Refashioning Womanhood in 1990s Taiwan:
An Analysis of the Taiwanese Edition of Cosmopolitan Magazine

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BIOGRAPHY

Jui-shan Chang grew up in Taiwan and received Ph.D. (Sociology) from University of Michigan. Her core interest is the comparative analysis of social trends and issues using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Her research publications have dealt with life course, manhood/womanhood, marriage, family and sexuality in diverse cultures. She and two other sociologists are launching the Sociology Program at University of Melbourne.
ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how the Taiwanese editions of *Cosmopolitan* (1992-1997) may serve to resolve a tension for modern women in Taiwan: by weaving global values and local values into a tapestry of "modern womanhood" that can dwell within, and yet extend, the local culture.

This paper treats the magazine as a window into a Taiwanese image of the "modern woman" and as an arena in which there are Chinese and Western systems and values which could clash but, in fact, intermesh by virtue of the practice of exploiting Western means for Chinese ends. Taiwan *Cosmo* shows how modernization needs not mean "Westernization," even if it creates veneers of Western images, and further aims to transform local Chinese values in a way that gives them global significance.
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The values implicit in women’s magazines and advice books have long been used to study a wide range of women’s issues, particularly in the West. Previous research mainly has focused on the following issues: the reproduction of women’s oppression by promoting the “cult of femininity” (Ferguson, 1983); the elaboration of a gender ideology of self-help which emphasized women developing themselves rather than helping others (Fridan, 1983); an analysis of the role this “self-help” literature played in providing women with only “an illusory cure for what ails us, collectively, as a culture” (Simonds, 1994, p.227); the emergence of a virtual community of women developed via their shared magazine reading (Shevelow, 1989; Seneca, 1996); and assessment of the polarity of feminism versus femininity (Fridan, 1963; Winship, 1987; Stuart, 1990; McRobbie, 1991, 1997; Sheridan, 1995) as well as arguments that such polarity has “gone for good” in modern Western contexts (McRobbie, 1994, p.8). Most of these findings derive from Western print media, primarily from a feminist perspective.

More recently, research using women’s magazines in non-Western contexts primarily has followed two approaches. One approach has been to use the same feminist lens to see whether patriarchal values and practices were reproduced in the representations contained in the non-Western women’s print media (for examples: Zhou, 1991; Lai, 1994; Ford et al., 1998). The other approach has been to utilize the local editions of the same popular women’s magazines in the West (such as *Cosmopolitan*) to study how the local and the Western values meet and conflict. This research grew out of concerns for women’s issues but eventually settled on how the local editions of “global” magazines, as “cultural hybrids” (Rosenberger, 1995; Leung, 1996), have fed into the construction of new role models and advice, directed especially at the anxieties and appetites of young women, in the process of rapid social change under globalization (for examples: Rosenberger, 1995; Leung, 1996; Sakamoto, 1999; Kirca, 2001).
This paper investigates how the Taiwanese edition of *Cosmopolitan (Kemengbodan)* may serve to resolve a tension for modern women in Taiwan: by weaving global values and local values into a tapestry of “modern womanhood” that can dwell within, and yet extend, the local culture. This paper provides a micro-example, the Taiwanese edition of *Cosmopolitan*, to illustrate that not only can contemporary women in Taiwan be “constructed” as “modern” while remaining “Chinese” but also that this achieves a successful and *harmonious* weaving of Confucian and Western civilizations rather than simply expressing a “clash of civilizations,” as Samuel Huntington (1996) might call it.

This study examined a series of Taiwanese editions of *Cosmopolitan* to determine (i) what concerns or issues were addressed, (ii) the propensity for local and Western sources to be used differentially to deal with certain issues, and (iii) how globalism and localism were *harmoniously* intermeshed in constructing modern womanhood in 1990s Taiwan as portrayed in this magazine.

*Cosmopolitan* is a popular women’s magazine with a worldwide circulation. Its production is both centralized and localized: Different countries can borrow materials from the “central bank,” i.e., the New York Headquarters, or from “sister” issues in other countries, as well as producing their own articles. Consequently, each issue of *Cosmopolitan* comprises a unique blend of global and local cultural ingredients on the issues of modern womanhood. The Taiwanese version is no exception.¹ Taiwanese *Cosmopolitan* started in January of 1992 and has been a leading “cosmopolitan” women’s magazine in the 1990s. Because it deals predominantly with women, it ought not be too surprising that its content, in effect, is continually “refashioning” women—both in the literal sense of clothing and make-up fashion, but also more fundamentally in terms of key concepts of self-definition for modern women in Taiwan.

As a form of popular culture, the Taiwanese version of *Cosmopolitan* (“Cosmo”) gains its popularity not only from symbolizing being fashionable, modern or Western, but also from being grounded in local contemporary Taiwanese issues and problems. Its increasing popularity can be evidenced by its approximate annual circulation for 1992 - 1997: 230,000; 260,000; 290,000; 310,000; 330,000; 380,000.²
Its unique appeal can be seen by contrasting it with another major local women’s magazine in Taiwan. *Women’s Magazine (Funu zazhi)*, the earliest magazine of its type, ceased publication in recent years.

The Taiwan edition is notable in two respects: size and seriousness. Each monthly edition is at least 200 pages (some issues are up to 270 pages) and costs about US$10—much more expensive than in some Western countries, including the U.S. or Australia). Despite its higher cost, its sales figures in Taiwan were over 380,000 in 1997 which, on a per capita basis, makes it one of the more successful editions of *Cosmopolitan* worldwide. Furthermore, the readership figures can be expected to be even larger than the sales figures, because it is very likely that many more people read Taiwanese *Cosmo* via their friends, neighbors or classmates, or while waiting in hairdressers, medical clinics, libraries or other public places.

These relatively high sale figures, as well as the growing readership of *Cosmo*, suggest that more and more Taiwanese women have an interest in refashioning womanhood, and are accessing the ideas presented and represented in the Taiwanese edition.

This paper explores the mechanisms Taiwanese *Cosmo* utilizes to address concerns about, and provide guidance for, women through the medium of popular culture in the 1990s. To do this, I treat the magazine in two ways: (i) as a window into a Taiwanese image of the “modern woman” and the concerns that face the modern woman, given the Chinese context of such modernization, and (ii) as an arena in which there are Chinese and Western systems and values which could clash but, in fact, intermesh by virtue of the practice of exploiting Western means for Chinese ends.

In delineating the image of the modern Taiwanese woman, I refer to both physical (“hardware”) and spiritual (“software”) dimensions. In discovering the main concerns of modern Taiwanese women, I have used ethnographic content analysis to examine a random sample of Taiwan *Cosmo* (1992-1997). I have identified the major topical concerns as well as what global and local contents are draw-in to tackle each concern. I have also extracted major contrasts underlying the wisdom and strategies revealed between the global and local contents. In a later section of the paper, “Cosmo as Arena,” I operate at a somewhat more abstract level of analysis and discuss which aspects of globalizing Western values for women have or have not meshed successfully with Taiwanese values. What appears to be going on between Taiwan and
the West, it should be stressed, is not a clash of civilizations but a filtering as well as a blending, even if at times certain core values still enter in from each culture. The intermeshing of (filtered) global and local values for Taiwanese women is an interesting example of how globalism and localism interact in a non-Western cultural context.

