901, with educational reform being one of the themes. And although women's education had not officially been advocated, Chinese citizens were encouraged to establish their own private girls' schools.[29] Following this edict, more and more girls' schools were established mainly in the urban centers. This is visible in the number of schools and students, as Bailey mentioned, in 1905 there were 71 girls' schools with 1761 students, which had increased to 245 schools with 6791 students the following year[30] by 1907 this number had increased to 434 schools with 15.324 students,[31] and then in 1908, as Judge notes, there were 512 schools with 20.557 students.[32] However, just as with the number of mission schools, there are some differences in the number of Chinese girls' schools. In contrast to the numbers that Bailey and Judge gave above, Lewis gives a lower estimate in her book.[33] Bailey and Judge only give an indication of the number of schools and students until

[24] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern," 101.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 21.
[27] Nanxiu Qian, "Revitalizing the Xianyuan (Worthy Ladies) Tradition: Women in the 1898 Reforms," Modern China 29, no. 4 (October 2003): 408. DOI: 10.1177/0097700403256781.
[28] Cameron, *The Reform Movement in China*, 66.
[29] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern," 102.
[30] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 26.
[31] Idem, 34.
[32] Joan Judge, "Citizens or Mothers of Citizens? Gender and the Meaning of Modern Chinese Citizenship," in *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 29.
[33] According to Lewis, in *The Education of Girls in China* chapter 2, page 34, there were 71 schools with 1665 students in 1905. In 1906 the number of schools increased to 233 with 5945, to 391 schools with 11.936 students in 1907, and 513 schools with 18.202 students in 1908. These numbers are in almost all cases lower than the

1908. According to Lewis, in 1909 there were 722 schools with 26.465 students, and while she gave no data for the years 1910-1911, as many schools closed during the Revolution, she does mention that in 1912, just one year after the end of the Qing dynasty, there were 2389 schools which enrolled 141.130 students.[34]

In the education regulations of 1904 women's education was broached for the first time, and it was officially acknowledged that girls need to be educated to become good, future mothers, however, at that time the plan still advocated for women's education to take place inside the household and not in a public school.[35] However, as the figures above indicated, the number of private girls' schools continued to grow, and in 1907 the Qing government officially sanctioned public education for girls. One reason for this change in attitude was that the Qing court started to feel deep concern about "the moral impact of girls' schools, their educational aims, their curricula, their textbooks, and the changes that education would bring to women's lives and thinking."[36] Following this, girls' primary schools and teachers training (normal) schools were established, with the primary education being divided into lower elementary and higher elementary schools, both requiring 4 years of attendance.[37] By limiting higher education to teaching, the new public schools accentuated the traditional mother's role as the primary teachers of children.[38] However, that did not mean that the education provided was very limited. According to Liu,

> Five courses were taught at lower primary school level: morality, Chinese, mathematics, needlecraft, and gymnastics, plus music and drawing as electives. Nine courses were taught at higher primary school level: morality, Chinese, mathematics, Chinese history, geography, physics, drawing, needlecraft, and gymnastics.[39]

The normal school curriculum offered an even more extensive and varied course schedule:

> […] psychology, logic, philosophy, history of education, educational administration, practical teaching, Chinese literature, penmanship, modern language, history,

numbers that both Bailey and Judge mention in their works. The reason for this is not stated anywhere, but it might be because in Lewis' work not all schools were included by the government when counting them, which would lead to a lower amount of schools and thus students. Another possibility is that Bailey and Judge based their numbers on different sources than Lewis. However, this is pure speculation on my part. There might be a different reason for the differences in numbers.

[34] Lewis, *The Education of Girls*, 34.
[35] Idem, 27.
[36] Cong, "From Cainü to Nü Jiaoxi," 137.
[37] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern, 107.
[38] Cong, "From Cainü to Nü Jiaoxi," 137.
[39] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern," 107.

> geography, mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry), bookkeeping, methods of teaching, natural science (botany, zoology, mineralogy, geology, physics, chemistry), political science, drawing, manual training, domestic science and gardening, sewing, music, physical education, and so on.[40]

The curricula adhered to the four aspects that were stressed in the 1907 regulations. These four aspects, as Cong has described them, were:

> First, the students of women's normal schools were expected to accept the traditional morality of being virtuous daughters, wives, and mothers. [..] Second, women's education was expected to train good mothers who would conduct good family education, which would assist the prosperity of the country. [..] Third, the students were expected to learn skills that related to daily life and women's housework. Fourth, the students would do physical exercises and learn good personal hygiene habits in order to enhance their physical health.[41]

The regulations for the girls' schools demanded that elementary schools should be gender segregated, however in practice this was not always possible to follow due to a lack of funds or qualified staff.[42] As a result, foreign teachers, often Japanese teachers, or in some cases even male teachers had to be hired.[43] Following the 1907 regulations, according to Liao, many private and public schools were being taken over by the government due to a lack of funds or problems with personnel.[44]

Overall, when looking at women's schooling at that time, with some exceptions being mission schools and a small number of charity schools, the schools were mainly an elite enterprise and seen as a luxury.[45] However, even though at the end of the Qing dynasty only about 1 or 2% of the total female population attended school, the establishment of girls' schools represented one of the most dramatic social and cultural change of that period.

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Cong, "From Cainü to Nü Jiaoxi," 140-141.
[42] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern," 107; Liao Xiuzhen 廖秀真, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang de yanjin ji nüzi xiaozue jiaoyu de fazhan (1897-1911)" 清末女学在学制上的演进及女子小学教育的发展 (1897-1911) [The evolution of the school system and the development of women's primary education in the late Qing Dynasty (1897-1911)], *Guoli chenggong daxue lishi xuebao* 国立成功大学历史学报 10 (1983): 226, 230.
[43] Borthwick, "Social Implications of the New Schools," 116-117.
[44] Liao, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang," 232.
[45] Borthwick, "Social Implications of the New Schools," 117-118.

The Modern Press and its Influence

The modern press is another factor that influenced the debate on women's education. Initially, only translated works and the few missionary periodicals were in circulation in China, however in the late 1800s this also started to change. The thirst for knowledge from the West led to an increase in the number of periodicals and newspapers, both foreign-owned and Chinese-owned. These new periodicals influenced the debate surrounding women's education by disseminating Western information about this topic.

Development of the modern printing industry

Before the increase in the number of Chinese periodicals, most knowledge on science and literature from the West came from translations by missionaries.[46] The missionary schools and their publications were the easiest means of access to this Western knowledge for Chinese.[47] Western printing technologies were first used in areas where Protestant and Catholic missionaries were active, such as Macao, Shanghai and the other treaty ports, because those were initially the only places where they could live, spread their faith and do business, which also entailed the importing of Western machinery.[48] However, this does not mean that the missionaries only used the more modern Western printing presses. Missionaries also engaged in traditional woodblock printing, but they mainly experimented with the modern Western printing techniques that they brought to China.

