

“Have You Put on Weight?” A Study on the Effects of Certain Factors on the Increased
Presence of Eating Disorders in Modern Chinese Women

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Dedication

To my parents, for their unconditional love and support and to Duong Hoai Phuong,
without whom this thesis could not have been written.

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I. Introduction

“Have you put on weight?” was once a traditional Chinese greeting (发福, *fa fu*); however, such a phrase might be considered offensive in modern day China.¹ Illnesses such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, while long discussed in the West, are just beginning to come to the forefront in China. According to some experts, the media, more globalized eating styles, an influential fitness industry, changing perspectives on women’s roles, and increased urbanization have all led to the rise in eating disorders in China.²

In the past, eating disorders have been more prevalent in the West than in other parts of the world. However, with the onset of the previously mentioned catalysts, cases are now being reported in the non-Western world.³ The causes behind eating disorders are complex and varied, but general causation is often rooted in the same symptoms found in many psychiatric disorders.⁴ Researchers have created a “biopsychosocial”

¹ Sing Lee and Antoinette M. Lee, “Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China: A Comparative Study of Female High School Students in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Rural Hunan.” *International Journal of Eating Disorders* (2000): 323. (EBSCOhost) accessed August 2010.

² Sing Lee, “From Diversity to Unity: The Classification of Mental Disorders in 21st Century China.” *Cultural Psychiatry: International Perspectives*. (2001) 426. (EBSCOhost) accessed August 2010.

³ Sing Lee, Antoinette M. Lee, and Tony Leung, “Cross-Cultural Validity of the Eating Disorder Inventory: A Study of Chinese Patients with Eating Disorders in Hong Kong.” *International Journal of Eating Disorders* (1998): 177. (EBSCOhost) accessed September 2011.

⁴ Zafra Cooper and Christopher Fairbur, “The Eating Disorder Examination: A Semi-Structured Interview for the Assessment of the Specific Psychopathology of Eating Disorders.” *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 6 (1987): 2. (EBSCOhost) accessed March 22, 2011.

model for studying the reasons for eating disorders; this model considers cultural, biological, familial, social, cognitive, learning, and personality factors.⁵

Several aspects are specific to Chinese cases of Anorexia Nervosa (AN). In many Chinese cases of AN, there is little to no fat phobia, allowing for an exploration of the causes of such non-fat phobic AN cases. AN is usually characterized by a fear of gaining weight, thus leading the victim to cease eating; however, in the case of some Chinese subjects, there is little to no fear of weight gain. Portions of these non-fat phobic cases stem from the social incarnation of the traditional Confucian institution of filial piety, but other cases result from other traditional aspects of Chinese culture.

Men are also becoming more at risk for disturbances in eating behavior. However, the American Psychiatric Association said in 2000 that it estimates over 90% of those diagnosed with an eating disorder are women, while other studies have shown that girls and women are more at risk for general body dissatisfaction and often express desire to lose weight.⁶ Women in China still suffer from inferior social status and must navigate the struggle to find a comfortable medium between traditional and modern culture. Under these combined forces, the eating habits of Chinese women are often an expression of deeper and more complex turmoil, such as a desire for control and autonomy.

⁵ Janet Polivy and C. Peter Herman, "Causes of Eating Disorders." *Annual Review of Psychology*. 53 (2002): 191. <http://comp.uark.edu/~nlwilli/polivy02.pdf> accessed March 22, 2011.

⁶ Kim Stark-Wroblewski, Barbara J. Yanico, and Steven Lupe, "Acculturation, Internalization of Western Appearance Norms, and Eating Pathology Among Japanese and Chinese International Student Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 29 (2005): 38. (EBSCOhost) accessed January 2011.

There has also been a slow shift from non-fat phobic AN to fat phobic, echoing the evolution of eating disorders in the West.⁷ Additionally, the augmentation of Western influence in China has led to increased income and urbanization; both these factors are usually present in the development of anorexia, known as the “Golden Girl’s” disease in Western psychology. There has also been a steady influx of Western foods into China since Deng Xiaoping’s 改革开放 (*gai ge kai fang*, or “reform and opening up”) of China in the 1980s.⁸ This Chinese importation of the West’s fast food culture has led to increased rates of obesity and subsequent unhealthy measures to lose weight.⁹ As noted, in addition to these factors, China’s own Confucian roots and ideals have also provided fertile ground for an increase in eating disorders among Chinese women.

The research methodology utilized previously existing case studies and qualitative social data. The thesis writer’s own survey was a central research factor. The subjects of this survey included relatively young (16-33 years of age) Chinese women in the city of Nanjing, China. The subjects were given the survey in the areas surrounding Nanjing University. Each respondent was given a disclaimer stating the premise of the survey. Subjects were aware that participation in the survey was completely anonymous; they were also aware that there would be no penalty for refusing to participate in the survey.

The survey delves into the perceptions behind the development of eating disorders in young Chinese women. It asked several key questions including but not limited to the effects of the rise in the influence of Western media and how traditional Confucian values affect eating habits. The survey also discerned the level of influence the fast food culture

⁷ G. Tsai, “Eating Disorders in the Far East.” *Eating and Weight Disorders* (2000): 191 (EBSCOhost) accessed November 2010.

⁸ Frederik Balfour, “China’s weight-loss industry is gaining: Growing affluence leads to expanding waistlines.” MSNBC.com. June 8, 2010, accessed August 26, 2010, http://msnbc.com/id/37510165/ns/business-bloomberg_businessweek/

⁹ Ibid.

and striving for perfectionism has had on young women's diets. The questions asked by the survey probed the effects of Confucian ideals, Western culture, and social pressures on the potential development of eating disorders in the subjects. The surveys will be analyzed in depth in Chapter 6.

An important factor when discussing the rise in eating disorders in China is the Confucian based culture. Confucian culture is not only dominated by males but also demands strict filial piety. Foot binding is perhaps the most famous manifestation of Confucian teachings of male-dominance. This practice was considered symbolic of control over women and this control exists in other forms today.¹⁰ Women in China often express the feeling that they must look a certain way in order to get a man's attention. In this male-dominated society, marriage is still expected by a certain age. Therefore if a woman does not look a certain way, she may have trouble getting married.¹¹

In another modern context, Confucian culture has had an inhibiting force on the traditional healing process of anorexia; many young women are afraid to describe their eating disorders to their therapists for fear of causing their parents to 丢面子 (*diu mian zi*, "lose face"). Filial piety, in a broader sense, is constructed by complete obedience to one's family, particularly one's parents. This ideal is often blamed for the development of eating disorders due to its extreme discouragement of communication and negotiation between parents and children.

¹⁰ Hung-Yok Ip, "Fashioning Appearances: Feminine Beauty in Chinese Communist Revolutionary Culture." *Modern China*. 29. (2003): 332. (SAGE Journals Online), accessed March 6, 2011.

¹¹ Kathy Chu, "Extreme dieting spreads in Asia: Many women endanger their health to meet society's standard of beauty." *USA Today*. March 30, 2010, accessed November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

The Westernization of China has been relatively rapid if one considers the process beginning with China's "opening up" in the early 1980s. Eating disorders are not an uncommon occurrence in Western culture; they are sometimes called "the price paid for Western civilization."¹² As Western literature and media has become more readily available for the average urban Chinese individual, public views of anorexia and eating disorders in general shifted to center stage.

China's "opening up" to Western influences in the early 1980s also allowed for a sudden mass movement of Western investors to China, eager to sell their products to a brand new market. These investors included fast food chains such as McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken and with this exportation of the West's "fast food culture," China's childhood obesity rates have skyrocketed. In addition to the increased presence of these fast food restaurants, Chinese children face social pressures to have more expensive and more popular Western snacks that are often unhealthy with high calorie counts.

Along this same line, the economic reforms of 改革开放 (*gai ge kai fang*, "opening up") allowed for these Western companies to invest in China's fertile markets thus fanning the flames of modernization and urbanization. Anorexia, often known as the "Golden Girl's" illness due to the fact that most victims of the illness are well off, well educated urban women, may be a direct descendant of such urbanization and increase in wealth.

Traditional Chinese society valued a round face and plump figure, believing these two attributes to indicate wealth and prosperity. However, under the combined effects of

¹² Sing Lee, Antoinette M. Lee, Tony Leung, Hong Yu, "Psychometric Properties of the Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI-1) in a Non clinical Chinese Population in Hong Kong." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. (1997): 177-178. (EBSCOhost), accessed October 2010.

Westernization, the exportation of the fast food culture and the strong presence of Confucian values in Chinese culture, modern Chinese women are falling victim to psychological illnesses that have long plagued Western societies.

II. Review of Literature

The research field regarding the study of Chinese women with eating disorders is relatively new. The first widely reported case of an eating disorder-related death in China was in 1994, when a 14-year-old girl collapsed on the sidewalk in Hong Kong.¹³ Dr. Sing Lee had been researching eating disorders in a Chinese context since the early 1980s, making him a pioneer in this field in China.¹⁴ Lee's research includes classifying mental disorders in 21st century China, examining the differences in disordered eating in three Chinese communities, examining the need for a culturally sensitive understanding towards eating disorders, and investigating various cases of fat phobic and non-fat phobic AN.

By classifying the current state of mental disorders in 21st century China in "From Diversity to Unity: The Classification of Mental Disorders in 21st Century China," Lee expounds on the existence of various mental diseases throughout China and their cultural influences.¹⁵ In this article, Lee recognizes that in China, advertising, eating habits, an emerging fitness industry and the changing perspectives on women's status have influenced the development of eating disorders.¹⁶

In "Self-Starvation in Context: Towards a Culturally Sensitive Understanding of Anorexia Nervosa," Lee demonstrates that in many Chinese cases, fat phobia does not

¹³ Ethan Watters, *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche*. (New York: Free Press, 2010), 41. Hong Kong was not a part of mainland China at this time, but the two places shared historical and cultural backgrounds.

¹⁴ Ibid, 16.

¹⁵ Lee, "From Diversity to Unity," 421.

¹⁶ Ibid, 426.

always play a role in the development of AN.¹⁷ Lee cites two case studies in which both subjects have reasons other than fat phobia for developing eating disorders. In the case of Miss Y, a 31-year-old young woman whose boyfriend had recently moved to England, self-starvation was the only way she knew to express her heartbreak.¹⁸ Lee's other subject Miss W, a 29-year-old young woman, refused to eat dinner with her abusive father.¹⁹ Miss W claimed when she sat down at the dinner table with her family, her appetite disappeared due to her father's presence.²⁰ In the case of Miss W, Lee says, "This was a profound act of communication by not communicating, and a non-confrontational style of expressing intrafamilial hostility which did not clash with Confucian values on demure female behavior."²¹

Lee, along with Antoinette M. Lee, examines the effects of Westernization in "Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China: A Comparative Study of Female High School Students in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Rural Hunan."²² The results of this study show that Hong Kong, the most Western of the three places, had the highest instances of body dissatisfaction.²³ Shenzhen also had results showing body dissatisfaction, though to a lesser extent than Hong Kong; Rural Hunan, the least Western of the three areas studied, had the least amount.²⁴ This research indicates that increased

¹⁷ Sing Lee, "Self-Starvation in Context: Towards a Culturally Sensitive Understanding of Anorexia Nervosa," *Social Science Medicine* 41 (1995): 25 (EBSCOhost) accessed August 2011.

¹⁸ Ibid, 27.

¹⁹ Ibid, 29.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 31.

²² Sing Lee and Antoinette M. Lee, "Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China," 317.

²³ Ibid, 323.

²⁴ Ibid.

exposure to Westernization exacerbates body dissatisfaction in Chinese women and leads to eating disorders.

“The Variable Manifestations and Contextual Meanings of Anorexia Nervosa: Two Case Illustrations from Hong Kong” examines two subjects, each exhibiting either fat phobic or non-fat phobic AN.²⁵ The first subject, Miss A, began to feel fat in high school and began to limit her food intake.²⁶ Miss A was classified as fat phobic, but she showed signs similar to those found in non-fat phobic cases: she was using her illness as a way to communicate a feeling of inferiority as compared to her older sister to her authoritative mother.²⁷ The second subject, Miss B, felt no feelings of fat phobia but instead stopped eating because she felt stressed at school.²⁸ Lee describes Miss B as having a strained relationship with her mother, saying, “She never dared to let her mother know what she really wanted [...] By refusing food and treatment for 3 days, she believed she had gained control over everything.”²⁹

Another prevalent researcher in the field of eating disorders in a Chinese context is Joyce L.C. Ma. A professor in social work at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Ma approaches researching eating disorders through a social worker’s view. Her articles involve discovering the meanings behind food refusal and self-starvation. “A therapeutic alliance with Chinese adolescents suffering from eating disorders in Shenzhen, China” is Ma’s attempt to establish an alliance between therapists and those suffering from eating disorders. Ma reminds the reader that familial culture in China is almost at odds with the

²⁵ W.K. Kam and S. Lee. “The Variable Manifestations and Contextual Meanings of Anorexia Nervosa: Two Case Illustrations from Hong Kong.” *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. (1998): 227 (EBSCOhost) accessed November 2010.