METHOD

Taiwan’s Cosmo was founded in 1992 and is published monthly. This research covers the period from its founding until 1997 (when I conducted my research). The sampling method was to select at random one issue of Cosmo per year from the 72 issues available for the six-year period. This yielded a primary data set of 87 articles, features, Cosmo “clinics” and columns. For convenience I call all these different formats of writing “articles.” Each Cosmo issue normally contains such components as articles, features, columns, quizzes and tests, celebrities, interviews, horoscopes, advice columns, fashion, health and beauty tips, cuisine, and recommended books, art, music, movies and travel places. For the purpose of this study, the 87 articles chosen for analyzing topical concerns, cultural sources and strategies for modern Taiwanese women are those articles which address issues and/or can reveal cultural discourses in Cosmopolitan. In other words, the sample does not include advice columns, articles on health, diet, beauty, fashion, cuisine, music, movies, art, travel places etc., because most of these topics are direct translations focusing only on transmitting information or knowledge rather than engaging in debates.

The sampling method adopted here is “time-based random sampling”. This is a valid and reliable approach for obtaining a representative sample to discover the main topics and sub-topics covered by the magazine, and the balance struck among these topics. The alternative approach of sampling by topics or themes would have required initially a complete, categorized list of topics or themes to be constructed. This was not feasible, given that I could not know a priori what topics would be covered and what the balance would be between New York and local Taiwanese input. Furthermore, exploring a “theme” makes more methodological and narrative sense when dealing with a homogenous field, such as a major text or works by a single writer, or certain themes already associated with that writer. It becomes
presumptive and elides much of the variability of content when using “themes” to sample the textual material in this kind of research, given that there are multiple authors and competing value positions from different cultures.

Supplementary data, quoted briefly here but mainly incorporated in the “Discussion” section, come from a 2-hour in-depth face-to-face interview, which I conducted in the Taiwanese Cosmo Office in Taipei on September 24, 1998. The interviewee was Associate Editor Cai Huiming, a single woman in her late 20s who had been working almost three and half years on that job at the time of interview. The issues covered in the interview were who and what factors have determined the content of the magazine from its inception to the present day. I also inquired as to the target readership groups, the relationship between the editors and the readers, and Cosmo’s impact on Taiwanese women, as well as the impact of the readers on the editorial policy in the 1990s.

Another methodological issue in analysis of the media is whether the values reflected in the contents are mainly those of the editors or of the readers or both. That fact that Cosmopolitan is a magazine dependent upon monthly sales means it has to respond to readership preferences—unlike say, a government publication. Associate Editor Cai Huiming was unequivocal on this point: “In the process of editing Taiwan Cosmo, I have realized that the readers’ taste has become the editors’ taste.” She further explained that the very large increase in local content in recent years was a direct response to the demands of Taiwanese readers for a different take on feminism and on combining marriage and career. The readership of Cosmopolitan has grown alongside a growing proportion of its articles coming from local sources. These issues are explored in detail in the Discussion section.

The principal method employed in this research is ethnographic content analysis. The first phase of the analysis was to sort the raw material of the 87 articles into topics, then into sub-topics. There were eight main topics covered in 1992-97, the most frequent being relationships, sex, gender roles, the self, work, marriage, money and life in general. The most frequently covered topics naturally generated a lot of sub-topics—eight in the case of “personal relationships” and seven in the case of “sex.” Less-cited topics generated fewer sub-headings.
It should be noted that coding into topics and sub-topics proved to be a fairly straightforward, or at least replicable, task. Although in some articles the content entailed more than one topic (such as “sexual harassment” or “how to be one’s self in relationships”), the main criterion for me was to decide which “code” to associate with a particular article by identifying its ultimate concern, its primary discussion, and the advice it offered. In the example of “sexual harassment,” since the intent of such articles was to raise women’s awareness in dealing with sexual harassment (including interacting with relatives, friends, colleagues or strangers), I coded this article under the topic of “sex” rather than “work.” In the example of “self in relationships,” since the primary concern and the weight of the discussion goes to “self,” I coded the topic of such article as “self” rather than “relationships.” After developing the coding scheme and completing the coding myself, I communicated my coding criteria and supplied the coding scheme to a colleague familiar with content analysis but not with the issues of this particular research project. He randomly selected 20 articles to code. Our coding matched in over 95% of cases for topics, and over 90% for sub-topics. This is an acceptable level of inter-coder reliability for our purposes.

The second phase of the analysis involved sorting all of the articles under each topic according to their cultural sources (i.e., global versus local). The third step was to analyze and contrast all of the contents under each topic between the global and local sources, and then to use analytic induction (Turner, 1953) to extract the underlying contrasting focuses revealed in each culture.

**COSMO AS A WINDOW**

In this section I treat Taiwanese *Cosmo* as a window that enables us to look into the construction and propagation of Taiwanese modern womanhood in the 1990s.

A number of topical concerns about becoming a modern woman have arisen in Taiwan as it has modernized and yet has kept alive gender roles lodged within a Chinese familial system (Lu, 1989; Thornton and Lin, 1994; Chang, 1996, 1996a; Yang, 1997; Chang, 1999). Rapid social change in Taiwan has brought more changes in, and impacted more on, women’s life courses than on men’s (Chang, 1996a). Modernization, as indicated by education and urbanism, has affected family values and attitudes toward
divorce more for Taiwanese women than for men (Tsai and Yi, 1997). In relation to a range of life situations regarding relationships, marriage, family and work, there are tensions and confusions that create an appetite for advice, stories, role models and images upon which modern Taiwanese women can draw and apply in their own lives (Chang, 1997; Wang, 1997). Therefore, all the main articles and the personal interviews with “successful women” in Taiwanese Cosmo provide a “window.” Through this window, a certain image of a modern Taiwanese woman becomes apparent. The core areas of modern life that appear to matter to Taiwanese women are also revealed. More revealing to the argument of this paper are the ways Taiwanese Cosmo responds to, and provides strategies for, resolving conflicts for its readers.

The Image of a Modern Taiwanese Woman

The most obvious feature revealed by Cosmopolitan is a certain image of the modern woman. Throughout all this content, this image reveals little variation.

The data for examining this image are advertising pages, reports of female celebrities and interviews with successful Taiwanese women. In regard to images of modern woman, there is little variability across all of the material in the Cosmo data set. The image is one of Western clothes and make-up, an autonomous life-style with a professional career, liberal romantic relationships, a healthy diet and work-out regimen, travel, a stylishly decorated modern home and, most importantly, “being in charge.” This image is consistent with the worldwide focus of Cosmopolitan and with its advertiser base.