However, as Reed argues, while "the printing machinery [that was] initially developed or imported by missionaries did lay [the groundwork] for the Chinese print capitalism that later developed in Shanghai],"[49] it was not the missionaries that spurred later developments in this field. From the 1870s onward, Chinese themselves started to invest in the Western printing press, initially with the preference towards lithographic presses, but this later changed to letterpresses. Letterpress printing and lithography first arrived in Shanghai in the 1870s and 1880s. According to Reed,

> […] Chinese history changed course when Shanghai publishers, influenced by their own culture and history, began to place new demands on Western printing technology. The phase of technological development that distinguished China's, and especially

[46] Cameron, *The Reform Movement in China*, 17.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 26.
[49] Ibid.

> Shanghai's, early Westernized printing industry was that involving lithography. […] At the same time, one must not lose sight of the fact that Chinese printers had a wide array of options available to them but chose to use lithography at the expense of other technologies.[50]

There were multiple reasons why the late-nineteenth century Chinese publishers favored lithography over letterpress. Three reasons were first was that the initial investment needed was relatively low, secondly the aesthetic appeal of the texts, and thirdly that it demanded only limited changes in publishing outlook.[51] It was only after 1895 that the growth of the letterpress industry in Shanghai started to overtake the lithography industry. One of the reasons for this change was that, fueled by the new journalism and newspaper publishers, the public wanted more news and they also wanted it to be delivered faster. To fulfill these demands, printing speed in the end caused letterpress-printed newspapers and journals to become the main technology used.[52]

By the end of the nineteenth century, Shanghai had become the center of the modern press. Shanghai, but also the other treaty ports, were places were publishers could "avoid government repression, which on Chinese territory was virtually unconstraint by legal guarantees for the press."[53] Shanghai was able to gain this place in the world, partly "thanks to new roads and railroads, the growing and increasingly efficient Chinese Post Office and a spreading network of bookstores, and partly [due] to traditional letter-carrying hongs (*min-hsin chü*), riverine paddle-boats and the like," which allowed the publishers who had their offices and printers here to distribute their periodicals and newspapers throughout large parts of China.[54]

A new type of press

The public discourse on the topic of women's education was for a large part carried out in the new print media, such as periodicals and journals, both in China and also abroad in Japan.[55] These new periodicals, as Beahan mentioned, "contributed to the intellectual climate by

[50] Idem, 89.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Idem, 126.
[53] Leo Ou-fan Lee, and Andrew J. Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture: Journalism and Fiction in the Late Ch'ing and Beyond," in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, eds. David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 368.
[54] Lee and Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture," 369-370.
[55] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 51.

introducing new ideas, publishing translations of Japanese and Western writing, and presenting news of China and the world."[56]

Before, people received news through traditional periodicals, also called gazettes, in which memorials and edicts were featured, and through the occasional news sheet in the cities. Besides these forms of communication, there were also already a few modern-style newspapers and magazines by missionaries and a few Chinese journalists. By the early 1890s, about a dozen Chinese language newspapers and magazines were being published in the major treaty ports, containing news and essays.[57] The editorials in these magazines often reflected the upcoming idea that the solutions for the current dangers that China faced in institutions laid, which gave literati a way to express their views on public affairs and also gave them an opportunity to take part in formulating policy.[58] At that time, in order to succeed, the newspapers had to focus on commercial news and avoid political advocacy or controversy, so as to not offend potential readers or invite government harassment.[59]

The Sino-French and First Sino-Japanese War changed this. The fear that China was on the verge of being exterminated by foreign powers brought about an increased interest for news and political debate and a new awareness of dangers from abroad.[60] This led, according to Lee and Nathan, to "the emergence and rapid growth of a kind of newspaper new in China – the political journal, devoted largely to essays of political dispute and advocacy."[61] The emerging news media on the one hand intensified the sense of alarm at the foreign incursions that occurred, they also increased the anger that was aimed at the court, and on the other hand also stimulated people's fascination for the foreign and exotic.[62] The newspapers, while popular, were often short-lived. For example, a few years after 1894 an historian counted 216 newspapers and 122 magazines, while Liang Qichao only identified 80 newspapers and 44 magazines in 1901.[63]

Of these new periodicals the new women's periodical was a unique aspect of the new-style journalism, because before this time a periodical which had as its target audience women was itself revolutionary.[64] Before this time, publications for women were limited to books for

[56] Charlotte L. Beahan, "Feminism and Nationalism in the Chinese Women's Press, 1902-1911," *Modern China* 1, no. 4 (October 1975): 379. https://www.jstor.org/stable/188849.
[57] Lee and Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture," 362.
[58] Mary Backus Rankin, "Alarming Crises/Enticing Possibilities: Political and Cultural Changes in Late Nineteenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China* 29, no. 1 Supplement (June 2008): 44. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/late.0.0005.
[59] Lee and Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture," 363.
[60] Rankin, "Alarming Crises/Enticing Possibilities," 1.
[61] Lee and Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture," 364.
[62] Rankin, "Alarming Crises/Enticing Possibilities," 40.
[63] Lee and Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture," 364.
[64] Beahan, "Feminism and Nationalism," 379.

women who lived inside their family's home, but in the new women's periodicals women were addressed as an integral part of society and gave them information about the world outside of the domestic sphere in which they had lived their whole lives.[65] According to Beahan, these women's periodicals "attempted to bring women into the mainstream of the new intellectual trends, or failing that, to bring news of these trends to women."[66] This was also the first time that women themselves, and not men, started to write about their situation and goals for the nation. Shanghai, which was the center of modernization, both in technology and in reforms such as women's education, was an ideal market for these new women's journals.