²⁶ Ibid, 228.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 229.

expectations of Western therapists.³⁰ In the Chinese household, a new acquaintance is often treated as a member of the family. In the case of a therapist, however, there must be a certain degree of professional separation from the family, especially in a Chinese context. If the subject sees the therapist as a family member, then the therapist becomes part of what the subject is rebelling against.³¹ In order to properly facilitate treatment, therapists must remain separate from the family.

In her article “Family treatment for a Chinese family with an adolescent suffering from Anorexia Nervosa: a case study,” Ma examines a single case and the implications of the effects of traditional Confucian values.³² In the examination of this case study, Ma emphasizes the important role of filial piety in the Chinese family.³³ She also discusses how a slightly overweight child often symbolized a well-loved child.³⁴

“Family meaning of self-starvation: themes discerned in family treatment in Hong Kong” involves Ma and several other researchers examining the perspectives behind the development of eating disorders in Chinese adolescents. The article claims that eating disorders may have become a “cultural metaphor” that young women use to express conflict when they are expected to stay silent.³⁵

Ma also co-wrote “Aetiology of anorexia nervosa in Hong Kong: a social work qualitative analysis.” This study, researched with Zenobia C. Y. Chan, challenged the

³⁰ Joyce L. C. Ma, “A therapeutic alliance with Chinese adolescents suffering from eating disorders in Shenzhen, China,” *The Association for Family Therapy* 29 (2007): 395. (EBSCOhost) accessed January 2011.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Joyce L. C. Ma, “Family treatment for a Chinese family with an Adolescent Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa: A Case Study,” *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families* 13 (2005):19. (ESBCOhost) accessed February 2011.

³³ Ibid, 21.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Joyce L. C. Ma, Mina Y.M. Chow, Sing Lee, and Kelly Lai, “Family meaning of self-starvation: themes discerned in family treatment in Hong Kong,” *The Association for Family Therapy* 24 (2002): 57. (EBSCOhost) accessed October 2011.

commonly accepted analysis that eating disorders in Chinese adolescents were spurred by a drive for slenderness.³⁶ This discourse emphasizes the role of women as the submissive force in traditional Chinese society and includes analysis on the role of these traditional societal roles in the development of eating disorders. “Aetiology” also aimed to provide social workers with insight into the social dynamic behind the development of abnormal eating behaviors.³⁷

In “The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa: Implications for Clinical Social Work,” Ma and Chan discuss the meanings of food in a Chinese social and familial context.³⁸ Their research states,

Food can be conceptualized in the following ways: eating as an expression of filial piety; food preparation as part of the woman’s nurturing role; self-starvation as refusal to grow up; self-starvation as a struggle for autonomy; assignment of food as part of the family hierarchy; and assignment of food as part of parental control.³⁹

In order to accurately treat a subject suffering from anorexia nervosa, it is essential to understand why the subject is refusing food. In this article, Ma and Chan discuss the ramifications of each reason for food refusal as related to how Chinese society and families view food.

China’s importation of the West’s fast food culture has also had an effect on the development of eating disorders. In the book *Feeding China’s Little Emperors: Food, Children, and Social Change*, many authors offer a perspective on how this emerging fast food industry in China has affected Chinese children. Guo Yuhua discusses Chinese

³⁶ Zenobia C.Y. Chan and Joyce L. C. Ma, “Aetiology of anorexia nervosa in Hong Kong: a social work qualitative inquiry,” *Child and Family Social Work* (2004): 177. (ESBCOhost) accessed September 2011.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Joyce L. C. Ma and Zenobia C.Y. Chan, “The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa: Implications for Clinical Social Work,” *Social Work in Mental Health* 2 (2003): 47. (EBSCOhost) accessed November 18 2010.

³⁹ Ibid.

children's obsession with McDonald's in his chapter, "Food and Family Relations: the Generation Gap at the Table." He says that young children do not necessarily like fast food restaurants because the food tastes good, but because they enjoy the Western atmosphere.⁴⁰ In the same book, Bernadine W.L. Chee examines how Chinese children use trendy food as a symbol for popularity among classmates.⁴¹ These articles underscore China's growing obesity problem, with some sources putting current statistics at as much as 30%.⁴² With this growing trend, there is a related movement amongst Chinese women to use dangerous "quick fixes" such as diet pills and laxatives.⁴³

Additionally, many news articles from sources such as *US Today* and *South China Morning Post* offered insight into the effects of various factors on the Chinese perspectives behind the development of eating disorders.

The study of eating disorders in the East Asia is still relatively new. These articles established a framework for this thesis: that the influence of traditional Confucian ideals, a more prevalent Western media, and the importation of the fast food culture have all played an important role in the development of eating disorders amongst young Chinese women.

The author's own survey drew from this established foundation but also expanded upon the existing research. These survey results indicated that to a large number of

⁴⁰ Guo Yuhua, "Food and Family Relations: The Generation Gap at the Table," in *Feeding China's Little Emperors: Food, Children, and Social Change* ed. Jun Jing (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2000)104.

⁴¹ Bernadine W.L. Chee, "Eating Snacks and Biting Pressure: Only Children in Beijing," in *Feeding China's Little Emperors: Food, Children, and Social Change* ed. Jun Jing (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2000) 49.

⁴² Frederik Balfour, "China's weight-loss industry is gaining: Growing affluence leads to expanding waistlines." MSNBC.com. June 8, 2010, accessed August 26, 2010, http://msnbc.com/id/37510165/ns/business-bloomberg_businessweek/

⁴³ Kathy Chu, "Extreme dieting spreads in Asia: Many women endanger their health to meet society's standard of beauty." *USA Today*. March 30, 2010, accessed November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

subjects, weight and happiness are linked. This result has not been found in previous studies and thus deserves more research. Additionally, the majority of the previous studies have focused on subjects Hong Kong or other largely Western cities, whereas this survey was concentrated solely in Nanjing. Nanjing, located three hours west of Shanghai, is often considered a more traditional Chinese city. The close proximity of Nanjing University makes Nanjing a “college town” filled with students from all types of Chinese cities and lifestyles. Not only was the survey distributed in a new city, but it also asked new questions thus expanding on and adding to the existing research on eating disorders in Chinese women.

III. The Effects of Confucian Ideals

The traditional Confucian values that have most affected the dangerous rise of eating disorders in China are those of filial piety and traditional male dominance. When AN is brought on by desires other than the desire to lose weight, that case is classified as non-fat phobic AN; that is, the subject did not develop AN exclusively to lose weight. Fat phobic and non-fat phobic AN are not mutually exclusive; in some cases, AN is fueled by both non-fat phobic and fat phobic motivations. Non-fat phobic AN is oftentimes seen in the context of the traditional Chinese ideal of filial piety.

孝顺 (*xiao shun*, “filial piety”) is a key value of Confucianism and is thus an important facet of modern-day Chinese culture, especially in regards to women. According to the Confucian Analects, filial piety involves many aspects: the classics say, “Your body with your hair and your skin is a gift from your parents. You must treasure this gift to be filial.”⁴⁴ The thesis writer’s own survey underscored this concept with many subjects claiming that parental pressure and expected filial piety had influenced their eating habits.

Exacerbating this situation is the Confucian principle of maintaining harmony and peace in familial relations; this requires that conflict be strictly avoided by the use of “non-confrontational language and coping strategies such as self-restraint and self-

⁴⁴ Joyce L.C. Ma, “Patients’ Perspective on Family Therapy for Anorexia Nervosa: A Qualitative Inquiry in a Chinese Context.” *Australia & New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*. (2008): 21 (EBSCOhost).

discipline.”⁴⁵ G. Tsai says of filial piety, “The family is often considered ‘extended’ by Western standards... and many of its members are socialized into components of familial piety and intergenerational dependence. Thus, the endpoint of adolescence may be prolonged and unclear.”⁴⁶ This extended childhood creates confusion in young women who are trying not only to become mature adults but who are also struggling with the conflict between traditional and modern cultures.

Many young girls use food refusal and self-starvation as a weapon. Previous case studies suggest that in a society in which filial piety is paramount, food refusal is a method of communication.⁴⁷ In traditional Chinese culture, parents often show their love for their children through the food they cook: even only slightly overweight children are considered a sign of adequate love and care.⁴⁸ Conversely, the parents of Chinese children who are underweight are often seen as not taking proper care of their children; meanwhile the child is rebuked for not being filial.⁴⁹ It is through these thought processes that young Chinese girls with eating disorders consider food refusal and self-starvation as a way to negotiate and communicate.

In present day China, filial piety has come into sharp contradiction with contemporary society. Filial piety as an ideal requires a woman to place the needs of the family ahead of her own; in a specific Chinese context, a woman must obey certain men present throughout her life: her father, husband, and son.⁵⁰ The role of women as required by filial piety is limited. Women are expected to take care of the household and

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Tsai, “Eating Disorders in the Far East,” 190.

⁴⁷ Ma and Chan, “The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa.” 56.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 52.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 56.

fulfill all the demands required by such work.⁵¹ A filial child must “obey her parents unconditionally, in reciprocation to the parental love and care received in her upbringing...Open discussion and negotiation are discouraged when conflicts arise.”⁵² This discouragement of open communication often leads young Chinese women to find other avenues of expression; sometimes this means developing an eating disorder in order to express inner emotions or to assert control over a specific aspect of life.

Adding to this pressure, modern Chinese women must try to blend what is traditionally demanded of them and what modern society expects of them; oftentimes the struggle to balance traditional and modern pressures can exacerbate or even cause eating disorders.⁵³ In this context, the development of eating disorders is sometimes the result of a young Chinese girl attempting to take control of her own life; she is making her own choices about what she does or does not eat, therefore she is in control. In several previously administered case studies, female Chinese AN patients often confirmed that in refusing to eat or in eating very little, they felt more in control of their own choices.⁵⁴

According to Confucianism, having a lack of control over one’s life is “consistent with the Confucian precepts of personhood, which is grounded not in voluntarism and assertiveness, but in self-effacement, fatalism and concern over family rather than individual prosperity in Chinese society.”⁵⁵ Confucianism not only encourages self-

⁵¹ Ma, Chow, Lee, and Lai, “Family meaning of self-starvation: themes discerned in family treatment in Hong Kong.” 67.

⁵² Ma, “A therapeutic alliance with Chinese adolescents suffering from eating disorders in Shenzhen, China,” 392.

⁵³ Ma, Chow, Lee, and Lai, “Family meaning of self-starvation: themes discerned in family treatment in Hong Kong,” 58.

⁵⁴ Ma and Chan, “The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa,” 60.

⁵⁵ Lee and Lee, “Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China,” 193.

discipline but also discourages open discussions between parents and children; this creates an especially potent environment for eating abnormalities to develop.

One study in particular focused on the comparison of a non-fat phobic case and fat phobic case; in the fat phobic case, “fat phobic” is still a slight misnomer due to the fact that the subject still felt “a sense of powerlessness [and] relational disconnection,” characteristics more seen in non-fat phobic cases of AN.⁵⁶ It may therefore be concluded that in certain cases of AN in a Chinese context, although fat phobia is increasing in the reasons cited for the onset of AN, there is still the underlying potential cause in the traditional Confucian ideals so common in Chinese culture. That is to say, there are mixed causes found in some subjects’ reasons for developing eating disorders. Many times subjects are influenced by reasons found in both fat phobic and non-fat phobic cases.

Many case studies have been done on the effects of filial piety on the development of eating disorders in young Chinese women. In one case study, the subject told researchers that she stopped eating in order to punish her parents for their overly high expectations.⁵⁷ This would correlate with the theory that because filial piety discourages negotiation, young women often resort to drastic measures such as self-starvation as an attempt to open up lines of communication with their parents and other relatives. Research shows that Chinese parents often have extremely high expectations for their children; the “ideal child include[s] good academic performance and high

⁵⁶ Kam and Lee, “The Variable Manifestations and Contextual Meanings of Anorexia Nervosa,” 230.

⁵⁷ Ma and Chan. “The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa,” 56.

educational attainment.”⁵⁸ The combined pressure of high academic expectations and the lack of open negotiation channels is a double-edged sword for many young Chinese women. Under this strain of expected perfection, many of these young women develop eating disturbances in order to cope with and possibly to express their struggles.

In traditional Chinese society, parental skills were often judged on the weight of the child. For example, chubby children had doting and loving parents. Conversely, in the case of an emaciated child, the parents would be blamed for not providing enough love and care.⁵⁹ With this attitude in mind, a child suffering from a disease such as AN would appear to the outside world as having unconcerned parents and would “induce guilt, anger and resentment in the mother, who is blamed by the significant others, especially by the spouse.”⁶⁰ This blaming of the mother is based on traditional Chinese attitudes, specifically that a “devoted mother and virtuous wife should be competent in household chores, in cooking and serving meals, and in taking care of the children, and in taking care of children, the sick, the handicapped, and the weak.”⁶¹ It is reasonable to assume then that a child suffering from any sort of eating disorder, including AN, would reflect poorly on the child’s mother. In addition, Chinese parents are often uncomfortable showing verbal and physical love and encouragement, instead replacing these with food.⁶² This facet of traditional Chinese society puts the thought process of an anorexic daughter into perspective. Instead of verbalizing her discontent, she refuses to eat the meals made for her by her parents, thus communicating her unhappiness.

⁵⁸ Chan and Ma. “Aetiology of anorexia nervosa in Hong Kong; a social work qualitative inquiry,” 182.