However, if we probe at a deeper level, this image of the modern Taiwanese woman actually contains two different layers. The most immediate layer is the “physical” side of this modern woman, while the inner layer is her spiritual side. The modern woman’s physical layer is readily and widely visualized through glossy advertisements for Western fashions, make-up, fitness, beauty and health tips, furniture, room decorating, and food and restaurants. Although ads for Taiwanese models and Oriental styles of furniture have been increasing slightly in more recent issues, overall, the physical look of this modern woman image and her material possessions tends primarily to be “Western.”
In the textual content of Taiwanese *Cosmopolitan*, however, there is a *spiritual* image of the Taiwanese modern woman. This is revealed by reports of female celebrities in contemporary Chinese societies (eight in Taiwan and three in Hong Kong) and interviews with successful or famous Taiwanese women. Among 11 female celebrities reported in the sample, two are in news media, three are actresses, one is a violinist, and five are managers in business or industry. These successful women are depicted as hard-working, conscientious, inwardly confident and wanting to pursue advanced education. Zhao Yu, an adviser of *China Post* in Taiwan, is depicted as “a traditional woman but a modern manager.” Some have a quite traditional and idealized view about romantic love. For example, Zhang Xiaoshian, a writer in Hong Kong, thinks that an ever-lasting love does exist but that it is up to individuals to find it.\(^\text{vi}\) Li Zi, a Hong Kong actress, states that she could give up everything for love.\(^\text{vii}\) Their discourse on love and romance leads into a series of notions that spiral inwards to a spiritual core.

An interview with four successful Taiwanese women about how to become an attractive modern woman in a 1996 issue suggests to readers what a successful and charming modern Taiwanese woman should be really like.\(^\text{viii}\) The women were Gao Yiping and Li Wen, who are performers, Zhang Yaqing who is a TV news reporter and producer, and Xiao Ai who is a writer. First, all of them emphasize that physical beauty is not the crucial factor for a woman’s charm or attractiveness. Instead they all emphasize the spiritual aspect which, in turn, includes several layers. The outer layer concerns how a modern woman should deal with the world—her attitude—and emphasizes the need to work hard and be persistent (Xiao, Gao, Li, Zhang). In this process there are also opportunities for self-reflection and self-modification (Zhang), which provide a basis for an active and enjoyable life marked by milestones of self-actualization and progress (Li, Xiao, Zhang).

The next layer deals with the kind of personality that drives these attitudes. Here one finds references to the flexibility and friendliness that lubricates social interactions (Gao, Li, Xiao). The “sociable” personality is a “sincere” personality. In turn these interactive aspects of personality lead to a capacity to be natural, secure, and confident (Gao, Xiao, Li, Zhang). But this strength is not a given, but rather an accomplishment tied to a pursuit of self-knowledge and wisdom (Gao, Xiao, Li, Zhang). Thus the modern
woman’s personality is flexible on the outside and strong on the inside which is the basis for strength without rigidity.

Such a personality leads to a deeper layer of ethical coherence. These interviewees are not hesitant to moralize the “modern woman”: She has ethical responsibilities to engage. These include a containment or even avoidance of being calculating toward people (using them as means rather than as ends) and a stress on being responsible (Xiao). This leads to personal assets of having good character, manner and reputation (Zhang, Gao). The ethical layer is not the most intimate core of the modern Taiwanese woman: The final layer deals with spiritual beauty.

All mention the idea of inner beauty and richness in life experiences: All life’s experiences teach something, this learning deepens one’s sense of life, and this allows women to achieve inner beauty (Zhang, Li, Gao, Xiao).

In sum, overall, the “hardware” or physical side of this image of the modern Taiwanese woman is portrayed as “Western”—the “modern” look and material possessions are Western. The “software” or spiritual side of this image is emphasized as “Chinese”—hard-working, valuing education, being conscientious, ethical and sincere, self-improving through self-reflection, a personality that is flexible on the outside and strong inside (“Wairou neigang”), and inner beauty as a woman’s ultimate achievement. So, these two sides of the modern woman reflect how globalism and localism are intermeshed in constructing modern womanhood as portrayed in Cosmopolitan: “Looking” Western and using modern goods are desirable, but the core values and inner beauty remain Chinese.

**Topical Concerns and Cultural Sources**

This section looks through the “window” to determine the core content of *Cosmopolitan*. Table 1 summarizes the magazine’s range of topics and issues concerning modern womanhood in 1990s’ Taiwan, as well as the frequency of cultural sources for each of the topical concerns. Not surprisingly, the topics and concerns follow the major life course transitions and relevant events and issues that confront the “modern young woman.” The major topical concerns in Table 1 and in the analysis presented below are
ordered in terms of a life course trajectory. Starting from the self and gender roles and identities, it expands to an interpersonal level pertinent to relationships, sex, and marriage, then ends at a wider context dealing with work and money. With respect to articles about “relationships” and sex, these have been further subdivided into those that are normative (and mundane or “normal”) and those that have a transgressive quality about them.

Table 1 About Here

All topics deal with women being in control or taking charge of what could be under their control. With regard to relationships, there is a mix of topics ranging from the mundane (ending a relationship) to the transgressive (multiple lovers for women). But regardless of the range—or perhaps because of it—the tone and the content can communicate an image of a woman taking charge and not being “left hanging” as a result of not having anticipated the worst and/or having aimed for the best.

In contrast to the lack of articles on the topic of sex in, for instance, the Hong Kong edition of *Cosmo*ix (Leung, 1996), no issue of Taiwan *Cosmo* would be complete (in any edition) without dealing with matters of sex.x The range of topics on sex spans from the mundane (e.g., the importance of sex) to the transgressive (e.g., cross-dressing). Sex and relationships constitute about two thirds (63%) of the 87 articles in my sample. An additional 30% of the articles deal with more life trajectory matters of self, gender, marriage, work and money. The content of these life trajectory matters has a stronger emphasis on strategies for success, though they do cover ideological (feminist) issues such as whether women can maintain “self” and autonomy in relationships and marriage. The sample also covers smaller logistical topics such as travel, and wider questions about life in general, e.g., happiness.

With regard to sources, *Cosmopolitan* has a “bank” in New York from which material for articles can be drawn. The Taiwanese *Cosmo* reveals a unique blend of global (mainly Western) and local influences. Three different sources of content appear within this magazine: imported translations, locally-written articles, and articles translated but “elaborated” with local names of people and places, or that are composed locally but based on a collage of imported content. These three different sources are initially
categorized or named as “global source,” “local source” and “mixed sources” for this study. However, due to fact that the original source of the “mixed sources” is normally Western material, I have combined this category with “global source” in this paper. Overall, the proportion of articles from local sources is slightly higher than that from global sources: 53% versus 46%. In addition, the data show that there is a tendency for fewer articles to come from global sources through the years, declining from 78% in 1992 to 40% in 1997.