These new women's periodicals promoted a sense of sisterhood among women by addressing the readers as 'sisters' or 'women comrades' and also made them identify with the nation as a whole.[67] The reason for that is, as Beahan argues, that all the women's periodicals were united in their ardent nationalism and wanted women to "become aware of their desperate and isolated condition and take steps to remedy it."[68] However, according to Qian, not all women's periodicals were ardently nationalistic. According to her, the first women's periodical *Nü Xuebao* (*Chinese girls' progress*), which appeared in 1898, had as aim the promotion of women's learning as more than just women's labor for national strengthening. It believed that "In both self-fashioning and national strengthening, women should stand in a leading place instead of their conventionally subordinate position, for women's Dao had "mothered" *wanwu* 萬物 (myriad things), all things under Heaven."[69] The opinions that this journal published went against the opinions of the male reformers on what the role of women in the national reform movement should be. Having said that, *Nü Xuebao* was still part of the campaign for women's education that had been initiated by the same male reformers.[70]

Women's education, both in itself and linked to the nationalistic project, was an important topic in all women's periodicals. Many periodicals linked the case of women's education with the health and prosperity of the nation, while others argued that the superior strength of Western countries was due to women's education.[71] No matter how the different women's periodicals argued for women's education, they all believed that "the education of women was of basic importance, [just like male education, and that] without women's

[65] Idem, 379-380.
[66] Idem, 380.
[67] Idem, 382.
[68] Idem, 382-383.
[69] Nanxiu Qian, "The Mother *Nü Xuebao* versus the Daughter *Nü Xuebao*: Generational Differences Between 1898 and 1902 Women Reformers," in *Different Worlds of Discourse*, eds. Nanxiu Qian, Grace Fong, and Richard Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 266.
[70] Qian, "The Mother *Nü Xuebao*," 266.
[71] Beahan, "Feminism and Nationalism," 384.

education, educating men would ultimately be useless. The education of women held the key to China's survival; it was not a luxury that could be put off until a later date."[72] I mostly agree with what Beahan mentioned here. I do believe that women's education at that point in time, and also now, is very important, because it is necessary for developing a sustainable economic and social society. Cheng also mentions that "a nation could not be strong without girls' schools, because education equipped women with modern scientific knowledge and the means to strengthen their bodies, such as exercise and the elimination of foot binding. As a result, 'a strong mother will have a strong son, a strong race will make the country powerful'."[73] However, it is unclear why she said that by not educating women, educating men would be useless. It might be that in the context of that time and of the role that the (male) reformers wanted the women to play, namely the role of 'mothers of citizens,' that by not educating women, these women would not be able to teach their future children, especially their sons. Also in this context, referring to women as the 'key to China's survival' most likely did not refer to their abilities to change or save the nation themselves, but to the role they will play as 'mothers of citizens,' which links them indirectly to the nations salvation and not directly. While at that time, advocating women's education was a monumental change in society, by linking women only indirectly to the goal of saving the nation through birthing and raising future, patriotic citizens, reformers still limited the potential of women.

[72] Idem, 385.
[73] Weikun Cheng, "Going Public Through Education: Female Reformers and Girls' Schools in Late Qing Beijing," *Late Imperial China* 21, no. 1 (June 2000): 111. doi:10.1353/late.2000.0002.

Women's Education in *Nüzi Shijie*

Women's periodicals were a new style of journal that appeared at the end of the late Qing dynasty. These journals which were aimed at women as the target audience became platforms of discussions where women but also men could write about and express their opinion about important topics, such as women's education. One of these women periodicals was *Nüzi Shijie* (NZSJ), which appeared between 1904 and 1907, making it the longest running women's periodical in the Late Qing. The periodical featured many articles about women's education by different authors. In order to analyze these articles I will first articulate the different views of the reformers, and then provide my analysis of NZSJ.

Late Qing reformers on women's education

In the 1890s, Chinese intellectuals started to establish girls' schools and following in 1907 the Qing government started to establish official public schools for girls. However, the people who advocated women's education did not all have the same reasons for it. These people, whose opinions differ sometimes widely from each other, cannot be placed in one group. As such, groupings are created where each person involved is placed in one of the groups based on their views.

While some authors have created their own groupings based on similarities between their standpoints, Lewis and Judge for example, I have decided to only loosely use the grouping that Judge uses.[74] The reason for that is that, when we look at Judge's groupings for example, those are mainly based on the topic of citizenship and political power and not on their opinions of women's education per se, even though they do coincide. While Judge differentiates three groups, I will only use two of those, namely: the conservatives, who believed that the only role women should have was to be "good wives and wise mothers" (*liangqi xianmu*) and who would be mainly concerned with the domestic realm; and the moderates, which I will call the reformers, who advocated for women to be "mothers of citizens" (*guomin zhi mu*).[75] However, in some cases reformers or conservatives used the arguments of the other group in order to make their standpoint and one can thus discuss whether someone belongs to a certain group or not. Moreover, in order to give enough attention to not only the men involved in this debate, but also the women, I will discuss their standpoints separately, because their arguments often differed from their male counterparts, even if they were both reformers.

[74] To see in more detail which groupings Lewis and Judge used see, Lewis, *The Education of Girls*, 2, 5; Judge, "Citizens or Mothers of Citizens?," 25.
[75] Judge, "Citizens or Mothers of Citizens?" 25.

Male conservatives and reformers

One of the first advocates of women's education was Zheng Guanying 郑观应 (1842- 1921). He advocated women's education in 1892 for the specific purpose of cultivating: 'virtuous women, virtuous wives and virtuous mothers (*liangfu, liangqi, liangmu*).'[76] He, like many male reformers after him, linked China's social and moral malaise to women's perceived backwardness. However, education for women would:

> […] make them morally upright, literate, numerate and competent in 'handling everyday matters' (such as sewing, cooking and household budgeting), [and thus] would relieve husbands of undue anxiety and bring virtue to the household. Women would thereby be able to 'guide sons and assist husbands' (*xiangzi zuofu*) and divest themselves of 'extravagance and dependence' (*xumi zuoshi*)."[77]

Liang Qichao 梁启超, an important reformer, later on expanded on Zheng's justification. Liang was an advocate for the establishment of girls' schools, and he linked the cause of women's education to the cause of national strengthening, just like many other male reformers did after him. His views on women's education and its connection to the nation were described in his article '*Lun nüxue*' 论女学 (On Women's Education). He argued that "[…] if I push the foundation of the world's weakness, then I must start from that women are not learning."[78] According to Liang, women's education would have multiple benefits for both women and men. The first of these benefits that he mentioned was that after receiving education, women would be able to become economically independent. He argued that for a country to be peaceful and prosperous everyone must have an occupation and be able to support themselves.[79] Based on Timothy Richard's (1845-1919) work "Productive and nonproductive methods", Liang argued that the cause for China's backwardness was the lack of women's education, which made them non-productive and only 'consumers' instead of 'producers'.[80] In other words, Liang argued that one reason that women should receive education was so that they could become economically independent, relieve the burden on their husbands. That education was seen as the key of removing women's dependence is not surprising. As Judge mentioned, Chinese

[76] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 15.
[77] Idem, 16.
[78] 然吾推极天下积弱之本，则必自妇人不学始。 Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Lun Nüxue" 论女学 [On Women's Education], in *Liang Qichao Quanji* 梁启超全集 (第一册) [Liang Qichao's Collection, Vol. 1], ed. Yang Gang 杨钢 and Wang Xiangyi 王相宜 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 30.
[79] Liang, "Lun Nüxue", 30.
[80] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 17.

culture, due to Confucian influence, had long privileged education as the most effective means of personal, social and political transformation.[81]