⁵⁹ Ma, “Patients’ Perspective on Family Therapy for Anorexia Nervosa: A Qualitative Inquiry in a Chinese Context,” 21.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

According to preexisting studies, the pressure to perform well academically along with discouraged communications could result in a dangerous combination. These studies suggest, “One of the predisposing factors for female adolescents to develop anorexia nervosa might be the expectation of academic success by the subjects themselves and by their parents.”⁶³ Another subject is quoted as saying, “That’s where the conflict arises: to study hard in order to have a good job...to provide a comfortable living for my parents...or to save money and lessen the financial burden on my parents by not eating enough...which eventually leads to anorexia nervosa causing my parents to worry about my health.”⁶⁴ The subject hints at the cyclical nature of her own problem: she is under immense pressure to perform academically in order to eventually provide for her parents; in addition, she eats less to assist them financially. The subject then loses enough weight to cause her parents to worry about her, adding more stress and pressure on her, exacerbating the nature of her disorder.

The Confucian tradition of children taking care of the parents adds additional weight to the stress of young Chinese women; this is also an example of the current collision between modernization and the long-established Confucian traditions.

In addition to filial piety, traditional Chinese society has had other effects on the development of eating disorders. In Sing Lee’s case study of two subjects, it was found that the subject, pseudonym Miss Y, was deeply affected by her boyfriend’s move to England; she began to withdraw socially and to refuse food.⁶⁵ It was then discovered that in the village where Miss Y lived, communicating one’s distress and complaining of

⁶³ Chan and Ma. “Aetiology of anorexia nervosa in Hong Kong; a social work qualitative inquiry,” 182.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 183.

⁶⁵ Lee. “Self-Starvation in Context: Towards a Culturally Sensitive Understanding of Anorexia Nervosa,” 27.

depression or anxiety was considered to be strange and eccentric.⁶⁶ Miss Y could only show her inward distress through her loss of appetite and subsequent development of AN. This reflects the traditional Chinese aversion to 丢面子 (*diu mian zi*, “to lose face”). The subject’s situation was shameful and thus communication was not only discouraged from external sources (the village in which she lived) but by inward sources as well (the desire to save face).

This traditional idea of “losing face” has long affected the development of mental and psychological disorders in China; patients oftentimes do not want to or are discouraged from seeking out help for the fear of being shamed.⁶⁷ In a similar case study, the subject refused to eat because she felt a deep sense of hatred for her father; this led to her desire to leave the dinner table as soon as possible, even if she had yet to touch food.⁶⁸ The intense dishonor associated with mental disease and mental suffering is not only brought onto the victim of these problems but is also considered projected onto the victim’s family ancestors.⁶⁹ In traditional Chinese society, shame is not just brought on oneself but also on one’s entire family, including long-dead ancestors. Shame so deep that it even affects one’s ancestors can be crippling; it is this type of dishonor that is deeply embedded into the Chinese psyche, leaving many victims and their families unwilling to admit to the problem. The *I Ching*, an ancient text that holds the tenets of traditional Chinese society, says of the ancestors, “Through collective piety of the living members of the family, the ancestors become so integrated in the spiritual life of the

⁶⁶ Ibid, 31.

⁶⁷ Ma, “Patients’ Perspective on Family Therapy for Anorexia Nervosa: A Qualitative Inquiry in a Chinese Context,” 11.

⁶⁸ Lee, “Self-Starvation in Context: Towards a Culturally Sensitive Understanding of Anorexia Nervosa,” 31.

⁶⁹ Ma, “Family Treatment for a Chinese Family With an Adolescent Suffering From Anorexia Nervosa: A Case Study,” 21.

family that it cannot be dispersed or disintegrated.”⁷⁰ This underscores the pivotal role the ancestors play in each family member’s life and the additional intensity of the shame.

Filial piety is highly linked to another Confucian trait sometimes considered responsible for the rise in eating disorders in Chinese women: the traditional value of male dominance. In traditional Chinese culture, a man is called 外置 (*wai zhi*, “exterior”) while a woman is called 内助 (*nei zhu*, “interior”); these names meant that the man was to work outside of the home while the woman was expected to work inside of it.⁷¹ The *I Ching* says, “The tie that holds the family together lies in the loyalty and perseverance of the wife. Her place is within, while that of the husband is without.”⁷² With the responsibility of cooking, preparing the food and other household chores falling to the women, they were encouraged to take care of others before taking care of themselves.⁷³ Likewise, many Chinese women feel that in order to get married, they must look a certain way; one Chinese girl told researchers, “Guys here are so small and skinny... They need to feel masculine and they don’t if you’re bigger than them.”⁷⁴ This is an example of the traditional view of Chinese men as the dominant force; female body image is centered on male opinions.

The traditional Confucian emphasis on male domination often found in China has proved to lead sometimes to the development of eating disorders in disenfranchised women. Family and societal roles of young women encourage them to subordinate

⁷⁰ *I Ching*. Translated by Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes as *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

⁷¹ Ma and Chan, “The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa,” 51.

⁷² Wilhelm and Baynes, *The I Ching*.

⁷³ Ma and Chan, “The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa,” 53.

⁷⁴ Kathy Chu, “Extreme dieting spreads in Asia: Many women endanger their health to meet society’s standard of beauty.” *USA Today*. March 30, 2010, accessed November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

themselves to the men in their lives. Likewise, Chinese women are brought up to believe that women are dependent on men, promoting an intense fear of divorce and separation.⁷⁵ The *I Ching* advises, "...the husband is the directing and moving force outside, while the wife, inside, is gentle and submissive."⁷⁶ It is from this social institution and other traditional values that Chinese society garners the opinion that women must be obedient caretakers.

As with the institution of filial piety, women are expected to kowtow to the demands of the men in their lives: their fathers, husbands and eventually, to their sons. In addition, because Chinese women are expected to put the demands of the household ahead of their own needs, the family becomes a place of oppression for women.⁷⁷ According to experts, women are "socialized to place major emphasis on their families, and to respect the specific family roles assigned to them."⁷⁸ This has led to an emotional and mental battle between traditional requirements and modern, Western expectations.

In the *I Ching*, the traditional place of the woman is defined thusly: "Accordingly, it is altogether right for a woman to hold conservatively to tradition..."⁷⁹ This text underscores the theory that modern Chinese women are being torn between holding to tradition and modernization.

The way these values are reflected in modern discourse can be seen in the portrayal of women in Chinese magazines. Researchers found that women were typically

⁷⁵ Ma, Chow, Lee, and Lai. "Family meaning of self-starvation: themes discerned in family treatment in Hong Kong," 67.

⁷⁶ Wilhem and Baynes, *The I Ching*.

⁷⁷ Chan and Ma. "Family Themes for Food Refusal: Disciplining the Body and Punishing the Family," 56.

⁷⁸ Chan and Ma. "Aetiology of anorexia nervosa in Hong Kong; a social work qualitative inquiry," 177.

⁷⁹ Wilhem and Baynes, *The I Ching*.

portrayed in one of four ways: as a nurturer, as a strong woman, as a flower vase, and as an urban “sophisticate.”⁸⁰ According to these researchers, the flower vase and the nurturer referenced more traditional Chinese values, while the strong woman and urban sophisticate represented more modern ones.⁸¹ It is argued that the woman’s role as the nurturer is still relevant in Chinese society today as men expect women to be soft and docile; in a recent survey of Chinese men, many said they wanted a wife who is 温柔 (*wenrou*, “gentle and soft”) and willing to put her husband’s interest ahead of her own.⁸² Other advertisements show a woman who is, “talented, ambitious and independent of spirit.”⁸³ This message being sent by society in addition to the encouragement for women to be independent and strong is creating a complex clash within women who often deal with such a struggle by exerting control over their bodies. These conflicting images raise the question: are modern Chinese women supposed to be strong and independent or nurturing and soft? This issue underscores the struggle these young women often cope with.

⁸⁰ Kineta Hung and Stella Yiyuan Li, “Images of Contemporary Woman in Advertising in China: A Content Analysis.” *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 19 (2006) 7. (EBSCOhost) accessed March 27, 2011.

⁸¹ Ibid, 11.

⁸² Ibid, 12.

⁸³ Ibid.

IV. Anorexia as the “Golden Girl” Disease and the Increased Influence of the West

With eating disorders often being cited as the “price paid for Western civilization,” the increased number of eating disorders found in Chinese women lends credence to the reasoning that eating abnormalities may be a negative consequence of Westernization.⁸⁴ In traditional Chinese culture, slimness was a sign of impoverishment; round, robust figures were more valued. However, in more recent years as China has modernized and subsequently westernized, there has been a dangerous increase in the number of young women affected by eating abnormalities and disorders.⁸⁵

As more young Chinese women grow up with families that have increased in financial gain, they must choose between traditional roles and modern ones. It is this freedom of choice that oftentimes causes the development of eating disorders in these young women.⁸⁶ Additionally, as Western media gains greater influence in China, more Chinese women are exposed to the Western ideal that attractiveness is intrinsically linked to body weight.⁸⁷

To illustrate the negative impact of increased Westernization, researchers compared the number of disordered eating found in rural Hunan, Shenzhen and Hong

⁸⁴ Lee, Lee, Leung, and Yu. “Psychometric Properties of the Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI-1) in a Non clinical Chinese Population in Hong Kong,” 177-178.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Rosenthal. “Beijing Journal; China’s Chic Waistline: Convex to Concave.” *The New York Times*. December 9, 1999, accessed August 26, 2010.

⁸⁶ G. Tsai. “Eating disorders in the Far East,” 190.

⁸⁷ Gerard Prendergast and Leung Kwok Yan. “Role Portrayal in advertising and editorial content, and eating disorders: an Asian perspective.” *International Journal of Advertising*. (2002): 239 (EBSCOhost) accessed October 2010.

Kong. Their findings were that the high school-aged girls in all three locations were very aware of dieting and fat concerns.⁸⁸ It was also discovered that a fuller shape was more acceptable in rural Hunan and less acceptable in Hong Kong, with Shenzhen falling in the middle.⁸⁹ Researchers concluded that according to their research, “modernity and socioeconomic status” played a greater role in dieting attitudes and body image in Chinese society.⁹⁰ Experts who have analyzed this study agree that “modernization equates success with young, slender, more glamorous women.”⁹¹

The Western media plays a large role in the perpetuation of a slim body as the ideal body type. In Hong Kong, arguably the most Western city in China due to its special circumstances as British colony until 1997, more girls wanted to lose weight than collegiate women in the United States (74% as opposed to 71%).⁹² In one case study, the subject was quoted as saying, “The reason behind my anorexia nervosa is quite straightforward. I want to keep fit. My favorite female singer is very thin and trendy. I want to be like her.”⁹³ Researchers have found that the influence of media has a sizable effect on the desire for thinness; one is quoted as saying, “Media influence is partly to blame as a model-thin figure is often portrayed as being attractive. Even in TV cartoon programs, the good characters tend to be slim and the villains fat.”⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Lee and Lee.” *Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China*,” 323.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 323-324.

⁹¹ Jessi Hempel. “Eating Disorders Grow among Hong Kong Women.” *W News*. August 8, 2002 accessed February 12, 2001. LexisNexis.

⁹² Lee and Lee.” *Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China*,” 324.

⁹³ Chan and Ma, “Aetiology of anorexia nervosa in Hong Kong; a social work inquiry,” 183.

⁹⁴ Shirley Lau, “Primary pupils fret about weight; Two in five want to be thinner, one in five have dieted, says survey of children nine to eleven.” *South China Morning Post*. April 9, 2001 accessed November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

In one survey taken at a school in Hong Kong, 84% of young girls were concerned with weight gain, with 31% being “terrified of gaining weight.”⁹⁵ According to the survey, at least one-third of the girls believed that if they were slimmer, they would be more valuable to society; many of the older girls discussed their eating disorders “as a fad.”⁹⁶ The self-worth attached to a slimmer figure underscores the lasting effects of Westernization as “...the greater adherence to the norms of Western culture (as reflected by the mass media) might increase one’s risk of developing an eating disorder.”⁹⁷ With the increase in Western advertisements and media, it can be assumed that there is also an increase in images of thin Western models and actresses. This could be a catalyst for some to develop eating disorders.

Some doctors assert that many young Chinese girls developing eating disorders because they are constantly barraged with advertisements for weight loss products, such as laxative herbal teas, diet pills and muscle-toning creams.⁹⁸ These products are manufactured in China and sold only illegally in the United States; the pills often contain weight loss substances illegal in the US.⁹⁹ However, most medical professionals agree that modernization has played a significant role in this increase in eating disorders.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Audrey Parwani, “Alarm at schoolgirl eating disorders; Social pressures persuade increasing number of teenagers to try to lose weight, warns expert.” *South China Morning Post*. March 19, 1999 accessed on November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Prendergast and Yan, “Role Portrayal in advertising and editorial content, and eating disorders: an Asian perspective,” 239.

⁹⁸ Jessi Hempel, “Eating Disorders Grow Among Hong Kong Women.” *W News*. August 8, 2002 accessed on February 12, 2011. LexisNexis.

⁹⁹ FDA Alert, “FDA Warns Public About Chinese Diet Pills Containing Fenfluramine,” August 13, 2002, accessed March 21, 2011.