An interesting question to pose at this juncture is to ask whether the sources of the material correlates in any way to its topic. Table 1 shows that the topics of sex and relationships tend to have global sources to a significant degree (57% and 47% respectively). The source of the articles on work topic is evenly distributed. Topics on self, gender and marriage tend to use more local sources. In some respects this disproportionate representation of global/Western sources, providing material about sex and relationships is not too surprising. One of the allures of Western magazines is their openness with regard to such topics, which tend to be taboo in Chinese societies. The following letter from a young woman in Taipei to the Cosmo editors reveals the appetite of young Taiwanese women for information and advice on such private matters:

Dear Cosmo,

I and my female friends all are very grateful for Cosmo providing so much information and reporting on relationships and sex issues, because we all have problems in these areas. Only Cosmo honestly face the need of women and provide us such information and wisdom to deal with relationship difficulties in our lives. Most men do not know that some techniques bringing them sexual satisfaction may not suit women...I am not a sexual liberalist, but I support women having the right to seek and get sexual satisfaction. Cosmo can make women like me happier and will make more women happier. (Sept 1996 issue, page 34)

**Topics, Sources and Strategies for Modern Taiwanese Women**

The core topics in Taiwanese Cosmo show Taiwanese women’s concerns over the major aspects of their lives. Articles draw upon both global and local sources to provide wisdom and practical strategies for
young women through biographical narratives as well as dreams, meanings, wisdom, and morality regarding these major topical concerns. For each topical concern, I will analyze and contrast the wisdom and strategies revealed in global and local cultural sources.

**How to Complete the Self?**

Six of 87 articles deal with the nature of identity or the “self.” Only one of these is Western, with the other five produced locally. A contrast in focus and theme is apparent. The one Western article deals with the idea that enjoyment is to be found through autonomy, and that ultimately, trying to please men makes you unhappy. In the one Western article “Broccoli and Burgers” the author says how much happier she is now that she just eats what she likes and does not try to accede to the wishes of men she is close to merely to “fit in.”

The other five local articles deal with identity and self in more complex forms and diverse discourses. Some articles made reference to Western feminism but do not adopt such ideology. In one article, entitled “Huo di yiranzizai”(Can Women Have a Self in Life?), the author argues that many women really want a “settled life” in terms of “having a stable job and a genuine relationship.” These women work hard toward this goal and, once they are settled, try to remain so. This “settled life” may not conform to Western feminist expectations, but the most important thing is that these women feel natural and at peace in their lives. In another article entitled “Nuren di wancheng”(The Completion of Women), the author reveals, in a biographical sketch, how she has discovered that she became “complete” when she had a man. Now she is without one, she has to admit that there is something “missing.”

The topic of “self” is very much associated with the topic of gender. Far more articles acknowledge the impact of social change on gender relations in Taiwan as well as provide progressive and fundamental principles for modern women. One author argues that, regardless of who chases after whom in the courtship process in this day and age, the most important principles for a modern woman are “being healthy, natural and genuine” and to “let your self be your own master.” Another article “Zixing di nuren cai mei” (Confident Women Are Most Beautiful) expands on this theme of self and autonomy by saying that a beautiful woman ultimately is one who has self-confidence. Compromising to men all the time is
not a women’s “virtue” anymore.” Another article argues that *Cosmopolitan* can help women develop a “fashioned self,” not only improving their appearance through make-up, but also informing women of social possibilities so that women can explore and understand their “selves.”

**Relationships: Finding Authenticity, Harmony and Growth**

After presenting how the “self” is redefined and gender roles are re-assessed by *Cosmopolitan* articles, it is now appropriate to explore the nature of the relationships into which the “self” enters and the gender politics involved. This area has 34 articles, the largest number for any topic in my sample. The majority of these articles deal with topics or address issues regarding how to make transitions for the major events (e.g., the emergence, consummation and termination) occurring in “normative” relationships. Other articles are about consequences and meanings in certain non-normative contexts, e.g., triangle relations, multiple lovers, and “holiday love”.

Western articles dealing with relationships tend to focus on individualism and autonomy. The woman is an autonomous agent who should take cues from her “feelings” rather than attend to the opinions of others. Regardless of romance having no reason or being based on rational calculation, the ultimate principle is to be honest and “true to yourself.” This principle appears repeatedly in Western articles on virtually any topic of relationships in *Cosmopolitan*. Consequently, the only resources to draw upon in this context are personal honesty (to her feelings) and skills (how to get a man).

On the topic of meeting the right match, one Western article, entitled “In Love with a Man who is Shorter than You,” recommends that “what other people think” should be ignored. On the topic of igniting romance, all four articles are from global sources. The common themes are technicality, competence and “do-able”. They all treat starting a romance as a technical issue, thus their advice is of a “how-to” variety. One article deals with “how to get your man on the first date”!

There is an irony in regard to “romance” in these Western articles. On one hand, romantic love is depicted as having “no reason.” It is just “chemistry.” “Love” is treated as a mysterious injection of feeling into one’s life. Yet, once this injection happens, once “cupid’s arrow” has been launched, then the
context of the romance comes into view. On the other hand, such romance is also depicted as being overwhelmingly embedded within gender politics, and women have to make careful calculations at every step. Women are urged to show themselves to be independent persons by going home by themselves on the first date. “This is the first step for an equal relationship.” If, during the first date, a man wants to have sex with the woman, then this is a sign that the man is not trustworthy.

The five Western articles on the topic of 'breaking up' also deal far more with gender politics, the ultimate concern being self-esteem or (re)gaining a sense of self. The notion of termination is justified by the idea that identity has been marred. No relationship can distort one’s sense of self. Termination is a path to survival. Renovating the relationship is not mentioned. There is even a suggestion that the termination ought to be brutally frank rather than “fudged” around false niceties. Thus, women should be honest and real. They should avoid the “Let’s be friends” line. Truth about one’s feelings takes priority over the feelings of others. Furthermore, a more careful “cost-benefit” analysis is offered. If the woman’s self-esteem and dignity are at issue, he should be dumped and/or the woman should “get even” and regain a sense of self, for life moves on and, by implication, people who cause pain should be left behind. Even the “third-party” can be viewed as “beneficial” to a woman. In one case, a woman could not admit the truth about a doomed relationship until literally confronted with the evidence of a third-party, by which time her heart was broken. This is an example that Cosmopolitan is good at selling “hope” and instructs women to “read” life through a positive lens, looking forward and (re)gaining their senses of self.

Even for the transgressive situations such as extramarital affairs, the two Western articles on this topic reveal that affairs, while potentially awkward, can ultimately be therapeutic if people stay true to themselves (in addition to the possibility that affairs can be fun and that, in the end, they have a minimal “downside.”) In one article concerning becoming your best friend’s third-party, it recommends that women be rational about getting involved and becoming a third-party. Men are animalistic, so always it will be perceived as “the third-party woman’s fault.” In addition, fights between women never end! However, if he is irresistible, “go for it.” In the other Western article, two married people used affairs
to obtain the fun and excitement that were missing from their own marriages. When they say goodbye to each other, however, they still “feel lost and abandoned.” When they return home, they observe it is “still the same me!”