The second benefit that Liang mentioned was that women's education would allow women to be better able to raise and educate their children. He argued that, as a result of the absence of prenatal and maternal education, Chinese women were "neither physically fit to produce healthy sons […] nor equipped for the upbringing of public-spirited sons."[82] He emphasized the important role that mothers played in the upbringing of children, who would be the future patriotic citizens, by looking to the West and arguing that "Western people divided the things that they taught children in 100 lesson, and mothers teach 70 [of these lessons]."[83] Chinese mothers were seen as the main educators of young children. However, because women were not educated, children "[…] were exposed to a petty and narrow life [at home] at worst, and, at best, simply encouraged to pass the civil service examinations in order to bring prestige and benefit to the household, all of which bred an outlook of 'hankering after selfish profit' (*yingsi quli*) that was widespread in society."[84] In other words, Liang believed that women's education would allow them to "protect both the nation and the race."[85]

Liang advocated for women's education, and thus disagreed with the long held view of scholars that 'a woman without talent is virtuous'. He argued for "[…] righteous people, and broad talents. The foundation of these two must start with nurturing; the foundation of nurturing must start with the mother's education; and the foundation of mother's education must start with women's education."[86] However, even though Liang advocated for women's education, he did look down on and disregard the literary accomplishments of 'talented women' in the recent past. He wrote that in the past these 'talented women' were merely people who "teased the wind and fondled the moon, plucked flowers and caressed the grass, and then toyed with ditties mourning the passing of spring and sad farewells in order to compile several volumes of poetry."[87] This disregard of the accomplishment of 'talented women' was shared by many other

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[81] Judge, "Citizens or Mothers of Citizens?" 28.
[82] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 17-18.
[83] 西人分教学童之事为百课，而由母教者居七十焉。 Liang, "Lun Nüxue", 31.
[84] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 18.
[85] 保国，保种。Liang, "Lun Nüxue", 32.
[86] 正人心，广人才。而二者之本，必自蒙养始；蒙养之本，必自母教始；母教之本，必自妇学始。 Liang, "Lun Nüxue", 32.
[87] Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Lun nüxue" 论女学 [On Women's Education] in *Liang Qichao Quanji* 梁启超全集 (第一册) [Liang Qichao's Collection, Vol. 1], ed. Yang Gang 杨钢 and Wang Xiangyi 王相宜 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), **quoted in** Paul J. Bailey, Gender and Education in China: Gender Discourses and Women's Schooling in the Early Twentieth Century (London: Routledge, 2007), 17.

reformers, both male and female, at that time in order to discredit the recent past and label it as everything that was backwards in society.

Another important person involved in the women's education debate, was Zhang Zhidong 张之洞 (1837-1909). When looking at his opinions on women's education, Zhang is by some people regarded as a conservative, while others describe him as a reformer, though a conservative reformer. The reason for this debate can be found in that Zhang was in favor of reform, however, he also warned against changes that could threaten the Confucian culture. He advocated for 'Chinese values, Western means,' which entailed that China should adopt Western knowledge, but have the Chinese values remain central. This view also applied to the topic of women's education. Zhang did understand that women should be educated, because, just like Liang and other progressive reformers, he understood that "if women are not educated, then the mothers teaching will not be good, the child's body will not be strong and their temperament and habits also cannot be perfected."[88] In Zhang's opinion all girls needed to be educated so as to fulfil their future roles as mothers, but the appropriate form of education for girls was 'family education'.[89] This meant that, as both Bailey and Liao argued, girls should be taught at home by their mothers, nurses or governesses, but the education should solely focus on 'inside affairs' so as to 'maintain the household and guide (future) sons'.[90]

In this sense, Zhang is more progressive than other conservatives who thought that women were not worth educating. However, while it is true that Zhang was more progressive and acknowledged that women needed to be better educated, he still was more conservative than most reformers, because he was against the establishment of girls' school. Just like many conservatives, Zhang was afraid that if women were to go to school that they would read Western literature and adopt their customs and ideas, for example freedom of marriage. Moreover the simple act of women going to school and walking in the street, thus them being outside of their own homes, would be a violation of China's traditional distinction between men and women, and would thus shake the fundamentals of the family.[91] Zhang's and the governments more conservative view on women's education and his opposition to the establishment of women's schools were also visible in the content of the education reform regulations of 1904, of which he was one of the writers of. As already mentioned in chapter one, while the regulation did state the women's education was important and necessary,

[88] 使女子无学，则母教必不能善，幼儿身体断不能强，气质习染断不能美。 Liao, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang," 220.
[89] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 28
[90] Ibid; Liao, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang," 220-221.
[91] Liao, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang," 220.

women's education was not officially included in the school system, and there was no official provision for the establishment of women's schools.

However, only three year later the government's stance on women's education changed. In 1907 the Qing government, "in step with most reformers, approved public women's education for pragmatic, nationalistic purposes, while simultaneously attempting to cultivate girls according to the model of Confucian femininity."[92] In the new regulations on women's education in 1907, the aim of the Qing government was to develop girls' knowledge while protecting traditional mores (*lijiao*), with the main objective still being teaching girls to obey their parents and future in-laws, and training to become 'worthy mothers' (*xianmu*).[93] This shows that while the Zhang, who was involved in the drafting of the regulations, and government in 1907 did accept that official girls' schools needed to be established, and that women's education was necessary, "the traditional Confucian way of educating girls still played an important role in the new educational principles and curriculum guidelines of the new girls' schools."[94] It can thus be debated if Zhang did indeed change his mind on the issue of public women's education, or if this change from family education to public education was purely based on the current situation.

Conservatives and most reformers do agree on one issue, namely co-education. There were some reformers that advocated for co-education, because, in their opinion, girls and boys until a certain age did not differ much from each other. Moreover, they believed that the regulations on separate schools were tantamount to preventing girls from receiving an education, because many girls' schools faced problems with funding and finding qualified teachers, which could lead to their closing or even prevent the establishment of a school if these problems cannot be resolved.[95] However, these reformers were the minority, and most reformers, like Liang Qichao, and the conservatives opposed the practice of co-education. While Liang did believe that men and women both possessed the same talents, he also believed that, "if girls were to be given too advanced an education, they might look down upon boys and refused marry in the future, thus annihilating the whole plan of cultivating good future mothers."[96] This fear of women going against their role as wives and mothers if they received too high an education, permeated the thinking of most conservatives and reformers at that time. Overall, conservatives

[92] Cheng, "Going Public Through Education," 116.
[93] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 30.
[94] Yun Zhang, Engendering the Woman Question: Men, Women, and Writing in China's Early Periodical Press (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 150-151.
[95] Liao, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang," 226.
[96] Liu, "The Rise of Women's Modern," 109.

and reformers advocated for women's education just so that they could in the end fulfill their roles as either 'virtuous mothers and good wives' or as 'mothers of the nation'.