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/DietarySupplements/Alerts/default.htm>

¹⁰⁰ Jessi Hempel, “Eating Disorders Grow Among Hong Kong Women.” *W News*. August 8, 2002 accessed on February 12, 2011. LexisNexis.

Experts have pointed out that after thirty years of acute Westernization, society in Hong Kong is unique in having changed drastically from emphasizing traditional Chinese values to emphasizing more Western ones.¹⁰¹ This massive influx of Western culture and civilization into Hong Kong and China led to educated, urbanized young women for whom slimness is equated with success.¹⁰² Another consequence of this Westernization is the specifically Western sexism that tags along with it; one young woman, who joined Weight Watchers, is quoted as saying that if she lost weight she would find a better job.¹⁰³ Researchers have also pointed out that in China, a highly collectivist country, women are more sensitive to the opinions of others and “more likely to engage in appearance comparisons with others to ensure they do not deviate from social norms.”¹⁰⁴ This adherence to social norms may have an extreme version in the development of eating disorders so that the subject may ensure a slender figure similar to her peers.

In addition, in many Chinese advertisements, women are portrayed as a “flower vase,” meaning that the woman in the commercial is seen using beauty products such as skin-whiteners, makeup, and bust enhancers.¹⁰⁵ This type of woman in Chinese advertising is modern and takes care of the way she looks. These advertisements emphasize the influence that modernization has had on China.

Increased income per capita in China has also led to the development of eating disorders. Researchers noted that young girls who grew up in higher income households

¹⁰¹ Lee and Lee, “Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China,” 324.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 325.

¹⁰³ Frederik Balfour, “China’s weight-loss industry is gaining: Growing affluence leads to expanding waistlines.” MSNBC.com. June 8, 2010, accessed August 26, 2010, http://msnbc.com/id/37510165/ns/business-bloomberg_businessweek/

¹⁰⁴ Todd Jackson and Hong Chen, “Sociocultural Predictors of Physical Appearance Concerns among Adolescent Girls and Young Women from China.” *Sex Roles*. (2008): 403 (EBSCOhost) accessed November 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Hung and Li, “Images of the Contemporary Woman in Advertising in China: A Content Analysis,” 13.

were more likely to develop eating abnormalities. Some have suggested that this is because increases in income are often accompanied by modernization and Westernization.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, the effect of these combined factors has influenced many young Chinese girls to develop abnormal eating behaviors.

¹⁰⁶ Todd Jackson and Hong Chen, "Predicting changes in eating disorder symptoms among Chinese adolescents: A 9-month prospective study." *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*. (2008): 93 (EBSCOhost) accessed November 2010.

V. China's Adoption of the Fast Food Culture

The importation of the West's fast food culture has drastically affected the diet of many Chinese children and young adults. Obesity rates in China have climbed to a staggering 30% of Chinese adults now being considered obese.¹⁰⁷ With this statistic in mind, many Chinese businesses have become devoted to weight loss. Diet pills, diet teas and other weight-loss products are frequently advertised and gyms and weight loss centers have become more and more popular.¹⁰⁸ In addition to the increasing prevalence of fast food restaurants in China, Chinese children often face social pressure to have the most popular and most Western snack foods at school.¹⁰⁹ Instead of eating according to traditional Chinese methods, such as eating bones to increase vitamin levels, many Chinese children simply use their pocket money to buy popular Western snacks.¹¹⁰ Elementary level school children ridicule their classmates who have not tried the latest, most popular snacks.¹¹¹

Along these same lines, since 改革开放 (*gai ge kai fang*, or "opening up") in the early 1980s, there has been an increase in of American fast food chains in China. Fast food chains, especially McDonald's, represent more than just American food to Chinese

¹⁰⁷ Frederik Balfour, "China's weight-loss industry is gaining: Growing affluence leads to expanding waistlines." MSNBC.com. June 8, 2010, accessed August 26, 2010, http://msnbc.com/id/37510165/ns/business-bloomberg_businessweek/

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth Rosenthal, "Beijing Journal; China's Chic Waistline: Convex to Concave." *The New York Times*. December 9, 1999 accessed on August 26, 2010. LexisNexis.

¹⁰⁹ Guo, "Food and Family Relations," 95.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 101.

¹¹¹ Chee, "Eating Snacks and Biting Pressure," 101.

locals. These restaurants serve as a gateway to American culture.¹¹² While Chinese children enjoy the food served at McDonald's, adults often say that the food is not especially good; they eat at the fast food chain because of its American appeal.¹¹³ Although many Beijing children are enamored of fast food restaurants, they admittedly do not like the taste of the food; they want to go to fast food restaurants because they enjoy the atmosphere and because it is considered fun.¹¹⁴

This increased exposure to the West's fast food culture is an important factor in rising obesity rates in children and adults alike and in sum has become an important aspect of the rise in eating disorders in China. Many parents and grandparents use fast food as a tool for encouragement for their children; when the child receives a high mark in school, some parents will reward it with a trip to McDonald's.¹¹⁵ The Chinese importation of fast food culture is closely tied with the increase in Westernization and the "opening up" of China to foreign markets.

As China has fallen victim to new dietary habits, the increase in the prevalence of fast food has often been cited as the reason for the rise in obesity.¹¹⁶ The ideal consumers for the fast food companies are children, who are just beginning to develop their lifelong eating habits; if they develop poor eating habits, they are much more likely to become obese. Researchers point out that "non-traditional foods are more accessible as a result of

¹¹² Yuanxiang Yuan, "McDonald's in Beijing: The Localization of Americana," in *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* ed. James L. Watson (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2006) 41.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 45.

¹¹⁴ Guo, "Food and Family Relations," 104.

¹¹⁵ "Kids Becoming Fatter Thanks to Fast Food." *Chinadaily.com.cn* June 24, 2010 accessed November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

¹¹⁶ Prabhu Pingali, "Westernization of Asian diets and the transformation of food systems: Implications for research and policy." *Food Policy*. (2006): 282. (EBSCOhost) accessed December 2, 2010.

trade liberalization and declining costs of transportation and communication.”¹¹⁷ There has also been negative consumption of rice, with experts predicting that by 2015 the per capita consumption will level off.¹¹⁸ All this points to the increased presence of the Western fast food industry. According to one recent survey taken by the China Youth and Children Research Center in June of 2010, 13.6% of the second generation of China’s “single child” population is obese.¹¹⁹

With this increased importation of the West’s fast food culture, the demand in China for quick and extreme weight loss has reached a fever pitch. In an interview with *USA Today*, Yu, a member of the Hong Kong Eating Disorders Association noted, “You can see how pervasive slimming is in this culture... In the old days, Asian women competed with one another to see how many children they could have, but now they compete to be the most successful, and the thinnest.”¹²⁰ Interestingly, Yu says in her interview that women compete to be not only the most successful but also the thinnest.¹²¹ This helps to prove that to many Chinese women, success is equal to body shape. With the increasing popularity of Western fast food chains, more drastic measures are enacted to keep the resulting weight off. The representative for one slimming center in Shanghai says that they do not encourage their clients to exercise because too much activity turns fat into muscle; too much muscle could be construed as too masculine.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 283.

¹¹⁹ “Kids Becoming Fatter Thanks to Fast Food.” Chinadaily.com.cn June 24, 2010 accessed November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

¹²⁰ Kathy Chu, “Extreme dieting spreads in Asia: Many women endanger their health to meet society’s standard of beauty.” *USA Today* March 30, 2010 accessed on November 4, 2010. LexisNexis.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

As China has opened itself up to foreign markets, more and more Western companies have taken full advantage of the untapped population. However, with the Chinese importation of the Western fast food culture, there has been an increased demand for extreme and oftentimes dangerously quick weight loss treatments.

VI. Survey Analysis

An integral part of the thesis was the distribution of the author's own survey. The qualitative nature of the survey should be noted because unlike with quantitative research, qualitative research allows for the subject's self-expression. In this particular survey, subjects were not only allowed to elaborate on their answers, but also encouraged to do so. This allowed for greater analysis of the perspectives and reasoning behind the answers to the survey questions.

Previous research influenced the types of questions asked in the survey. However, the survey analysis showed several new results that past articles have not mentioned. The potential for the development of eating disorders is far more widespread than indicated in earlier investigations. As Section A of this chapter will discuss, the idea of "losing face" is so fundamental in Chinese society that even in modern society, young women are loath to equate symptoms of eating disorders with the actual disease. Section B examines the influence of Western culture on the rise of eating disorders. These results have also indicated that in Chinese society weight and happiness are heavily linked, which will be further discussed in Section C. The survey and subsequent analysis has not only added to this particular field but has also advanced the scholarly literature on this subject. The questions asked in the survey have not been broached in previous studies and its qualitative nature offered a chance for the subject to explain her motivations and thoughts

on the questions. These explanations are crucial to understanding the extraordinary circumstances surrounding eating disorders in young Chinese women.

The surveys were distributed around the area surrounding Nanjing University, Gu Lou Campus in Nanjing, China. Nanjing is considered to be a “middle tier” Chinese city with a population of approximately 10 million people. It is approximately a three-hour car drive from Shanghai, one of China’s most heavily populated areas and arguably its most Western city. The majority of research has been done in major Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Hong Kong, making the results of this survey an expansion of the current literature. There are over 600,000 students in Nanjing, allowing for a diverse pool of opinions.¹²³

The Gu Lou campus of Nanjing University is located in the approximate center of Nanjing, granting better access to young adults. Nanjing University attracts students from all over China, allowing for more variety in the personal backgrounds of the subjects and in their survey answers. The survey was distributed amongst random young women in coffee shops, in bars, and in classrooms. It did not require names and was completely anonymous.

The questions were printed in both English and Chinese in order for greater clarification and to allow subjects the option of expressing themselves in either English or Chinese. The majority of subjects responded in Chinese and their answers were translated with the assistance of native Chinese speakers. The questions were also translated into Chinese with the assistance of native Chinese speakers. The thesis author also has had four years of university-level Chinese language training, allowing for a better understanding of the complex meaning of the survey’s responses.

¹²³ “General Introduction of Nanjing,” last modified 2009, accessed on February 19, 2011. http://english.nanjing.gov.cn/gk/200812/t20081214_256642.htm

Of the surveys issued, sixty were returned with completed answers to be analyzed by the author. The subjects were asked to list their age, weight, height, and hip and waist measurements. The only requirements to complete the surveys were that the subject must be female and relatively young (college aged was preferred but not required). The average age of the survey taker was 21.75 years old with the oldest being 33 and the youngest being 16. The mean age was 23.

The survey included a disclaimer stating its purpose, defining an eating disorder as a serious disturbance of eating behavior including (but not limited to) not eating when hungry, forcing oneself to vomit, and/or exercising excessively. The disclaimer also reiterated the survey's complete anonymity and reminded the subject "the reasons behind eating disorders are not necessarily to lose weight and thus affects this survey's answers." This was to ensure that subjects considered that the perspectives behind eating disorders are not always weight-related; as outlined in previous chapters, eating disorders in a Chinese context are often sparked by non-weight related concerns. The full survey may be found in the Appendix, but for clarification, the intent behind each question will be explained.

The purpose of the survey was to establish first the subject's concrete height and weight; the request for hip and waist measurements was to further establish the subject's overall health. Subjects were asked if they wanted to lose weight; if the answer was yes, then they were asked how much weight they would ideally like to lose. These questions were written with the assistance of a nutritionist in order to assure accuracy.

The survey also aimed to discover the various factors influencing eating disorders in the average young Chinese woman. Subjects were asked how often they came into contact with Western culture, such as movies, magazines or television shows. Following

this, subjects were asked if they thought Western culture has had a positive or negative image on Chinese body image.

Question 2 splintered off of the first question by asking how much the subject would ideally like to lose. The answers to these first two questions were arguably the most important because they showed whether or not the subject desired to lose weight; if the subject did desire weight loss, waist and hip measurements offered insight as to whether the subject was proportional.

The second question in the survey also asked how often subjects exercised in order to gauge if they were actively trying to lose weight. This also refers to the fact that BMI is affected by muscle mass; meaning that a subject could be close to underweight yet have a lot of muscle tone.

BMI, or the Body Mass Index, was used in the analysis of these surveys. According to the Center for Disease Control in the United States, BMI is defined as, "...a number calculated from a person's weight and height. BMI provides a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people and is used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems."¹²⁴ Recently, there was debate on whether the World Health Organization (WHO) should recalculate BMI standards for different ethnicities due to differences in the onset of health risks due to weight issues. After investigation, it was recommended that the international BMI standard remain unchanged.¹²⁵ The BMI chart used in this analysis is found in Table 1:

Table 1

¹²⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February 15, 2011. "Body Mass Index." Accessed March 22, 2011. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html>

¹²⁵ World Health Organization, "BMI Classification," April 17, 2011, accessed April 17, 2011. http://apps.who.int/bmi/index.jsp?introPage=intro_3.html.

Classification	BMI
Underweight	< 18.5
Normal	18.5-24.9
Overweight	25-29.9
Obese	30 or more

Source: World Health Organization, 2011

The third question asked if the subject had ever intentionally skipped meals to lose weight. If the subjects answered yes, they were asked why they did so. The purpose of Question 3 was to determine if the subjects had ever displayed eating abnormalities; and if they had, why they felt it was necessary to do so. Question 3 also asked, if the subject had answered yes, why she felt it was necessary to stop eating.