In contrast with the Western emphasis on autonomously fulfilled preferences, advice provided by most local articles primarily centers around interpersonal relations with a pragmatic attitude. The Chinese pragmatism places more emphasis on behavior and judgment rather than feelings. Regarding mate selection, the local articles suggest that judgments about an “appropriate” mate should be tested by experience and by soliciting the views of others. For example, the theme of “money incompatibility” is addressed, particularly when a woman earns more than her boyfriend. In this situation, it may happen that he wants to borrow money from the woman. How to deal with it? An author recommends caution. In such cases, the woman should find out more, noting in particular how he deals with money with his other family members or friends. Rather than ignoring “what others think” as suggested in the Western article, this local article recommends seeking out others’ points of view.

Furthermore, harmony in the relationship is more central than its intensity. The notion of “perfectionism” is challenged. The author of “Ta bu cha, ta shi wo di qingmi airen” (Mr. Perfect is not Your Only Choice) argues that women who think they can develop a perfect relationship are doomed to self-torture, because no one is perfect. Rather, women have to be flexible and know how to compromise.

A clear emphasis on harmony even appears in the local articles on how to terminate a relationship. Starting a relationship, as well as terminating one, are explicit Western concerns that do not have strong local cultural backing. Only one article (out of six) on ‘breaking up’ is local. This article emphasizes “empathy” for how the other party might feel. It even recommends that a good rationale for “justifying” a termination is to say that some family member does not find the man acceptable. Here there is a strong familial sense and the avoidance of conflict and hurt. Also, romantic relationships are in a sense embedded in other relationships, most notably familial relations. *Cosmopolitan* sends the message to its
female readers that, when a woman has to dump a man, she must be empathetic and protect his ego by trying to find a “family” excuse to leave him.

It is clear from the local articles that the Chinese advice tends to be inclined to counsel caution and responsibility. In the context of rapid social change in Taiwan, one article reports on the diversity of types of relationships young women today could choose to have in Taipei. The choices include “single and proud”, double income earners without children, unwed mother without a husband etc. The author certainly acknowledges the variations. She doesn’t make moral judgment except to suggest “people take responsibility for themselves.” This underlying value of responsibility is articulated as a basis for behavior in times of uncertainty about the forms that relationships may take.

There is an ultimate emphasis on moral integrity, particularly in dealing with transgressive events. Unlike the Western articles which perceive transgressions as fun and beneficial or therapeutic to individuals, the local articles approach the prospects of affairs with greater seriousness.

The most common advice is given to the third-party women when Chinese articles deal with affairs. The advice starts with “character building”: being rational, facing reality and thinking through the consequences. It is important to be honest and genuine. “Being able to be passionate is a good thing, but self-discipline and control is necessary.” A moral tone always accompanies the advice which clearly is directed to the third-party woman. There was a famous case of an extra-martial affair in which a Ph.D. student, Lee Annie, loved her thesis supervisor who is a rich/famous married man, and stated publicly that she was happy to simply be a “concubine.” The media portrayed her as the “most horrible woman.” On top of that, as a competent modern woman and a PhD student, she “should not just aim to be this man’s concubine! She should not want to just take advantage of a rich man!”

In addition to the advice, warnings are also given to third-party women. In “Being a Competent Third Party,” the author sets out ten criteria for being a competent third-party, but she also admitted that, in reality, no woman can meet all of these criteria. It ends with the claim that, to get involved without satisfying these criteria, women risk tears and endless regret. The theme that affairs are dangerous
exists in every local article. The third-party woman’s life is described as tough and lonely “just like a tree in the dessert,” and she is warned that “playing with fire will burn you.”

In all seven Chinese articles on the subject, the possibility of affairs in not denied, yet their feasibility is far more circumscribed. They suggest that the whole area is fraught with danger, unstable and bad for women. While there is a moralistic tone and under no circumstance should a woman “go for it” as suggested in the two Western articles.

On the topic of 'women straying', there are two articles on this topic, one local and the other Western. The contrast between the two is revealing. For the purpose of making more informed choices, the Western article actually recommends having multiple lovers. There is no need to get into marriage at an early age, so it is not worth “going steady” too soon with a man. In contrast, the Chinese article explores what a woman who had had multiple lovers actually lived through. She acted as though she did not care in front of other people but she still cared about it very much in her heart. There was always a sense of shame. Eventually she was caught in public. She felt humiliated by the whole thing, and swore that never would she do it again. The messages revealed from the two articles seem contradictory, but they are actually focused on two different levels. The Western one is based on self centered calculation while the Chinese one emphasizes moral integrity.

Finally, there is a destination for women in terms of spiritual growth, which is revealed by the two local articles on 'holiday loves'. In contrast to the focus in most Western Editions on techniques for finding a partner for the holidays, these two local articles focused more on spiritual themes. One theme pertained to the strengthening of the “self”—using holiday experiences for self-validation and spiritual growth. This personal discussion reveals how the Christmas season can make a woman feel lonely. The woman feels she should go to overseas and find romance. On one occasion this happened, but when she returned to work she realized that “the beautiful romance was not real,” and “it was not because I was really lonely, but it was because I used romance to demonstrate that I must be good. When I knew I was good, I was able to love myself and didn’t need to go to ‘blind dates’!” A second theme is self-growth, e.g., “It is possible to use loneliness during the holidays to grow up, because in loneliness you can
closely hear your own inner voice. Otherwise, ‘have a crazy Christmas Eve’ is okay too!” In other words, Taiwan *Cosmopolitan* adopts this sexy looking “Western topic” to highlight a Chinese value—encouraging women to seize the Christmas holiday as an opportunity to grow on a spiritual level.

In all 34 articles on relationships analyzed above, regardless of whether the subtopics are about normative relationships or non-normative arrangements, the 16 Western articles treat relationships as paths to individual ecstasy. Love is mysterious but precious. All else concerns creating the conditions for love’s “ignition” and its consumption as an “elixir of life.” All else—people, opinions, consequences and commitments—are secondary to this. In the process of seeking ecstasy, techniques and skills are suggested by the magazines to enable individuals to carefully calculate their self-interest and to make the best out of it. However, this Western tone of focusing on individuals having fun coexists with an even “louder” voice from the 18 Chinese articles. These articles are denser, more serious and textured than the Western articles, and there are many more specific pragmatic considerations and many more “players” involved, notably familial. Furthermore, there is more emphasis on issues and ultimate Chinese concerns, i.e. family and interpersonal relations, moral integrity and spiritual growth.

**Sex: Being Street-wise and Wise**

The more relationships are to have the modern form of intimacy, the more such relationships raise the central issue of their consummation: sex. Here, *Cosmopolitan* delivers its blend of sexual coaching within the confines of Chinese sensibilities and decorum. Sex sells! This topic is the second largest in my data set (21 out of 87 articles). Eight of the articles focus on sexual skills, which are mainly Western in origin (six out of eight). Six articles are on knowledge and “wisdom” regarding sex, which are mainly written by local authors (five out of six). The remaining seven articles deal with various non-normative sexual issues such as sexual harassment, male prostitutes and cross-dressing as an expression of sexual rebellion.