Female reformers

In the above part of this chapter I have discussed the views of the male reformers who were interested in the issue of women's education. However, male reformers were not the only ones who advocated for women's education. Some women also advocated for women's education. These women, like the male reformers, had their own opinions about the debate and these opinions did not always align with what their male counterparts advocated.

While the liberation of women was a goal of the 1898 reform and of the male reformers who were involved, Chinese female reformers also "had their own agenda, their own agency, their own organizations, and their own specific strategies for achieving self-cultivation and national strengthening," [97] which was another important goal in the 1898 and later reforms. One of the first campaigns that women were involved in was the women's education campaign that took place in Shanghai in 1897 and 1898. This campaign consisted of three parts: the first Chinese-run girls' school, the first women's journal (*Nü xuebao* 女学报), and the first women's association (the Women's Study Society). While it was true that men initiated this campaign, women soon took the lead. These women, as Qian mentions, welcomed the opportunity that this campaign gave them for self-affirmation and self-cultivation.[98] These women reformers felt that "by becoming 'well versed in both Chinese and Western knowledge' [...] they could 'fulfill their ambitions,' […] [and that] once [they] acquired this 'divine medicine' (i.e. the necessary foreign and domestic knowledge) they would be able to offer instant remedies for all the world's afflictions."[99] These women reformers saw that their help, which they could offer after having received education, could greatly benefit both the nation and themselves.

One of the women that was deeply involved in this campaign was Xue Shaohui 薛绍徽 (1866–1911). During the 1898 women's education campaign, Xue was one of the major contributors to *Nü xuebao* and involved in the managing of the girl's school. She designed a curriculum for the girls' school, which was designed to enhance not only the minds, but also the bodies and professional skills of Chinese women.[100] In contrast to the male reformers, Xue did not blame Chinese women for causing China's (perceived) backwardness. She thought than the fundamental problem that women faced was the stifling political and social environment

[97] Qian, "Revitalizing the Xianyuan," 408.
[98] Idem, 400.
[99] Qian, "Revitalizing the Xianyuan," 409-410.
[100] Idem, 428.

that in particularly was created by Chinese men.[101] According to her, Chinese women were not useless, they were just not used well, as such her goal for women's education was thus not to change women from being useless to useful, but to nurture their long-ignored talents.[102] However, even though Xue argued for women's education, she did not completely break with Confucian traditional thoughts. As Zhang mentions that Xue thought,

> Chinese women's utility lay in their faithful adherence to the womanly virtues outlined in the Confucian precepts. Calling attention to the significant role played by women in the domestic realm, she implicitly criticized the assertion that women were deplorable parasites on the family.[103]

If women were to receive an education, then they would be able to use that knowledge and the skills they learned to run the family and as such to serve the state. In other words, women's education and men's education should have the same goal, namely "preparing them to be selected for the use of the state."[104] Another difference between Xue and the contemporary male reformists' views is that she did not break away from the 'talented women,' tradition. Xue "valorized female learning built on the cultural legacy of literate women, addressing the need to acquire knowledge in the new global context."[105]

Two other women who were also involved in the campaign held the same view as Xue. Lai Mayi and Shen Ying agreed that the goal of women's education was "to open up their wisdom, nurture their inner strength and nature, and fortify their bodies, in order to foster their growth into worthy mothers (*xianmu*) and worthy wives (*xianfu*) in the future."[106] What is notable is that while Lai Mayi and Shen Ying agree with Xue's view on women's education, they also used the "worthy mothers and wives" argument that characterized both the conservatives and some of the reformers arguments for women's education. However, not all women who were involved with the campaign held the same view. One example of a female reformer who disagreed with Xue was Kang Tongwei 康同薇 (1879–1974). Kang agreed with contemporary male reformers. While she did mention that it was shameful to make light of the importance of female literacy and that the lack of formal women's education had a negative impact on the image of China, Kang herself did write disparagingly about women's literary

[101] Idem, 424.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Zhang, *Engendering the Woman Question*, 34.
[104] Qian, "Revitalizing the Xianyuan," 424-425.
[105] Zhang, *Engendering the Woman Question*, 36.
[106] Qian, "Revitalizing the Xianyuan," 428.

talents in the past.[107] Not only did she disregard the important role that women had played in *jiaxue* 家学 (family learning),[108] she also criticized that the 'talented women' of the recent past conducted themselves inappropriately and she also questioned the content of their writings. She thought that these 'talented women' "wallow in their own composition of sentimental prose-poems set to music (*ci* 词) and descriptive prose interspersed with verse (*fu* 赋)."[109] In her opinion, mothers, not teachers, should play the central role in the education of children, because only they could "cultivate the innate goodness in their offspring."[110]

Following the failure of the 'Hundred Days Reform' and the end of the women's education campaign a change in the opinions of female reformers started to appear. This was also visible in the second *Nü xuebao* that was released in 1902-1903. In contrast to the *Nü xuebao* that was released in 1898, this *Nü xuebao* was much more patriotic and linked women's education first and foremost to national strengthening, and not self-cultivation. The editor and writer of many of the articles, Chen Xiefen (1883 – 1923) "[…] blamed women for men's nonpatriotism [and she] launched a full attack on the *cainü* tradition, arguing that the knowledge construct for *cainü* caused women's indifference about the nation's destiny."[111] While the *cainü* tradition had been fiercely defended by many female reformers during the 1898 campaign, now more and more female reformers started to attack it as well.

As already mentioned, male reformers did advocate for women's education, however they were only concerned about national strengthening and Chinese modernization, and not about women's interests.[112] Women's feminist writings in the early twentieth century often were characterized by the preoccupation with the national interest instead of their personal interest. According to Zhang, a majority of these feminist writers, "framed their feminist goals in terms of national concerns," with the promotion of *guomin zhi mu* (mothers of citizens), which directly linked women's education and rights to the nationalist call for citizenship, being just one example.[113] One of the reasons for this change could be the Boxer Uprising and the

[107] Joan Judge, "Reforming the Feminine: Female Literacy and the Legacy of 1898," in *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China*, ed. Rebecca E. Karl and Peter Zarrow (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Asian Center, 2002), 166.
[108]Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "Wang Zhaoyuan (1763–1851) and the Erasure of "Talented Women" by Liang Qichao," in *Different Worlds of Discourse*, eds. Nanxiu Qian, Grace Fong, and Richard Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 34.
[109] Judge, "Reforming the Feminine," 166.
[110] Idem, 171.
[111] Qian, "The Mother Nü Xuebao," 276.
[112] Zhang, *Engendering the Woman Question*, 52.
[113] Idem, 53.

invasion of foreign forces, which empowered the nationalistic discourse that had already been present.