Question 4 splintered off of Question 3, asking the subject if she had ever seen someone else skip meals; because the surveys were handed out arbitrarily, it was considered an interesting statistic how many young women had seen others experience eating disturbances.

Question 5 asked if the respondent had ever suffered from an eating disorder or disturbances in eating behavior. If subjects responded in the negative, they were asked if they had ever known of someone with an eating disorder. Question 5 represents the crux of the survey because if the subject answered in the affirmative, a pattern could be established in what the majority of subjects see as the causes behind eating disorders.

In Question 6, subjects were asked if they knew anyone who had an eating disorder. This was asked in the same vein as Question 4 because due to the arbitrary nature of the subject selection process, the survey needed to establish that even though a subject may not suffer from the disease herself, it is possible one of her peers did.

In the seventh question subjects were asked how often they came into contact with Western culture, whether in the form of advertisements, movies, TV shows or

magazines. This was to determine if prolonged exposure to Western culture could influence the subjects' self-perception. Question 8 was an extension of this, asking if the subject believed that Western culture had an effect (whether it be positive or negative) on Chinese body image.

The next question asked if the subject considered weight (or an attractive form) and happiness to be linked. Question 9 was essential to analysis because it helped determine the perspectives behind eating abnormalities or possibilities for eating abnormalities.

The final question asked if parental pressure had an impact on the subject's eating habits; this question sought to probe into if the subject had issues with filial piety or extreme pressure stemming from parental attitudes.

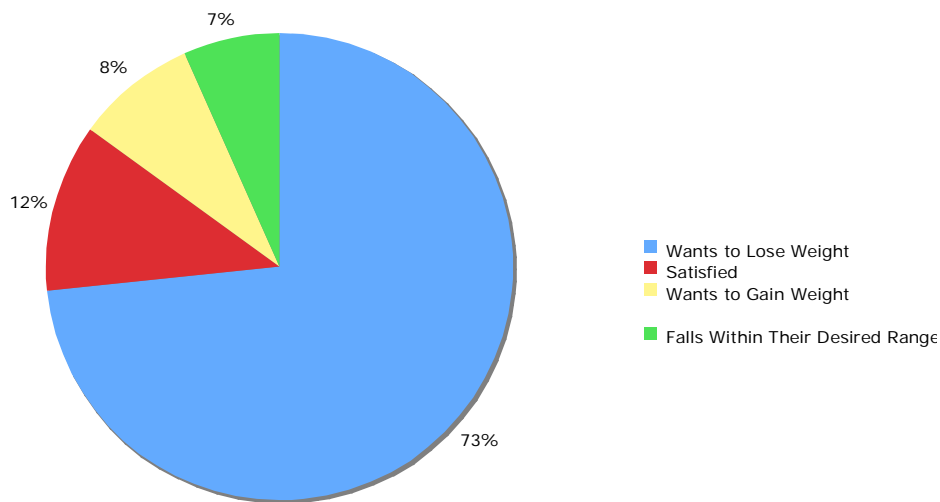
The surveys were arbitrarily given numbers ranging from one to sixty in order to simplify the analysis process; there is no relation between the assigned number and the subject's answer. Of the survey takers, forty-three out of sixty had a BMI Normal (18.5-24.9) and only two had a BMI of Overweight (25-29.9).¹²⁶ Because one of the flaws of BMI is its failure to look at the subject's lifestyle and how exercise factors into health, the subjects were asked how many hours per week they exercised and what activities they did in order to exercise. The subjects who were not BMI Normal or Overweight had a BMI of Underweight (>18.5).¹²⁷ 73% of all subjects wanted to lose weight; Figure 1 demonstrates these numbers.¹²⁸ Subjects whose weight fell within a satisfactory range were not included in these calculations; they were categorized separately as "Falls Within Desired Range."

¹²⁶ Surveys regarding Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Surveys 1-60, distributed in 2011.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Figure 1: All Subjects: Do You Want to Lose Weight?
N=60



Of the subjects who had BMI Normal, 75% wanted to lose weight (thirty-three of the forty-three subjects).¹²⁹ Of those who were BMI Underweight (sixteen subjects, or 26%) nine wanted to lose more weight (56%).¹³⁰

These statistics clearly show that the majority of young Chinese women as represented in the survey have a desire to lose weight. This does not mean that all of these young women are predisposed to develop an eating disorder; however, the potential is clearly present. Of the sixty randomly chosen women, only two were overweight (a BMI 25.9 and BMI 25.2 with a BMI 24.9 being the maximum Normal) and 26% were BMI Underweight. In addition, of the 73% of women who wanted to lose weight, 15% were already BMI Underweight, a disturbing statistic.¹³¹ This proves that there is an existing weight-loss culture currently present in China; young women whose BMI is Normal have expressed a desire to lose weight. In some cases, these young women want

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

to lose down to BMI Underweight. However, in other cases currently BMI Underweight subjects want to lose even more. The survey results naturally clustered into three categories: the influences of Confucian ideals, Western culture, and social pressures.

A. The Influence of Confucian Ideals

The unique struggle of Chinese women to balance traditional Confucian values with the demands of modern society is at the heart of many eating disorders. Confucian ideals tell Chinese women to be subservient to the men in their lives: their fathers, their eventual husbands, and their subsequent sons.¹³² However, as China has modernized and opportunities for women have increased, more women have found themselves desiring to have fulfillment outside of their domestic environment.¹³³ This has led to an eventual clash between traditional and modern views with Chinese women caught in the middle.

Several subjects mention that in China's corporate world, a slender figure and pretty face is often valued over talent or qualifications. Subject 13 said, "When you're searching for work, jobs prefer pretty and skinny girls."¹³⁴ In Balfour's news article on China's expanding waistline, he describes one particular woman who claimed that she had to join Weight Watchers or she would be unable to find a job.¹³⁵ However traditional social pressures require the opposite: a fuller, rounder figure is traditionally equitable to wealth and being a well-loved child.¹³⁶

¹³² Chan and Ma, "Aetiology of anorexia nervosa in Hong Kong; a social work inquiry," 56.

¹³³ Lee and Lee, "Disordered Eating in Three Communities of China," 324.

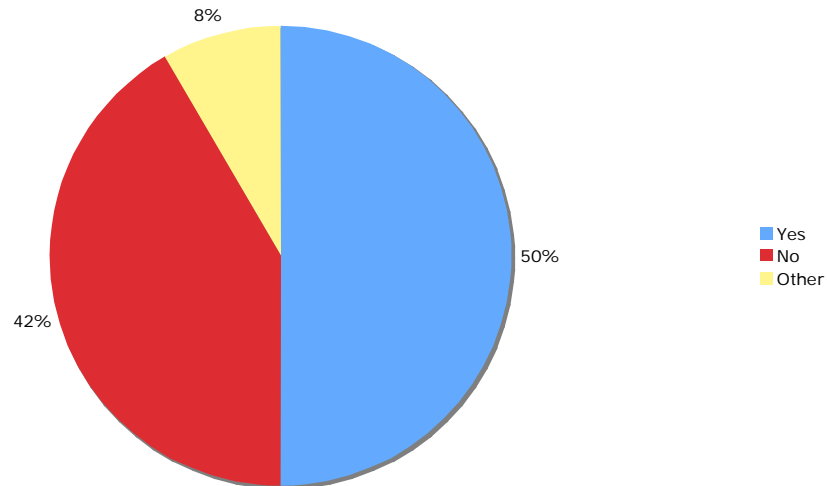
¹³⁴ Surveys concerning Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Survey 13.

¹³⁵ Frederik Balfour, "China's weight-loss industry is gaining: Growing affluence leads to expanding waistlines." MSNBC.com. June 8, 2010, accessed August 26, 2010, http://msnbc.com/id/37510165/ns/business-bloomberg_businessweek/

¹³⁶ Ma and Chan, "The Different Meanings of Food in Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa," 52.

Because traditional Confucian values have impacted Chinese culture so deeply, the survey asked each subject if she felt parental pressure had an impact on her eating habits. Figure 2 is a visual demonstration all sixty answers.

**Figure 2: All Subjects: Does Parental Pressure Impact Your Eating Habits?
N=60**



A staggering 50% of subjects believed that parental pressures impacted their eating habits. Answers categorized as “Other” were classified as such because they left the question blank or answered that their parents’ food preferences influenced their own, which is a misinterpretation of the question.

Subjects who did not want to lose weight still experienced parental pressure in regard to their eating habits. This demonstrates that filial piety still holds considerable sway over Chinese children in regards to eating habits. Subject 59, who is satisfied with her weight of 36 kg at 150 cm (BMI 16 or Underweight) says, “Yes. They hope I eat

enough to become fat.”¹³⁷ It should also be noted that Subject 59 also said that she had intentionally skipped meals but that she did not have an eating disorder.¹³⁸

The subjects who answered “No” explained their responses in several ways. Subject 41 said that because she has been living away from her parents for seven years, parental pressure was something she no longer considered in her eating habits.¹³⁹ Subject 29, who wanted to lose 6 kg, said that parental pressure did not have an impact on her eating habits because they wanted her to eat healthy.¹⁴⁰ When asked if she had ever had an eating disorder, Subject 29 responded, “No. I wish though...”¹⁴¹ This is a perfect example of parents adhering to the traditionalist attitude that a well-fed child is a loved child; in contrast, the child is struggling to adhere to a new social order where a slim figure is more desired. Subject 29’s parents want her to eat well but she herself prefers a thinner shape, thus adhering to the formula above.

Subject 44 answered, “My parents want me to eat nutritiously and to be fatter.”¹⁴² The fact that this subject’s parents want her to gain weight could stem from the previously stated ideal that a chubbier child reflects the parents’ love. In this same vein, Subject 29 said, “They [my parents] always want me to eat a lot.”¹⁴³ This is reflective of the traditional ideal that Chinese parents, mothers in particular, ply their child with food in order to show their love.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ Surveys concerning Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Survey 59.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid, Survey 41.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, Survey 29.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid, Survey 44.

¹⁴³ Ibid, Survey 29.

¹⁴⁴ Ma, “Patients’ Perspective on Family Therapy for Anorexia Nervosa: A Qualitative Inquiry in a Chinese Context,” 21.

In addition, “Chinese parents believe that careful food selection and an adequate intake of the right food would ensure a balance of *yin* and *yang* in a healthy body.”¹⁴⁵ *Yin* and *yang* in traditional Chinese beliefs represent balance, meaning that one should have equal parts *yin* and *yang* in his or her diet. Several subjects cite that their parents want them to eat nutritiously; this could reflect the traditional Chinese view that *yin* and *yang* must be balanced, requiring delicate preparation. In the case of children, the mother often prepares these meals. This means that it is possible there is rebellion in the form of self-starvation: in order to emphasize friction with the mother, the subject refuses to eat the prepared meal.

Subject 32 was classified as “Other” because her answer fit neither category; she said, “My mother does not eat much and keeps fit; but my father tells me to enjoy every meal.”¹⁴⁶ Subject 32 has a current weight of 104 斤 (approximately 104 lbs, or 47.2 kg) and listed her desired weight as 94 斤 (approximately 94 lbs, or 42.6 kg); this would make her BMI 16.9 (Underweight).¹⁴⁷ She says that she enjoys every meal; however, she still desires to lose enough weight to classify her as Underweight. This could suggest that the opposing views of Subject 32’s parents has allowed for some indecision regarding acceptable eating behaviors in her life.

50% of all subjects believed that parental pressure had some impact on eating habits. The explanations of these answers were varied; for example, Subject 17 said, “Yes, my mother wants me to be skinnier and prettier.”¹⁴⁸ This seems to conflict with the ideal that a heavier child is a loved child, but could be seen as an example of a Chinese

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Surveys concerning Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Survey 32.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, Survey 17.

mother adjusting to the new social norms of placing more value on a thinner body.

Subject 17 also wanted to lose 6 kg.¹⁴⁹

Subjects were also asked if they had ever skipped meals or vomited to intentionally lose weight or if they had ever seen someone do so. The large majority of subjects did not skip meals or vomit, but many had seen this practice done. Subject 15 elaborated, saying, “I’ve seen this. My classmates don’t eat in order to lose weight”.¹⁵⁰ In a follow-up question asking if she has ever known someone with an eating disorder, Subject 15 said, “Yes [I know someone]. Her family puts a lot of pressure on her so she overeats and over-drinks to relieve herself.”¹⁵¹ Subject 7 answered similarly, saying, “I know many girls who do not eat at night because dinner is not easy to digest and it’s easy to get fat.”¹⁵² Subject 48 said, “Some classmates don’t eat breakfast or dinner. If they do eat dinner, they only eat vegetables or fruit. They don’t eat snacks, fried foods, noodles or rice. They jump rope and hula hoop for exercise.”¹⁵³

Subject 43 echoed these experiences, saying, “I have seen this. Some classmates only eat a single apple a day. One girl sometimes doesn’t eat anything then eats too much.”¹⁵⁴ Subject 56 says, “Yes. Everyday, some classmates only eat yogurt and drink green tea.”¹⁵⁵ Even though the large majority of the subjects did not identify as having an eating disorder, many had seen friends or classmates partake in abnormal eating behaviors. Subject 11 said, “Yes, I have seen my older sister do this. However, after

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, Survey 15.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid, Survey 7.