The ten Western articles on ‘normative’ sex predominantly deal with skills rather than issues. Such skills include how to perform oral sex, how to build up self confidence in the bedroom, how to engage in safe sex and how sex is a good tonic. Twenty-five reasons are listed for wanting sex “tonight.”
Women also are encouraged to take initiatives so that men do not have to “do all the work” in bed, but women also are encouraged to focus on enjoying themselves and receiving pleasure rather than solely focusing on giving men pleasure. Also, “Yushuizhihuan shi di gangga yiwai” (The 10 Most Awkward Things that Happen in Bed) are described and preventive strategies are offered. Finally, an article lists 10 reasons why men don’t want to make love and how to overcome them. The “how to” strategies embedded in gender politics include trying to be understanding and to support him, not looking down on him, letting him communicate what is bothering him, and letting him regain confidence and feel “in control” in the relationship.

Overall in these six Western articles, the focus on pleasure and skills/techniques/strategies mutually reinforce each other: Pleasure does not “just happen”; competence makes a difference. Conversely, the more pleasure that is achieved, the more confident people become, so the more they can do and enjoy.

In contrast, the six local articles on this topic had a much more serious tone and focus on the quality and the meaning of relationships rather than on skills and strategies. For example, one local article contains interviews of four Taiwanese men regarding their oral sexual experiences. All four men think that oral sex is even more intimate than intercourse. In order to be able to enjoy oral sex, a couple needs a longer and deeper relationship to do this and the two parties need to have more trust in each other. The emphasis is not on what to do to get it right, but what is right about a relationship that gives oral sex its quality.

Also, four out of the six local articles focus on knowledge and wisdom regarding sex. One article on women’s orgasms argues that the process of aging is linked to the growth of confidence, self-awareness and open-heartedness. All these endowments provide the basis for women to achieve good orgasms. Another article develops the theme of aging by addressing the sex myth regarding the elderly. The elderly can and should enjoy intimacy rather than focusing on performance or acting like sex machines. Two other articles deal with the issue of whether body smells can be arousing. It is significant that the local articles deal much more with aging and the body, rather than tactical issues of how to keep young, act
young and get what one wants. There is an openness to “letting good things emerge” from a lifelong natural process rather than through immediate strategies in dealing with gender politics.

Finally, there is an issue dealing with sexual harassment, which has only become an issue in Taiwan society since the early 1990s.

Li Ang, a local feminist, wrote both articles on this topic. In both she urges increased autonomy for women. She argues that the way to eliminate sexual harassment is for women to dare to express themselves and respond to others based on what their bodies feel! Listening to what your body says is more important than listening to your mind. This is because the conventional gender roles have been developed in your mind and so listening to your mind cannot solve the problem of sexual harassment.

Li Ang also comments on a now famous phrase: “No sexual harassment but sexual orgasms!” Over time people have forgotten the original meaning of this phrase: It was an anti-harassment slogan. Now people tend to focus on the last part of this slogan, which Li Ang points out challenged two things. One is the “good woman” morality, i.e., the inseparability of love and sex. The other is sexual competence for men: The more active and stronger women become, the more pressure men feel and the less likely they are to achieve or maintain an erection! Li Ang argues that the latter is a particularly useful insight to deal with sexual harassment.

**Work and Money: Strategies with Integrity**

Six articles are on work, three Western and three locally sourced. Two articles are on money (both Western sourced). The three Western articles focus on the strategies for success, e.g., in the first job interview, in being a female manager, and in pursuing a new career path in public relations. These Western articles link prospects for advancement to the operation of gender. These are not simple discrimination stories, but instead offer strategies for women to achieve their goals in terms of mobilizing what is within their control in the work domain. Similarly, the two Western articles also teach concrete skills for investing money.

The three Chinese articles on work deal with the issues of salary raises, career planning and mistakes made at work. Again, in contrast with the tone of the Western article, the Chinese approach
emphasizes moral and ethical integrity. A common feature among all the three local articles is that, when the authors state their argument, they don’t address women readers specifically, even though it is a women’s magazine. On this front, moral/ethical integrity is gender neutral from authors’ perspective. In addition, such integrity is “status neutral.” For example, a local author argues that, for both employees and employers, making a mistake at work is a golden opportunity to learn and to improve, so one should not be afraid of making mistakes. To the employees, “You should face the mistake you made honestly and peacefully.” To the employers, “You should fight with your subordinates and don’t blame your subordinates for making mistake or threaten to fire them!”

**What is Visible Through This “Window”**

In developing the discussions above, I have started with the self and ended with the world. In between there are “gendered” relationships, either personal or work-related. In contrasting the local with the foreign articles, one can see the difference between a process view and a structural view of womanhood. In the Taiwanese case, the local articles focus more on process. Thus, experience is a teacher. In some articles there are nuances of shame and morality that mark “dangerous” areas, not only in the field of gender but also with respect to being a decent person. By contrast, the Western imports provide more of a static approach while offering ways to change the status quo. The tone is more technical and strategic. The “self” is already fully formed, and there is less to be learned from experience. Choice, rather than experience, is the source of success.

In many of the Western articles, the self is identified as a site of enjoyment. Thus, identity is based on consumption. In the local articles, identity is the site of composure and, implicitly, producing social outcomes rather than seeking all-consuming stimulation or attention. For instance, *Cosmopolitan* is not simply to be read as a manual for “make-overs,” or for learning how to “make-do” in the “battle of the sexes.” rather, it is to inform and deepen the value of the reader as a woman. This value has its own trajectory in life: to seek coherence and stability with a robust form of integrity. Women have to be “true to their natural self,” cultivate self-confidence and feel confident that when they have what they want, they should maintain it. Implicit in most Chinese articles, except one that makes it explicit, is that women
need men to round-out their lives. This is quite contrary to the view revealed in the Western articles. Ironically, however, this view that man “completes” woman does not imply the woman must then be “subservient” or dependent. There may be insights here worthy of a Western readership.

**COSMO AS AN ARENA**

This section treats Taiwanese *Cosmopolitan* as an arena for cultural discourse. This arena can reveal how globalism and localism interact, adapt, exchange, resist and/or mesh with each other in the process of constructing Taiwanese modern womanhood.

As long as social change exists, there will always be the potential for tension between traditional and non-traditional values. *Cosmopolitan*, as a print medium, actively engages in the selection of the material it publishes. As such, in an arena where different discourses or values come into conflict, the *Cosmo* editors function as “cultural modulators.” Rather than seeing the *Cosmopolitan* editors as “cultural gatekeepers’” this paper suggests that they filter, mix and match content in ways that satisfy a readership, while also dwelling within Chinese cultural parameters. This paper thus identifies, through this filter, what Chinese values and Western values the editors select. In addition, this paper also examines whether certain Chinese and Western values, which would normally be filtered out, nevertheless get through this filter, despite the *Cosmo* editors’ pre-selecting market-appropriate topics regarding modern womanhood. These break-through values from Chinese and Western cultures can thus be seen as core aspects of the respective cultures.