However, just like the opinions of female reformists differed during the 1898 women's education campaign, the views that female reformers, both in China and abroad, in the first decade of the twentieth century held also differed. While some female reformists did indeed put the nation first in their writing and argued that women should be emancipated for the national good, other women, however, advocated women's interests for itself. For them, using the nation in their writings gave them legitimacy to express their own ideas on women's issues, without linking them directly to each other.[114] Women's education, for them, was the factor that would allow them to overcome women's subjugation and become qualified as "female citizens."[115] While they did stress that women's education would contribute to family prosperity, national strengthening, and racial survival, they did not view this as to prepare women to become "mothers of citizens", as most male reformers and other female reformers saw. In other words, women's education's purpose was not to enable women to be able to better teach their (future) children on how to become qualified citizens of the nation, but to empower women (in the present) to become citizens themselves.[116]

Moreover, many female advocators for girls' schools often did not agree with the opinion of male reformers that women's education was only valuable if it benefited the nation and the economy of family, instead they argued that women should receive education, because "it could solve women's problems of dependency and consequently build up their individual character."[117] These women argued that, instead of educating women so as to become economically independent, thus reducing the burden on men, women should be educated so that they would be able to become independent. However, as Cheng argues,

> […] the more radical arguments for female independency were usually eclipsed by more moderate opinions, since female activists understood that benefits of supporting the more palatable male-oriented argument that a woman's education should benefit more than herself. […] [Thus] proponents of female education sought to persuade society that if a Chinese man married a more educated and capable woman, their children would

[114] Idem, 53.
[115] Idem, 65.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Cheng, "Going Public Through Education," 115.

> reap the benefits of her education, and the country could have more patriotic and productive citizens.[118]

This shows that, while there were advocates for women's independence and rights, most female reformers in China in the first decade of the twentieth century did support or at least used the 'mother of citizens' argument.

Nüzi shijie and women's education

Nüzi Shijie (NZSJ) was the third women periodical that was published in China, with the first being *Nü xuebao* (1898) and the second being *Nübao/Nü xuebao* (1902-1903). NZSJ was published from 1904 till 1907, making it the longest running women's periodical in the late Qing. The periodical was edited and published in Shanghai, however its circulation range was very wide and in its first year the periodical had reached more than forty distributors. Most of these distributors were located in the Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang areas, but the periodical also circulated in other provinces and the capital Beijing.[119] NZSJ was edited by scholar and educator Ding Chuwo 丁初我 (1871-1930) until 1907 when he stopped being the editor and was replaced by Chen Yiyi 陳以益 (1889-1962), also known by the name Chen Zhiqun 陳志群, for the last issue in 1907. In the first year that the periodical was published monthly, but after the first year the periodical was only published a few times a year. The main contributors to the periodical were progressive male intellectuals who advocated for women's rights, women's education, suffrage and gender equality.[120] However, some of the articles in the periodical were written by women. It does need to be noted that in the late Qing, men often used a woman's name when writing, so even though some articles might seem to be written by women, we cannot conclude if that was really the case or not.[121]

When taking a first look at the different issues of NZSJ, we can see that the editors placed a special emphasize on women's education. In all issues, with the 12th issue being the only exception, is an advertisement asking readers to send news on girls' schools. The first part of the advertisement, called 'Special assignment for female student investigators' (女學調查部專約) read as follows:

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[118] Idem, 116.
[119] Xia, Xiaohong 夏晓虹, "Wanqing nübao de xingbie guanzhao" 晚清女报的性别观照 [The Gender View of Women's Newspapers in the Late Qing Dynasty,] in *Wanqing nüxing yu jindai Zhongguo* 晚清女性与近代中国 [Women in the Late Qing Dynasty and Modern China] (Beijing: Beijing da xue chu ban she, 2004): 69.
[120] Zhang, Engendering the Woman Question, 55.
[121] Xia, "*Wanqing nübao de xingbie,"* 92.

> If you are willing to serve as investigators of our company, comrades from all over the world please send documents about women's schools, the status of women's schools, photos of the schools, or poems and new regulations at any time by mail to the head office of the company at a rate of one piece per month.[122]

In exchange for sending the pictures or articles to the periodical, the contributors would receive the periodical as a reward throughout the year.[123] Asking for contributions had the advantage that the periodical would receive articles by authors other than the main contributors, and it also opened the way for women to openly express their views, even though most of the articles published were still by men.

While we cannot determine how many contributions were published, we can see that some of the contributions were published. In many issues of the periodical, articles about the regulations of newly established women's schools were published. One example is the regulation of Ming Hua girls' school, which was published in the second issue in 1904. This regulation gives information on multiple aspects of the running of the school. It is mentioned that the school will admit 30 girls who are between the ages of eight and fifteen years old and who will graduate in the general subjects after three years, however, if there are not enough students, then the school will also admit boys under twelve years of age.[124] On the one hand, the fact that the school will accept boys, if necessary, is surprising, because at that time most reformers were against co-education and these reformers were often the ones who established the schools. However, on the other hand, when considering the actual situation at that time, it is quite logical that girls' schools would also admit boys under a certain age if necessary. Due to the lack of funds that many girls' schools had, schools needed to admit boys in order to make up for the shortage of funds, or close down. It might also be that the school was established by a reformer who had a favorable outlook on co-education, but seeing as that in this case boys would only be admitted if there were not enough girls', this is most likely not the case. Another regulation, called 'The regulations at Xuebu Zouding Girls' School,' which was published in the last issue in 1907, explicitly stated that the girls' primary school was established separately

[122] 海内同志如有愿充本社调查员者请将有关女学文件及女学状况或论说诗歌新闻规约学校撮影等件随时邮寄本社总发行所每月以一件为率。"Unless otherwise noted, all following translations are my own." "Nüxue diaocha bu zhuan yue"女學調查部專約 [Special Assignment for Female Student Investigators], *Nüzi shijie*, 1904-1907, https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/issue.php?magazin_id=2

[123] "Nüxue diaocha bu zhuan yue" (no standard page).

[124] "Ming Hua nüxue zhangcheng" 明華女學章程 [Regulations of Ming Hua Girls' School], *Nüzi shijie* 2, February 16, 1904, 69. https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/page_content.php?magazin_id=2&year=1904&issue_id=009&issue_number=002&img_issue_page=079

from the boy's primary school and that the two schools should not be combined.[125] This regulation stipulated that only girls aged seven to ten would be admitted to the primary girls' school, and girls aged eleven to fourteen would be admitted to the higher primary girls' school.[126]

There are a lot of similarities between these two regulations and the 1907 regulations. The courses that are offered at the Ming Hua girls' school, for example, overlap quite a lot with the courses listed in the 1907 regulations. However, the number of courses that are offered at Ming Hua girls' school is more extensive. According to the school regulations, a total of ten course would be taught, namely: "Chinese, morality, elementary history, literature, geography, elementary physics, elementary arithmetic, reading novels, singing, and gymnastics."[127] Another similarity is that it mentions that the courses are being taught by female teachers, which was an important point in the 1907 regulations because of the complete separation of genders in schools. This separation of genders is also visible, as mentioned, in the regulations of Xuebu Zouding girls' school. The above discussed regulations were just two of the regulations printed in NZSJ, however, many more were printed in different issues of the periodical.