¹⁵³ Ibid, Survey 48.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, Survey 43.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, Survey 56.

many years she regretted it because health is most important.”¹⁵⁶ Subject 8 said that she has seen these eating abnormalities in movie stars and models, but not in person, lending credence to the idea that these too-thin models have possibly had an affect on Chinese body image.¹⁵⁷

Only a few of the survey respondents admitted to suffering from an eating disorder. Subject 16 says, “Yes, I have an eating disorder. I overeat and cannot stop.”¹⁵⁸ Subject 16 also is BMI Underweight (18.4) and wants to lose weight, making her even more underweight with a BMI of 15.6.¹⁵⁹ She claims that she does not believe weight is equivalent to happiness or attractiveness and that parental pressure plays no role in her eating habits. She does not exercise but does, however, come into contact with Western influences in the form of movies.¹⁶⁰ She has also seen people only eat fruit in order to lose weight. It may be a combination of Western influences and seeing others use extreme methods to lose weight that has led Subject 16 to this point.

Subject 16 is not alone in admitting that she struggles with eating abnormalities. Subject 3 also writes that she has an eating disorder, saying “I do not eat food, only fruit,” and said she comes into contact with Western culture every week.¹⁶¹ However, when asked if she believes that weight and happiness are linked, she responded, “No because for happy people, it isn’t about weight.”¹⁶² Subject 3 also wrote that she jogs approximately 6 hours a week; in addition, her current BMI is 18.3 (Underweight) while

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, Survey 11.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, Survey 8.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, Survey 16.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, Survey 3.

¹⁶² Ibid.

her desired BMI is even lower at 16.5.¹⁶³ She is one of the youngest of the subjects and also answered that China already considered thin to be a beauty ideal, perhaps exposing the reasoning behind her extreme dieting methods. It is also a possibility that when she says, “For happy people, it isn’t about weight,” her meaning may reveal that for her, it is about weight and she is therefore not happy. From Subject 3’s answers, it is possible that she denies herself food because she is unhappy; starvation could be a form of self-punishment.

Subject 60, at age 22, did not put her current weight; she only offered her desired weight of 48 kg.¹⁶⁴ At her current height, this would put Subject 60 at BMI 16.8 or Underweight.¹⁶⁵ Her response to whether or not she had ever had an eating disorder was, “Yes. I intentionally did not eat.”¹⁶⁶ She explained, “When I’m hungry, I am more clear-minded. It’s not necessarily to lose weight.”¹⁶⁷ In addition, Subject 60 said that she has previously suffered from a combination of anorexia and bulimia, saying, “When the pressure was too much I had anorexia. I was very hungry and did not eat. I stopped eating. I also had bulimia. The pressure was too much.”¹⁶⁸ As previously mentioned, Subject 60 also believes that weight and happiness have a direct link, saying, “Beauty makes you and others happy.”¹⁶⁹

As discussed in previous chapters, young Chinese women often have trouble finding the middle ground between traditional expectations of submission to men with modern opportunities of independence. According to Ma, “Young women may be torn

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, Survey 60.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

between opposing cultural forces from the East and the West—being submissive, loyal and self-sacrificing to the family’s well being on one hand and being independent, autonomous, and individualistic on the other hand.”¹⁷⁰

Subject 7 gave a similar reason when admitting to her own struggles with an eating disorder, saying, “Yes [I had an eating disorder] when the pressure was too much.”¹⁷¹ She also said that many of her classmates had also suffered from eating disorders and that she had seen many girls not eat at night because it was harder to digest and easier to get fat.¹⁷² Subject 7 listed her current weight as 51 kg at 162 cm, making her current BMI Normal at 19.4.¹⁷³ However, she also wrote that she wanted to lose 4 kg, making her BMI drop to 17.9 (Underweight).¹⁷⁴

In addition to these responses, Subject 17 said when asked if she had ever skipped meals, “Yes. I usually do not eat dinner. I also do not want to eat, so I only eat one meal a day.”¹⁷⁵ When asked to explain why she developed an eating disorder, Subject 17 said, “Women’s pursuit of beauty is normal. The world’s standard is that women be beautiful, and if you are too fat, it is easy for others to tease you.”¹⁷⁶ She also answered when asked if she had an eating disorder, “Yes. After a period of time, I try and eat less; I deprive myself. Then it becomes not wanting to eat.”¹⁷⁷ When asked if parental pressures had an impact on her eating habits, she said, “Yes. My mother hopes that I am

¹⁷⁰ Ma, “Patients’ Perspective on Family Therapy for Anorexia Nervosa: A Qualitative Inquiry in a Chinese Context,” 21.

¹⁷¹ Surveys concerning Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Survey 7.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, Survey 17.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

skinnier and prettier. She suggests I diet and exercise.”¹⁷⁸ As previously stated, Subject 17’s mother’s attitude could stem from the stress of trying to reconcile traditional and modern values.

Interestingly, several subjects who admitted to skipping meals denied having an eating disorder. This underscores the Chinese association of mental problems with shame and “losing face.” Subject 29 says, “Yes, I’ve skipped meals because I sometimes don’t feel like eating.”¹⁷⁹ She then says that she wishes she had an eating disorder and that she wants to lose 6 kg.¹⁸⁰

In a similar response to these questions, Subject 8 says of skipping meals, “Yeah. I didn’t eat dinner [...] But now it’s winter, so I eat my dinner with little food...I think if I eat less [at] night, I could be more healthy and it’s a quick way to lose weight.”¹⁸¹ Subject 8 is 54 kg at 164 cm, putting her BMI at 20.1 (Normal); however she wants to lose 4 kg, which would put her BMI at .1 shy of Underweight.¹⁸²

Subject 6, who wrote that she could not admit her waist and hip measurements because she was “too fat,” said that she had intentionally skipped meals, saying, “Yes. In order to lose weight, I have skipped meals and gone hungry.”¹⁸³ She explains her reasons thusly, “I think beauty starts from the outside and goes inward. When your outward appearance is more beautiful, you are more confident! I really need this!”¹⁸⁴ In response to the question asking if she had ever had an eating disorder, she said, “Sometimes, in

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, Survey 18.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid, Survey 6.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

order to lose a little weight, I intentionally eat less.”¹⁸⁵ She does not acknowledge that this line of thinking is directly linked to eating disorders.

These examples highlight the Chinese ideology of 丢面子 (*diu mian zi*, or “losing face”), which is one of the main reasons behind the traditional disdain for mental illness. Mental illness is shameful and not only brings shame to the sufferer but also to his or her family; therefore many victims hide their illness and do not seek help. Ma notes,

Due to the social stigma attached to mental illness, the fear of losing face, and bringing shame to ancestors, it is hard for Chinese families to admit having mental health problems in their family before a crisis, let alone to see consultation from mental health professionals (as cited by Cheung and Lau, 1982).¹⁸⁶

In addition, traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes *yin* and *yang* and balance within the body; Chinese parents, the mother in particular, painstakingly prepares each meal for the child.¹⁸⁷ Oftentimes, when a Chinese daughter is discovered to be anorexic, there is “guilt, anger, and resentment on the mother, who is blamed by the significant others, especially by the spouse.”¹⁸⁸ The *I Ching*, the ancient text that traditional Chinese society relied upon, says, “It is upon the woman of the house that the well-being of the family depends.”¹⁸⁹ This underscores the traditional view that the wife and mother is responsible for the mental, emotional, and physical health of each member of her household. When a daughter develops an eating disorder, it becomes the mother’s “fault.”

B. The Influence of Western Culture

The survey also examined the influence of Western culture in the development of eating disorders. Figure 3 shows if the subjects who wanted to lose weight considered

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ma, “Patients’ Perspective on Family Therapy for Anorexia Nervosa: A Qualitative Inquiry in a Chinese Context,” 21.

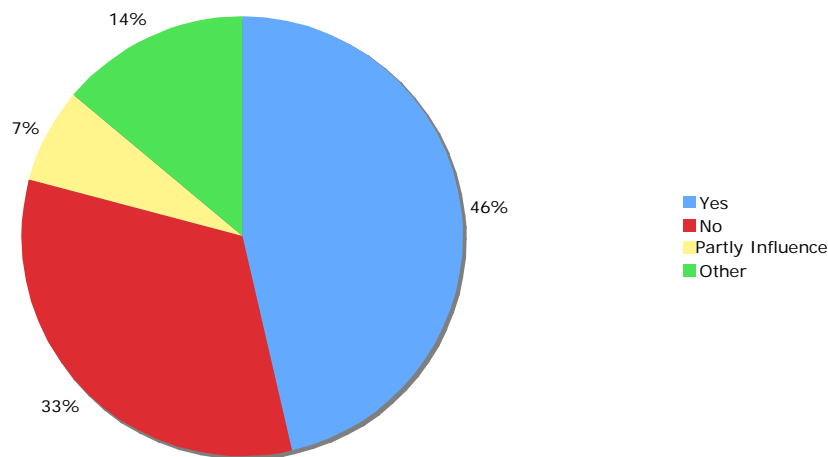
¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Wilhem and Baynes, *The I Ching*.

increased Western influence to be a factor in changing Chinese body image. Because rounder, fuller shapes were considered to be optimal in traditional Chinese society, many sources consider the influx of Western culture and media into Chinese society since the “opening up” of China in the early 1980s to be partly responsible for the increase in body dissatisfaction. The purpose of Figure 3 is to look at how many subjects out of the forty-three who are unsatisfied with their current weight believe the West has influenced Chinese body image.

Figure 3: Subjects Who Want to Lose Weight: Has the West Influenced Chinese Body Image?
N=43



The original question in the survey was, “Do you believe that the increased influence of the West has had an effect (positive or negative) on Chinese body image? Please explain your answer.”¹⁹⁰ Of the forty-three subjects who wanted to lose weight, 46% (or twenty-one subjects) said that they believed the West had influenced Chinese body image.¹⁹¹ Of those who answered, “Yes,” many blamed Western fashion and pop

¹⁹⁰ Question 8, Surveys concerning Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Surveys 1-60.

¹⁹¹ The 14% whose answers were labeled “Other” either left the question blank or wrote that they did not understand the question and are therefore not analyzed.

culture. Subject 5 said, “I definitely believe so,” and then listed, “Movie stars, skinny models, fashion shows.”¹⁹² Another subject echoed this, saying, “The West has a lot of movies, TV and other entertainment. Actresses are always skinny. There are some curves but almost all are skinny.”¹⁹³ Subject 9 agreed, writing, “Chinese people see the increase in Western influence and think that Western beauty ideals should be Chinese ideals as well.”¹⁹⁴

In an opinion differing from the others who answered, “Yes,” Subject 53 said, “The Western culture in Chinese media has made people fatter.”¹⁹⁵ This correlates to the idea that with the Chinese importation of the West’s fast food culture, there has been an equal growing market for dangerous and unhealthy weight loss products. Subject 7 echoed this to an extent, saying, “Yes. Some people think the customs and fashions in the West are better than [in] China.”¹⁹⁶

Those who answered “No” often said that they believed China has had its own culture predisposed to encourage slender figures. Subject 17 said, “China has its own unique and traditional beauty standard...Chinese women are more focused on slenderness than Western women.”¹⁹⁷ Subject 18 concurred, saying, “China already had a slender standard of beauty.”¹⁹⁸ Subject 3 also said that the Chinese beauty ideal was already a slender figure.¹⁹⁹ In addition, Subject 8 answered that the West has not had an influence on Chinese body image because in the eyes of the West, Chinese girls are the most

¹⁹² Ibid, Survey 5.

¹⁹³ Ibid, Survey 48.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, Survey 9.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, Survey 53.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, Survey 7.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, Survey 17.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, Survey 18.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, Survey 3.

beautiful.²⁰⁰ Likewise, Subject 56 said, “I don’t think so. ‘Losing weight’ is a trend and not necessarily from Western influences. It seems many people think Westerners are very fat...”²⁰¹

Only one subject of those who wanted to lose weight answered that she believed the West had a partial influence on Chinese body image. Subject 43 said, “There could be an influence but not necessarily. Compared to Western obsession with body image, the Chinese don’t really pay attention.”²⁰² This low number of subjects who responded with “Partially Influences” indicates that there is not much room for middle ground on the effects of Western culture. A clear majority of subjects who want to lose weight indicate that Western culture has influenced Chinese body image; therefore it may be asked which parts of Western culture have the most influence.