Furthermore, while the local sources tend to emphasize local/Chinese values, some local articles may use certain global values to support the local system or to criticize the local values. In addition, the overall feel of the magazine may give readers an impression of multiple values, but still one may find that there is an overall tone which emphasizes ultimate values in a “bottom-line” sense. Therefore, another way to validate empirically that Taiwanese *Cosmo* is an arena of cultural discourses is to map the topical concerns and the ultimate value being emphasized in articles from the global and local sources. This analysis can reveal several features: (i) how *Cosmo* editors function as cultural modulators in
(re)constructing a Chinese form of modern womanhood; (ii) how longstanding Confucian insights are implicated and re-emphasized in this “discursive” modern womanhood; (iii) in what areas of modern womanhood is Chinese wisdom becoming less relevant, or being criticized by Western values; and (iv) how global/Western values, views and knowledge are drawn upon as means to support the Chinese values in local Taiwanese system.

**Filtering**

It is important to ask whether magazines like Taiwanese *Cosmopolitan* accentuate and provoke cultural clashes and inflame local sensibilities, or whether instead they mediate conflict and assuage such sensibilities. Taiwanese *Cosmopolitan* is situated between two major cultural blocks. There are many opportunities for cultural conflicts to arise, such as the clash between Chinese familial values and Western individualism. Should a woman give up her career for her family? One culture recommends “yes”, the other “no.” Should money earned be given to parents for filial piety or saved for personal autonomy? The challenge for the magazine is clear. It has to maintain as large a readership as possible and, as a result, maximize advertising revenues. To do this, it cannot become too radical or closely identified with certain Western values that may disturb a local readership. At the same time, it cannot simply reiterate local values to the point of losing its “cosmopolitan” tinge. On this front, *Cosmopolitan* mediates two cultures, “reprocessing” content from both.

The American editions contain many more articles on sex, sexual techniques, exotic sexual encounters, sexual experimentation and homosexuality. These topics simply do not appear in the Taiwanese editions. Similarly, there are local values about filial piety that do not appeal to young women readers who are enjoying the fruits of personal autonomy in Taipei’s night life. They cannot be expected to warm to homilies on such topics! Therefore, certain specific sources or values from both cultures are already pre-filtered in Taiwanese *Cosmo* so that overt conflict is avoided. In other words, there are two “filters” operating on each side before global and local values even enter into this arena.
After filtering, there are no major cultural clashes in constructing and refashioning Taiwanese modern womanhood revealed in the Taiwanese edition of *Cosmopolitan*. Instead, the pre-selected global values are geared to Chinese values and the local Taiwanese social system.

**Values “Creeping In”**

The “filter” is a permeable one in the sense that certain fundamental Western and Chinese values occasionally still “creep in.” This is seen in the way some articles end: After confronting some behavior considered to be “deviant,” e.g. having sex with a best friend’s boyfriend or an extra-marital affair, the writers recommend courses of action that constrain the behavior or mitigate its bad consequences. Rather than ending the piece at that point, they add a clause which removes the deviant tone and rationalizes the original act. For instance, they may say that if the love is “true” and mutual, then it is okay to “go for it.” In other words, in some circumstances topics translated directly from Western sources are acceptable after filtering, but certain core values such as individualism creep in nevertheless.

Similarly, even if none of the articles in the sample are specifically about education, the emphasis on education occurs in most of the locally written articles. Normally, the least likely place for education values to creep in would be reports on the private lives of actors or actresses. However, in Taiwanese *Cosmo* we find a report on a popular award-winning actress, Lu Xiaofeng, which indicates that she is now busy studying at UCLA. “She came back in the summer term break and has become a much deeper person.”

**Intermeshing Globalism and Localism**

Taiwanese *Cosmo* data show two kinds of intermeshing. First, global/Western sources are used to support the local Chinese values. For example, the title of a translated report on Clint Eastwood is “tough looking in films but gentle in life” which depicts this celebrity as a good family man. Dennis Quaid is depicted as “sexy in film but straightforward and a competent/kind father in real life.” In most articles on extra-marital affairs, the ultimate tone is basically cautionary, e.g., how miserable it is to be a mistress
could be, and ending with the husband eventually going home. Or, the ending for a woman who has multiple lovers is “getting caught.”

The second kind of intermeshing appears in several articles written by local Taiwanese. Certain global/Western values such as feminism are drawn in to challenge certain aspects of the local gender system: sexual harassment, difficulties for women under conventional gender roles, etc.

Overall, my analysis of major topical concerns and their cultural sources presented in the “Cosmo as a Window” section suggests that the local/Chinese sources tend to moralize topical concerns. In contrast, the Cosmo editors tend to instrumentalize the global/Western sources mostly to support—and in a few cases to challenge—the local values and social system. In other words, the global/Western sources tend to be used as a means to enter new contexts (e.g. relationships, sex and jobs) and to deal with issues of “efficacy.” The local/Chinese sources, in contrast, tend to highlight the ends. For modern Taiwanese women, this means achieving inner coherence, being ethical, and balancing various roles—especially those pertaining to work and family.

The Taiwanese Cosmo treats Chinese values as ends while mobilizing global sources and Western values as means for a successful modern cosmopolitan woman in 1990s Taiwan. This is why globalism and localism tend not to clash with each other in Taiwanese Cosmo, i.e., because globalism and localism are operating on two different levels. In other words, these are not just “competing discourses” which “reproduce and magnify” modern young women’s anxiety about love, marriage, work and freedom, as Rosenberger found from the study of Japanese women’s magazines (Rosenberger, 1995, p. 156). Rather, the two values are operating on different levels, with the Chinese “moral” level dominant, thus guiding Taiwanese women toward an ultimate destination. An indication of the ascendancy of Chinese values is that Taiwanese Cosmo has increased the proportion of Chinese articles (compared to Western articles) in recent years, along with increased sale figures and sale prices as noted previously.

To further extend this interpretation, I would suggest that Cosmopolitan achieves a coherent “intermeshing” of values by organizing specific oppositions, one as means and the other as ends, each of which is then open to resolution as one reads the various articles in a specific issue of the magazine.
Indeed, by analytical induction, I have extracted three such “intermeshed” oppositions that situate and control the apparent tensions between Western individualism and Chinese familism: *skills* versus *integrity*; *choice* versus *responsibility*; and *moments* versus *processes*. In each case, the dangers of the first (Western) term are resolved by the counterpoints implicit in the second (local) term.

As mentioned above, within each of the topical concerns there is a tendency of the Western articles to be more about “skills” and the corresponding local ones about integrity. The challenge that this contrast expresses is the implication that being “too skillful” is perhaps to risk being seen as opportunistic, manipulative and shallow. The blend of articles creates the impression that this is resolved if the enhancement of social (or even sexual) skills is kept in check by a reflective awareness of personhood and inner spiritual coherence.