Besides regulations and pictures of girls' schools, the periodical also featured many essays on women's education. Jin Tianhe 金天翮, under the penname Jin Yi 金一, wrote already in the inaugural essay of NZSJ that:

> Women are the mother of the nation. If you want a new China, you must be a new women. If you want to strengthen China, you must strengthen the woman. If you want to civilize China, you must first civilize the woman. [And] if you want to save China, you must first save women, there is no doubt about it.[128]

While Jin Tianhe does not mention women's education specifically, he does mention that he believes that women are the mothers of the nation and that to save China one first has to save, and that includes educate, the woman. This nationalistic view of women, linking them indirectly

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[125] "Xuebu Zou Ding nüzi xiao xuetang zhangcheng"學部奏定女子小學堂章程 [The Regulations at Xuebu Zouding Girls' School], *Nüzi Shijie* 18, January 31, 1907, 130, https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/page_content.php?magazin_id=2&year=1907&issue_id=24&issue_number=6&img_issue_page=146

[126] "Xuebu Zou Ding nüzi", 130.

[127] 学科分国文修身初级历史书籍地理初级物理初级算学小说唱歌体操科。 "Ming Hua nüxue zhangcheng", 69.

[128]女子者，国民之母也。欲新中国，必新女子；欲强中国，必强女子；欲文明中国，必先文明我女子；欲普救中国，必先普救我女子，无可疑也。Jin Yi 金一 [Jin Jianhe 金天翮], "Nüzi shijie fakanci" 女子世界发刊词 [Women's World Inaugural Essay], *Nüzi shijie* 1, January 17, 1904, 1. https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/page_content.php?magazin_id=2&year=1904&issue_id=8&issue_number=001&img_issue_page=011

to the nation through their abilities to bear children and then educate them, was first advocated by Liang Qichao and then later shared by most of the reformers. This view, is visible in many of the essays on women's education. In the article 'On the harm of not encouraging women's learning in China' (論中國女學不興之害) Jiang Weiqiao 蒋维乔, under the penname Zhuzhuan 竹莊, discusses the harm of not educating women on not only the individual, but also on the family, society and the country. He starts the article by arguing that men and women both have the same rights and ability to compete for survival, and that "therefore, while governing the nation civilly, both men and women are equally important."[129] However, he then argues that Chinese women are suffering, because they are not educated. Just like Liang, Jiang argued that at this moment, Chinese women could only depend on men. He argues that, "among the 400 million people in our country, half of them are women, and these 200 million women are all useless people. And these 200 million men, who are fully qualified as citizens, are so amazing."[130] He remarks that, because women are not educated, as a result there is also no education in the family, and there are few people who earn a living, while there are many profit-sharing parties.[131] This refers to Liang's argument that women are only consumers of wealth and not producers. Instead of earning a living and supporting the family, women can only sit inside their house and live off their husband's wealth. As such, women's education is vital. He hopes that by receiving education, women can restore their natural rights, eliminate the weakness of having to rely on men, and that they will all study hard.[132]

The 'mothers of the nation' argument is also visible in other essays, for example 'Women's Education' (女子教育), which was written by Chen Yiyi (陳以益) under the penname Zhiqun (志羣). Just like Jiang, Chen argues that "the national educator is the mother of evolution, and the female educator is the mother of national education. Only when the family is together can the country be governed, and only when there are virtuous mothers, can there be good children."[133] Chen views that family education is an important part of saving the nation.

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[129] 故文明治国，男女并重。Zhuzhuang 竹莊 [Jiang Weiqiao 蒋维乔], "Lun Zhongguo nüxue bu xing zhi hai" 論中國女學不興之害 [On the Harm of not Encouraging Women's Learning in China], *Nüzi shijie* 3, March 17, 1904, 1. https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/page_content.php?magazin_id=2&year=1904&issue_id=10&issue_number=003&img_issue_page=9

[130] 我国四万万人，女子居其半，此二万万之女子，皆无用之人也。而此二万万之男子，其有完全国民之资格者，几何人哉。Zhuzhuang, "Lun Zhongguo nüxue bu xing," 5.

[131] Idem, 3.

[132] Idem, 7.

[133] 国民教育者，进化之母也，女子教育者，又国民教育之母也。能齐家然后能治国，有贤母而后有佳儿。Zhiqun 志羣 [Chen Yiyi 陳以益] "Nüzi jiaoyu" 女子教育 [Women's Education], *Nüzi shijie* 18, January 31, 1907, 1. https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-

However, at the moment women don't receive any education which negatively influences the nation. To solve this he describes how women's education should be structured. He mentions three types of education: moral education, intellectual education and physical education. According to Chen, moral education is the most important of the three, because without morality (道德) there would be no personality (人格).[134] Moral education is important, because by cultivating women's morality, women will share the same rights and obligations as men, thus getting rid of their inferiority, and nurture their patriotism, so as to become independent citizens.[135] Following moral education, is intellectual education, which purpose is to give women the practical knowledge and wisdom they need. Lastly, is physical education, which would solve the problem of that women's bodies are weak.

When looking at this article we see that a lot of the arguments that Chen makes coincide with Liang and Jiang's arguments, like the 'mothers of the nation' argument. However, there are also differences. While Chen does say that the lack of women's education is the reason that the country and the race are weakened, he does not call them useless or paint them as only consumers as wealth. Moreover, Chen does not say that women can only serve the nation by being mothers. As already mentioned, he argues that if women are educated, they will have the same rights and obligations as men and become independent citizens. This differs from Liang's view, who only argued for women to indirectly serve the nation, by bearing and educating future citizens, in that Chen argues that women could become citizens themselves.

Other essays also discuss the topic of women's rights, like 'A discussion on education being necessary to prepare for a restoration of women's rights' (論復女權必以教育為預備) by Danchen (丹忱). He analyses the relationship between women's education and women's rights in six different ways, namely their abilities, their insights, how social they are, social ethics, righteousness, and their ability to make choices.[136] According to Danchen, education needs to be promoted first, because only then will women possess these six virtues and be good at these six strengths, and only then will women be able to become nationals and join the country.[137]

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heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/page_content.php?magazin_id=2&year=1907&issue_id=24&issue_number=006&img_issue_page=017

[134] Idem, 4.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Danchen (丹忱), "Lun fu nüquan bi yi jiaoyu wei yubei" 論復女權必以教育為預備 [A Discussion on Education being Necessary to Prepare for a Restoration of Women's Rights], *Nüzi shijie* 15, March 6, 1905, 1-2. https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/page_content.php?magazin_id=2&year=1905&issue_id=22&issue_number=003&img_issue_page=5

[137] Danchen, "Lun fu nüquan," 2.