Most subjects who desired weight loss said that they frequently come into contact with Western culture; they mostly cited movies, television and magazines. 67% of the subjects who wanted to lose weight said that they came into contact with Western influences either “Every day” or “Often.” These answers allow for speculation on whether or not increased contact with Western influences has spurred young Chinese women into wanting to lose weight in order to look more like the actresses and models seen in the movies and in the pages of magazines. Figure 4 shows the answers to this

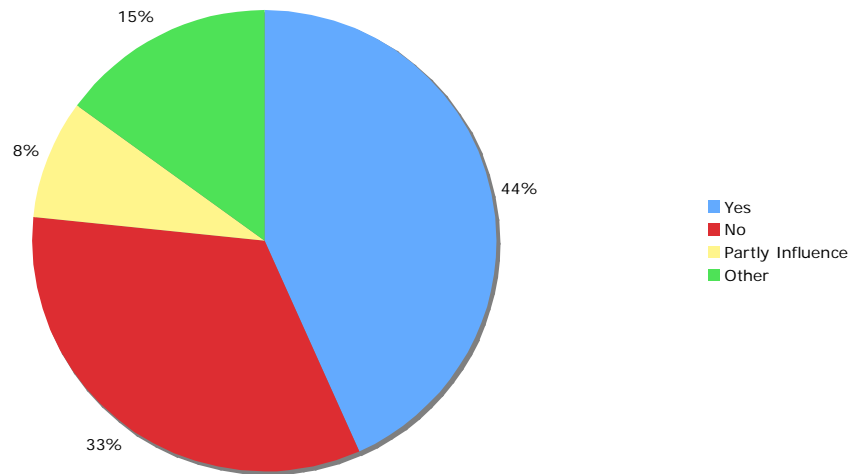
²⁰⁰ Ibid, Survey 8.

²⁰¹ Ibid, Survey 56.

²⁰² Ibid, Survey 43.

same question; however, in this chart, all sixty answers are compared.

**Figure 4: All Subjects: Has the West Influenced Chinese Body Image?
N= 60**



Of those who answered that there has been a partial influence from the West on Chinese body image, most expounded that there has been a cultural mixing. Subject 4 explained, “Chinese and American culture have meshed to create new values.”²⁰³ Of those who don’t want to lose weight (those who are satisfied with their current weight, or within a range of weight in which their current weight falls into), more answered that the West has had a partial influence on Chinese body image than in the previous figure. Another subject who believed there was a partial influence said, “Perhaps there is an influence. In fashion, girls are skinny and pretty. This influences a lot of people.”²⁰⁴

Subject 15 said, “There is an influence [on Chinese body image]. For Chinese people, the Western influence has brought a new standard of beauty, like Barbie dolls.”²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Ibid, Survey 4.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, Survey 51.

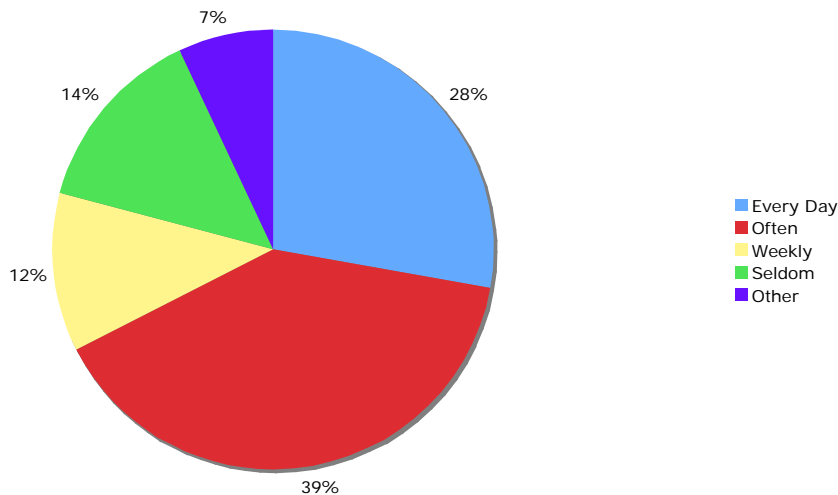
²⁰⁵ Ibid, Survey 15.

Although Subject 15 does not want to lose weight, her current height and weight is 166 cm and 43 kg, making her BMI 16.5, which is classified as Underweight.²⁰⁶

Of the 73% of subjects who wanted to lose weight, 44% believe the West has influenced Chinese body image. This could be indicative of many factors, such as increased exposure to Western media (i.e., websites, blogs, magazines, or movies) or increased exposure to foods with higher caloric properties. These subjects often cited fashion, magazines, and movie stars as the examples of how Western culture has influenced Chinese body image.

Figure 5 demonstrates out of the subjects who wrote that they desired to lose weight, how many of them often or seldom came into contact with Western culture (i.e. Western media, magazines, movies, TV shows, etc).

Figure 5: Subjects Who Want to Lose Weight: How Often Do You Come Into Contact with Western Influences?
N=43



The majority of subjects claimed that they did come into contact with Western influences often. Interestingly, a larger portion of those who did not want to lose weight

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

than those who did said they “seldom” came into contact with these influences. This affirms that increased contact with Western influences can perpetuate desire for weight loss. “Other” was not included because all the subjects who did not desire weight loss answered the question.

However, the large majority of subjects who desired weight loss (indeed, the majority of the total subjects) often came into contact with Western influences. The most common answers were “Every day” or “Often.” This near-constant contact with the West may have had an impact on the subjects’ psyches. There is documented research showing that prolonged exposure to abnormally thin women produces abnormal body expectations. In *Eating Disorders: An Asian Perspective* Prendergast and Yan cite Stice and Shaw’s previous experiment on women’s reactions to photos of thin models, explaining,

Exposure to thin models resulted in lower self-esteem and decreased satisfaction with one’s weight [...] Similarly, an experiment that exposed women to pictures of models from women’s magazines found that exposure to thin models [...] [this] produced increased depression, guilt, shame, insecurity and body dissatisfaction.²⁰⁷

It is possible then that this constant barrage of thin celebrities and models has had an undermining effect on Chinese body image, making for young women who believe that the Western ideal is the best ideal. Several subjects responded that the influence of the West has made them think breasts are important to men. If Western culture has influenced subjects in this way, then it is reasonable to assume that it has influenced subjects in other ways, i.e., believing that the body type that models and actresses possess is the ideal body type.

²⁰⁷ Prendergast and Yan, “Role portrayal in advertising and editorial content, and eating disorders: an Asian perspective,” 24.

Subject 60, as mentioned in the previous section, answered that she did have an eating disorder. She elaborated that the pressure was too great, but it is unclear what kind of pressure she is referring to. It is possible that she could be referencing the pressure to look thin from magazines and fashion icons. When asked if the increased influence of the West has had an effect on Chinese body image, she says, “Yes. Fashion has a huge influence.”²⁰⁸ She also admits that she has the opportunity every day to come into contact with Western culture.²⁰⁹ It is possible, however, that she could also be referring to the pressures of compromising traditional values with modern society.

Table 2 is a visual demonstration of the subjects who wrote that they desired to lose weight. It shows how many of these subjects came into daily contact with Western culture and how many felt as though their parents pressured them. The purpose of Table 2 is to visually demonstrate the correlation between Western contact and parental pressures with the desire to lose weight. This is important because these factors have been cited by previous studies as intrinsic to eating disorders in a Chinese context and the table provides a visual layout for side-by-side analysis. Table 2 only uses the survey answers of the subjects who wrote that they wanted to lose weight.

Table 2

	Current BMI	Desired BMI	Contact with West	Have Parental Pressure?
Subject 1	21.3	19.1	Every day	Yes
Subject 2 *	20.8	18	Not often	Yes
Subject 3 **	18.3	16.5	Every day	No
Subject 4 **	17.6	17.2	Every day	Yes
Subject 5	23	19.5	Every day	Yes
Subject 6	23	19.5	Often	No
Subject 7 *	19.4	17.9	Once a month	Yes
Subject 8	20.1	18.6	Every day	No
Subject 9	22.8	21.2	Once a month	No
Subject 10	20	19.4	Often	No

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Subject 11	20.4	18.6	Movies, magazines	Other
Subject 12	21	19.1	Weekly	Yes
Subject 16 **	18.4	16.5	Movies	No
Subject 17	22.7	20.3	Weekly	Yes
Subject 18 **	18	16.5	Every day	No
Subject 19	21	19.1	Every day	No
Subject 20	21.2	19.3	Other	No
Subject 21	24.5	22.6	Sometimes	No
Subject 22	21.1	19	TV	No
Subject 23 *	19.1	18.3	Movies	Yes
Subject 25	21.2	19.6	Movies	No
Subject 26	22.9	21.2	TV	Yes
Subject 27	24.5	22.6	Every day	No
Subject 28 *	18.6	16.9	Other	No
Subject 29	21.8	19.4	Often	No
Subject 31	25.9	22.9	Other	No
Subject 32 *	18.7	16.9	Internet, magazines	Other
Subject 33	25.2	22.3	Magazines	Yes
Subject 34	23.5	20.8	Magazines	No
Subject 35	22.5	20.8	Weekly	No
Subject 37 *	20.2	16.5	Movies	No
Subject 39 *	20.2	16.5	Often	Yes
Subject 43 *	21	17.8	Often	Other
Subject 45 *	19.6	18.1	Every day	Yes
Subject 48 **	18.3	17.1	Weekly	Other
Subject 49 *	19.5	18.1	Weekly	Other
Subject 53 **	16.6	15.5	Every day	Other
Subject 54	23.9	20.2	Other	Yes
Subject 55 *	19.4	17.5	Every day	No
Subject 56	23.1	20.1	Sometimes	No
Subject 57 *	18.8	15.9	Not often	Mostly No
Subject 58	21.8	19.4	Very often	No
Subject 60*		16.8	Every day	Yes

*Wants to Lose to Be Underweight

** Is Already Underweight

For the subjects who were already BMI Underweight (meaning their BMI is less than 18.5) and still wanted to lose weight, frequent contact with Western culture is common. Prendergast and Yan affirm that in Western society, the media commonly encourages thinness as the ideal body; when looking at the number of subjects in this thesis's study, one can see the correlation between Western contact and the desire of

already dangerously slim subjects to lose more weight.²¹⁰ When looking at the subjects who wanted to lose weight to become BMI Underweight, there is not as much contact with Western culture as with those subjects who are already BMI Underweight (6/6 BMI Underweight subjects who wanted to lose more weight said they frequently came into contact with the West, versus only 6/12 BMI Normal subjects who wanted to lose to BMI Underweight frequently did).

There could be several reasons for this difference, the most obvious of which is that something else influenced the subjects for whom Western culture was not a concern. Another interesting statistic to be gleaned from Table 2 is that of the 12 subjects who wanted to lose weight to become BMI Underweight but were not influenced by the West, 6 were affected by parental pressure. Therefore it can be reasonably deduced that parental pressure may have replaced the influence of Western culture as the catalyst for these subjects' eating disturbances and possible problems with body image.

According to Table 2, for the majority of the subjects who wanted to lose weight, regardless of whether they wanted to lose to become BMI Underweight or not, Western influence was a factor. Whether or not parental pressure played a role in the subjects' desire to lose weight is more widely dispersed. It seems that Western contact is a more common factor among these subjects than parental pressure.

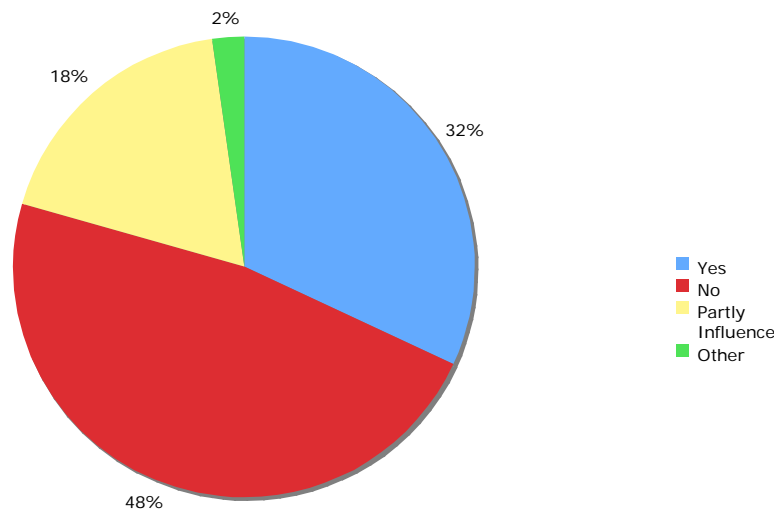
C. The Influence of Social Pressures

This survey found that social pressures also influenced Chinese body image and desire for weight loss. The link between happiness and weight had not been discussed in any previous research, making the answers of these 60 subjects groundbreaking material.

²¹⁰ Predergast and Yan, "Role portrayal in advertising and editorial content, and eating disorders: an Asian perspective," 239.

To further analyze these responses, Figure 8 demonstrates how many subjects out of the forty-three subjects who desired to lose weight believed that a slender figure was essential to happiness and attractiveness. It is imperative to note that believing a slender figure is essential to happiness or attractiveness is often a stepping-stone to developing abnormal eating behaviors.

**Figure 6: Subjects Who Want to Lose Weight: Are Happiness and Weight Linked?
N=43**



As shown in Figure 6, out of the forty-three subjects who expressed a desire to lose weight, 32% believed that weight and happiness were linked, while 48% believed otherwise.²¹¹ The original question in the survey was phrased in this way: “Do you think weight is directly linked to happiness and/or attractiveness? Please explain.”

Some who answered “No” explained their reasoning that inner qualities are more important than outer ones, such as Subject 18 who said, “Personal character and relationships are more important for happiness.”²¹² Subjects 47 and 48 also answered the

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid, Survey 18.

same way, with both responding that happiness is more important than weight.²¹³ The subjects who answered “No,” despite indicating that they wanted to lose weight, perhaps hold to the traditional idea that moral character is a more important aspect of life.

Subject 8 said, “Guys always [use] their eyes. Happiness needs more; we always say that if someone likes you, he or she will not care about your weight, but care about your health.”²¹⁴ Subject 8, at 164 cm and 54 kg, is BMI 20.1 (BMI Normal) but her desired weight is around 50 kg, which would make her BMI .1 shy of Underweight.²¹⁵

Subject 56 also answered this question, “No;” she says, “I am very fat, but I am still happy. Only sometimes, I can’t easily buy clothes.”²¹⁶ It should be noted that Subject 56 is 161 cm and 60 kg, making her BMI 23.1 or Normal; she would also like to lose 8 kg.²¹⁷ The issue of fashion in China is an interesting one; one news article claims that one in three Hong Kong women consider clothing sizes too small.²¹⁸ The *South China Morning Post* surveyed over 600 women and a staggering 45.4% claimed that they had had problems finding clothing that fit them.²¹⁹ Social worker Philippa Yu Man-wai said, “The overwhelming slimming advertisements have pushed many women to lose weight blindly and to wear smaller clothes.”²²⁰ One woman, who described herself as slightly overweight, said that she found even extra-large (XL) shirts to be too small on

²¹³ Ibid, Surveys 18, 47, and 48.

²¹⁴ Ibid, Survey 8.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid, Survey 56.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Lilian Goh, “Thin fashion leaves women feeling in fat,” *South China Morning Post*, March 30, 2007. LexisNexis accessed November 4, 2010.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

her.²²¹ The issue of accurate clothing size in China is a prevalent one and needs more research to be thoroughly discussed.

Comparatively, the subjects who answered, “Yes” often cited that a slender shape leads to being liked by others and to attention from other people. For example, Subject 12 answered, “Yes [weight and happiness are linked]. When you’re skinny, it’s easier for people to pay attention to you.”²²² Subject 55 agreed, saying, “Yes. A slimmer shape makes people think you are sexy and healthy. People like it more.”²²³ Subject 55 has a BMI of 19.4 and wants to lose 5 kg, bringing her BMI down to 17.5, or BMI Underweight.²²⁴ Additionally, Subject 55 recently broke up with her boyfriend and subsequently lost her appetite. She may be trying to express her emotions through her lack of eating. This scenario echoes Dr. Sing Lee’s Miss Y, who developed a severe lack of appetite after her boyfriend moved to England.²²⁵

Subject 6 also said that she believed there is a relationship between happiness and weight; she says, “If you are beautiful, you feel happier.”²²⁶ When asked if she ever intentionally skipped meals, she said yes, in order to lose weight.²²⁷ Similarly, Subject 57 responded to this question, “There is a relationship. Most people pay attention to weight.”²²⁸ Subject 57, at 168 cm and 53 kg, has a BMI of 18.8 and wants to lost 8 kg; this would make her BMI 15.9, or Underweight.²²⁹ Subject 60, who did not put her original weight on the survey, answered this question, “Yes. Beauty makes you and

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Surveys concerning Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Survey 12.

²²³ Ibid, Survey 55.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Sing Lee, “Self-Starvation in Context: Towards a Culturally Sensitive Understanding of Anorexia Nervosa,” 27.

²²⁶ Ibid, Survey 6.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid, Survey 57.

²²⁹ Ibid.

others happy.”²³⁰ She also wrote that her desired weight was 48 kg, making her BMI 16.8 or Underweight.²³¹ Subject 45 felt similarly, saying, “Yes. Skinny shapes are more attractive.”²³² Subject 45’s original height and weight of 163 cm and 52 kg put her BMI at 19.6 (Normal); but her desired weight is 48kg, which would put her BMI at 18.1 (Underweight).²³³

This idea of happiness and attractiveness stemming from weight is often present in modern media.²³⁴ Body shape is often seen through the lens of body image and because body image has been distorted through the media, thinness is often seen as linked to happiness.²³⁵ In addition, several of the subjects who answered that they thought weight and happiness were linked cited that men often prefer thinner women. Subject 38 (whose current weight fell into her desired range and was thus not included in the number of subjects who wished to lose weight) said of this question, “Yes. I think it is unhealthy to be overweight and in men’s eyes, [a] slim figure is more attractive.”²³⁶

Those who answered that weight partially influenced happiness often said that attributes such as confidence, knowledge and personality could make women attractive; however, these subjects also said that outward appearance does make a difference in happiness. Subject 17 said of this question, “There is a partial influence [between weight and happiness/attractiveness]. The internal is more important, but the outward helps achieve the final goal.”²³⁷ Subject 43’s answer was also classified as “Partly Influences;”

²³⁰ Ibid, Survey 60.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid, Survey 45.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Prendergast and Yan, “Role portrayal in advertising and editorial content, and eating disorders: and Asian perspective,” 237.

²³⁵ Ibid, 240.

²³⁶ Surveys concerning Eating Disorders in a Chinese Context, Survey 38.

²³⁷ Ibid, Survey 17.

she wrote, “There is not necessarily an influence. Compared to Westerners, Chinese people don’t pay as much attention to body image.”²³⁸ Subject 13 (who wrote that she was satisfied with her weight of 48 kg) said, “There is an indirect link. Boys like slim girls and when you are trying to find a job, you must be pretty.”²³⁹

As clearly indicated by these results, eating disorders in young Chinese women are becoming more widespread. As shown in Figure 1, the large majority of randomly chosen Chinese subjects desire to lose weight. China’s own Confucian background also has a strong influence on these subjects. Additionally, parental pressures played a large role in many subjects’ eating habits. The idea of “losing face” created a paradox in the survey answers: several subjects wrote they had skipped meals to lose weight, yet they also claimed to never have had disordered eating. This indicates that these subjects feel that they cannot admit their disorder or they will lose face. Western media and culture largely influences these subjects, with many frequently coming into contact with Western media outlets and citing fashion’s patronage of too-thin models as a catalyst for a negative body image. Finally, social pressures also played an intricate role in subjects’ answers: many subjects believed that weight and happiness were irrevocably linked. These final two factors, particularly the role of social pressures, played a larger part in this study than in others previously researched.

Many of the survey answers support the theories presented in the previous chapters, but as shown they have also greatly expanded the research in this particular field. Many subjects responded that Western influence has affected the Chinese psyche. In addition, the large majority of the subjects came into contact with Western materials frequently. Because of the stigma Chinese society places on mental illness, several

²³⁸ Ibid, Survey 43.

²³⁹ Ibid, Survey 13.

subjects who skipped meals did not equate this with an eating disorder. Because the surveys were randomly distributed, they underscore that there is a clear problem in the way that beauty and eating disorders are viewed in China. The numbers offered by the surveys emphasizes that there is a problem not only in the way that eating disorders are viewed in Chinese society but also that there already exists a fertile environment for the development of these eating disturbances.

VII. Conclusion

Eating disorders are moving to the forefront in China; however, as with most mental and psychological disorders in China, the victims rarely come forward to receive the help they need. The traditional Chinese ideal of avoiding “losing face” discourages those suffering from any type of mental disorder from admitting the problem and getting help. In the thesis writer’s own survey, only two of the sixty randomly chosen subjects had a Body Mass Index of Overweight; but 72% of all subjects wanted to lose weight. This statistic shows that there is a strong weight-loss culture in China, with even subjects who have a BMI of Normal are compelled to feel as though they need to lose weight

When the effects of traditional filial piety and male domination are combined with increased Westernization, urbanization and importation of Western fast food culture, Chinese girls are under more and more pressure to aspire to an oft-unhealthy body shape. Many times these young girls do not even realize their aspirations; they automatically assume they must lose weight regardless of their body size.²⁴⁰ Many researchers agree that the media focuses too much on being slim and on slimming products.²⁴¹ A large portion of the survey subjects agree that the Western media has influenced Chinese thought, with the large majority of the subjects came into contact with Western culture more than once a month. With the increase in Western media, such as magazines, movies, TV shows and websites, young Chinese women have more access to sources that emphasize a thin, often unhealthily so, figure.

With the modernization in China, there has been an advent in eating disorders and unhealthy eating behaviors among Chinese women. There are likely many

²⁴⁰ Carrie Chan, “More teenage girls obsessed by their weight: The number of those seeking help has doubled, with one patient aged only 11.” *South China Morning Post*. 4 August 2003. Web. 4 November 2010.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

interlocking causes specific to each subject that is to blame for each individual case. However those causes that have been most influential, according to both the previous research and the thesis writer's own research, are the influence of traditional Confucian values, China's increased modernization, and the importation of the West's fast food culture. Traditional Confucian ideals still hold considerable influence in Chinese society; as previously examined, filial piety is expected from all good children. This expected obedience, along with the demand for perfection in most aspects of the child's life, has produced a ripe environment for eating disorders as a way to control the only aspect of life available to the subject.

There is also the influence of male domination that is traditionally accepted in China. In modern society, Chinese women must cope with and balance the struggle between traditional forces that demand obedience to the males in one's life and modern values that claim that women deserve independence and autonomy. This adds pressure to a subject who may also be struggling with the idea that she must conform her body to meet the standards of a society still dominated by males. Women are told through advertisements that they must be soft, docile and obedient but that they must also be sophisticated and self-reliant; this obvious contradiction has had an adverse effect on the psyche of the modern Chinese woman that often leads to eating disorders as an attempt for control.

The importation of the West's fast food culture has had a similar effect on Chinese society by leading to a rise in more extreme measures to lose the weight added on by foods such as the Big Mac. Risky diet pills and teas have become more popular in China as women try any avenue available for quick weight-loss. In addition, children are often peer pressured to have the most fashionable and often Western snacks.

The West has long been plagued by problems such as eating disorders, but they are just beginning to come to the forefront in China. Under the combined influences of traditional filial piety, Westernization and increased income, and the importation of the fast food culture, there has been the creation of an almost perfect foundation for the development of eating disorders in China. These factors have shown themselves to be the most consistently affective in regards to the development of abnormal eating behaviors among modern day Chinese women.

Appendix

Survey 调查

Disclaimer: For the purpose of this questionnaire, an **eating disorder** is defined as: any of several psychological disorders (such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia) characterized by serious disturbances of eating behavior. A serious disturbance of eating behavior includes (but is not limited to) not eating when hungry, forcing oneself to vomit, and/or exercising excessively. The subject should be aware that the reasons behind eating disorders **is not necessarily to lose weight, and thus affects this survey's answers. This questionnaire is completely anonymous.**

饮食混乱的解释: 为了这份调查问卷的目的, 饮食混乱被定义为: 任何一些心理的问题比方说神经性厌食或者暴食症有严重的饮食行为的干扰。饮食行为的干扰包括(但是不局限于) 饿的时候不吃为了减肥, 迫使自己把吃的东西吐出来为了减肥, 或者过分的运动为了减肥。**你应该知道背后的原因是饮食失调不一定是减肥从而影响本次调查的回答。这份问卷是完全匿名的。**

Your age

你的年龄:

1. What are your height, weight and your waist and hip measurements?

你的身高、体重、腰围、臀围是多少?

Height 身高:

Weight 体重:

Waist 腰围:

Hips 臀围:

2. How much would you like to weigh? How much do you exercise per week? Please describe your activities and how many minutes you spend doing these activities.

你的理想体重是多少? 你每周运动多长时间? 请描述你的运动和你花多长时间在这些运动上?

3. Have you ever skipped meals or intentionally vomited your food? Please describe. 你有没有不吃一顿饭或者故意吐掉你的食物? 请描述。

3a. If your answer is "yes," please explain your perception of the cause(s) related to your eating abnormality (i.e., the belief that beauty is measured by weight).

如果你的答案是“是”的话请解释你对你自己饮食不正常的看法(比如: 美丽是用体重来衡量的)。

4. If you answered “No” to Question 3, have you witnessed someone else skip meals, intentionally vomit their food, or exercise excessively in order to lose weight? If your answer is “yes” please describe.

如果你的答案对第三题是“否”的话，你有没有亲眼见过某人不吃饭，故意吐掉他们的食物，或者过分的运动为了减肥？如果你的答案是“是”的话请描述。

5. Have you ever had an eating disorder, such as (but not limited to) anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa? If your answer is “yes” please describe.

你有没有饮食失调症，比如（但不局限于）精神性厌食症或者暴食症？如果你的答案是“是”的话请描述。

6. If you answered “No” to Question 3, do you personally know anyone who has had an eating disorder? Please describe.

如果你第三题的答案是“否”的话，你个人知道任何人有饮食失调症？请描述。

7. How often do you come into contact with Western media (i.e., television programs, magazines, or movies)?

你多久会关注西方的媒体（例如：电视节目，杂志，或者电影）？

8. Do you believe that the increased influence of the West has had an effect (positive or negative) on Chinese body image? Please explain your answer.

你相信西方对中国体表形象有增加的影响？请解释你的答案。

9. Do you think weight is directly linked to happiness and/or attractiveness? Please explain.

你认为体重是和幸福或者吸引直接相连的吗？请解释。

10. Does parental pressure have an impact on your eating habits (i.e., expected perfection)? Please describe.

你的父母对你的饮食习惯有影响吗？比如对完美程度的期望。

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