While the above mentioned essays were two examples that supported the view of Liang Qichao, other essays had a different view on them. In 'Discussing the prospects for women' (论女界之前途) the author, whose name is unknown, does agree that women's education is the only way to restore power and develop the nation, and that, at that time, the proposals for women's education were almost universally recognized by the people.[138] It is unclear, however, what the exact proposals for women's education that the author mentions are, because they do not explain further what these proposals entail. As such, it might be possible that the author refers to the education regulations that the government wrote in the previous year (1904), or to a proposal written by one of the reformers. However, the author differs from the previous mentioned authors in that they ask the 200 million men to not look at women as virtuous mothers and good wives, but to look at them as heroes, and that they hoped that women and men would rather treat women educators and commentators with welcome and praise instead of criticizing women in the world.[139]

The above mentioned essays were just three examples of essays published in NSZJ on women's education. However, more essays, about the link of women's education and women's rights or on the problems that uneducated women face and how to solve it, were published in the different issues. In addition, besides these essays, NZSJ also published many short stories or news updates related to women's education. These short stories ranged from news on the establishments of girls' schools in different provinces, to articles on female teachers, to even one article about the establishment of a school with co-education.

In short, NZSJ featured many articles and essays about the topic of women's education. While the standpoints of the articles differ, we can see, as Zhang also argues, that the writers, both male and female, promoted women's education for the national project and not for women's own betterment and development.[140] The ideal of the 'mothers of the nation' was often mentioned and, through the advocacy of women's education for the betterment of family education, the ideal of 'mothers of citizens' also was visible in the articles. Women were to be educated so that they would be able to better educate their children. Education also became the requirement for women to be able to restore or gain rights and to become independent citizens.

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[138] "Lun nüjie zhi qiantu" 论女界之前途 [Discussing the prospects for women], *Nüzi shijie* 13, January 6, 1905, 2. https://kjc-sv034.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/frauenzeitschriften/public/magazine/page_content.php?magazin_id=2&year=1905&issue_id=20&issue_number=001&img_issue_page=10

[139]我最亲爱之二万万兄弟乎，[...] 则与其以贤母良妻望女界，不如以英雄豪杰望女男与其以济排诟詈待女界，不如以欢迎赞美待女界教育家与言论家。An, "Lun nüjie zhi qiantu," 5.

[140] Zhang, *Engendering the Woman Question*, 78.

Conclusion

Throughout Chinese history, women's education had been traditionally allocated to inside the home. Only a few privileged girls' from well to do literati families got the chance to receive a more extensive education. These women, who expressed their talents through writing, would later be known as 'talented women'. It was not until 1844 that the first girls' schools in China were opened by missionaries, but starting from 1898 Chinese intellectuals started to establish the own girls' schools.

Women's education became an important topic of discussion in the reform movement. Women's education, or to be more precise, the lack of women's education, became the source of China's weakness. While conservatives initially wanted to adhere to the traditional ideal of 'family education', meaning girls' had to be educated by their mothers inside the home, reformers advocated for public education. Even though the reformers in general advocated for women's education, there were differences between reformers, mainly between male and female reformers.

As discussed in chapter three, the male reformers, with Liang Qichao being one of the most important ones, advocated for women's education because it would benefit the nation. Liang believed that, because women were uneducated, not only were they economically dependent on their husbands, increasing their burden, they also would not be able to give birth to and educate healthy and strong children. Liang and, as the discussion of the articles in NZSJ shows, other authors advocated for women's education so that they would become not only 'virtuous mothers and good wives' but also 'mothers of the nation'. Moral, intellectual and physical education would allow women to give birth to a stronger and healthier new generation of citizens and also provide them with better education. Conservatives, like Zhang Zhidong, on the other hand, initially did not support public women's education. While they did believe that women's education was important, according to them it should be taught inside the family, and education should solely focus on 'inside affairs' so as to 'maintain the household and guide (future) sons'.[141] Letting girls' go to school, and letting them leave the house, would be a violation of the traditional Confucian gender distinction.[142] Later on, the conservatives admitted that women needed to be further educated and that public education was the only way.

On the other hand, female reformers also advocated for women's education, but their aims did not always align with those of the male reformers. Many female reformers, like Xue

[141] Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 28; Liao, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang," 220-221.
[142] Liao, "Qingmo nüxue zai xuezhi shang," 220.

Shaohui, also had a different view on the idea that women were the reason of China's backwardness. Women, according to Xue, were not the cause of China's weakness and also were not useless. In her eyes, China's women were useful, however, their talents and skills had not been used in the correct way.[143] Her goal, and the goal of many other female reformers, was thus not to educate women so that they would become useful, but to nurture their talents and work toward individual development. Some female reformers did argue that one goal was to become 'virtuous mothers and good wives,' however this goal was not shared by all female reformers. After the Boxer Uprising, female reformers became more nationalistic in their arguments, often advocating for women to become 'mothers of the nation'. Overall, male reformers, and later on also many female reformers, mainly advocated for women's education because it would benefit the larger nationalistic project. Only a few male and female reformers advocated for women's education for their individual development, or because it would allow them to become citizens themselves, instead of just 'mothers of citizens'.

When we look at the articles and essays in NZSJ that I have discussed, we can see that most of them agree with the views that Liang Qichao had. The use of the idea of women being the 'mothers of the nation' is present in most essays. However, there are also differences between the essays. In 'On the harm of not encouraging women's learning in China' Jiang Weiqiao's arguments, about how Chinese women are, at the moment, useless and only consumers of their husbands wealth, completely mirrors Liang's view on the current state of women. However Chen Yiyi, while agreeing with some of Liang's and Jiang's arguments, goes further than painting women as only 'mothers of the nation'. He believes that by being educated women could become independent citizens. Moreover, one surprising detail is that in multiple articles in NZSJ co-education was either advocated or mentioned in a positive light. This is surprising, because at that time, most reformers and all conservatives were against co-education. To conclude, when we look at the articles of NZSJ that have been discussed here we can see that most of them possess the nationalistic undertone of the ideals of the male reformers. The 'mothers of the nation' ideal is often mentioned, and the purpose of women's education is to benefit the nation and the future citizens, and not necessarily women themselves.

[143] Qian, "Revitalizing the Xianyuan," 424.

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