Similarly, the deployment of skills necessarily implies the making of choices. While making autonomous choices based on calculating self-interest may be alluring, the problem posed by the contrasting articles in *Cosmo* is that self-interest alone does not deliver happiness. Inner depth and role integrity are the sure paths to happiness for women. Thus, the local articles in *Cosmopolitan* counter this by referring to issues of harmony and responsibility.

Finally, the Western articles tend to emphasize “moments” of insight, pleasure, or drama, while the local ones emphasize “process.” In creating this contrast, there is an implied resolution: Moments increase in their depth if women attend to the process of bringing them about. In short, “moments” acquire depth if, through reflection, they are stitched into “episodes” of an unfolding biography.

**DISCUSSION: “READERS BECOME EDITORS” AND INFERRING MODES OF READERSHIP**

Based on a survey conducted by Seven-11 stores in 1998, among 1,800 Seven-11’s in Taiwan, international women’s magazines sold much better than local women’s magazines. Second, among all international women’s magazines, the sale figures of *Cosmo* were the highest. What does Taiwan *Cosmo*’s sales rate mean? It means that the editors have done a successful job in filtering and constructing the right mix of global and local content in the magazine, satisfying local readers’ appetites and avoiding
the issues perceived to be irrelevant to Taiwanese women. This is revealed by the following quotes extracted from an in-depth interview with Cai Huiming, an associate editor:

The earlier years of the Taiwanese *Cosmo* had more translated Western articles but now have more local articles: from 100%, then half/half, to currently 30% imports versus 70% locals…. Because readers don’t like topics or contents being too radical…. What kind of topic being seen as too radical by local women? Mmmm… Western feminism is seen as too radical and Western feminists are seen as too angry—they are not relevant to local women here. Local women perceive that those Western feminists themselves don’t have good personal life experiences, so they feminists want to mobilize other women to support their views. But most other women like our local Taiwanese women don’t feel the same way and they perceive their own life experiences as not being bad at all!

This quote reveals that the “feminism” appearing in earlier issues (which translated directly from the Western sources) was perceived as “Western feminism” by the editors and local readers. I did not get the sense in my interview with Miss Tsai that she thought *Cosmopolitan’s* brand of “Western feminism” may be but one of several possible versions. In other words, the Western feminism translated from the English-written *Cosmo* has been regarded by local Taiwanese readers as too radical and too irrelevant to local Taiwanese readers, and even to the editors. Consequently, the editors not only filter the Western articles but also borrow from their content to construct a promising and positive image that makes sense to local readers:

We don’t want radical feminist. Because, after all, romance, relationships, marriage and family are good things in life—they may have problems sometimes but can always be improved and become better and better. We *Cosmo* want to give our readers a positive image that things can be improved and we *Cosmo* aim to provide advice and ways to improve them. And the advice and ways we provide have to be acceptable to local women. This is why the issues of recent years have much more articles written by local authors than earlier years. Now most articles are written by local authors and even the fashion models in the advertisement pages are Chinese!” (Interview with the associate editor Cai Huiming.)
This positive image constructed by the editors is seen by readers as distinct from “Western feminism” and has had an inspiring effect on the editors themselves. Cai Huiming feels that she has become a successful cosmopolitan woman since she took over the editorship of this magazine:

My personal view and life style have been gradually changed since I worked for Cosmo more than three years ago. I feel more positive toward life in general and I feel I can be in control. In the process of editing Taiwan Cosmo, I have realized that “Readers’ taste become editors’ taste!” I become much more upbeat. I started to wear make-up. I dress well, not for pleasing men, but for myself, feeling good and confident… and I feel I can succeed. I still want to get married, have children and have a very balanced life in which I can play both my family role and my career role well. All my old friends are amazed by how I look and my positive attitude toward life now!

Therefore, it can be argued that Taiwanese Cosmopolitan is a niche publication in 1990s’ Taiwan: It targets a specific audience consistent with its advertising brief.

Who are Cosmo’s readers? Are they a homogeneous group? Do they consume similar material in this magazine? These questions lead to the issue of “modes of readership.” The associate editor had a personal impression that the Taiwan Cosmo readers are more likely to be unmarried women with high school to post-graduate education, and from age 18 to age 35. The Taiwan Cosmo office conducted a readers’ survey in 1998. A short questionnaire was attached to an issue with a request to readers to complete the items and mail it back. Because the sample ended up not being representative of the Cosmo readership, it was not possible to induce generalizations about those readers. Moreover, it would be difficult or impossible to identify different modes of readership if they exist, because the population of potential readers goes so far beyond those readers who subscribe or occasionally purchase the magazine. On the other hand, we may draw on clues in the data and findings presented above to speculate about certain aspects of the Taiwanese Cosmo’s readers, about possible modes of readership, and about the kinds of functions Cosmopolitan might be performing within each mode.

We can surmise that there are three socio-demographic clusters of Taiwanese women in the 1990s, to each of which Cosmo may have a unique appeal.
There are local Taiwanese women who, being in the lower or the upper social strata, are likely to read *Cosmopolitan* as “spectators.” While family values may differ among women with different education levels, and between women living in the major cities and the regional areas in Taiwan (Tsai and Yi, 1997), for different reasons, women in both of these two social locations can have an interest in “modern” issues. For women in the lower social strata (e.g., factory workers), the West remains a source of glamour and excitement. For them *Cosmopolitan* is an accessible window into a world they may never see any closer. For those in the upper social strata, there is an abiding interest in trends of fashion and stories about the famous, particularly local celebrities. At the other extreme are Westernized and highly educated women who may have studied in Western countries and are well established in their careers. For them, *Cosmopolitan* (the Taiwanese edition or the US version) might appear overly concerned with issues of appearance, relationship management and how to be successful on the job market. Such women will have already solved many of these problems for themselves. Yet another part of *Cosmopolitan*—the commentaries on being a Chinese modern woman—provides a basis for, or even a provocation to, personal reflection and reflexivity. Such women can ponder on their own personal journey away from Chinese culture and consider some of the pathways of reconciliation that *Cosmopolitan* provides.

From the content of this magazine, we can surmise that the primary target group is more likely to be women “on the move”, who are therefore puzzled by the many choices and conundrums in their lives. These women are younger and perhaps have not yet completed their education. They are fascinated by Western glamour and perplexed by the issues that arise from dating in a more autonomous manner. They want a professional job, to be free from conventional control, and to have a high disposable income. They have not yet considered the costs of family formation, however.

It is these women whom Taiwanese *Cosmo* is refashioning by providing external guidance and internal direction. The emphasis on efficacy makes more sense to individuals who have been loosened from traditional bonds and have yet to establish themselves within more cosmopolitan settings. For such a group, too, the quest for balance and integrity will seem all the more pressing and problematic when there are so many choices and risks before them. Thus, these women use *Cosmo* more practically than the other
readership groups mentioned above. Their mode of involvement is more as a participant in learning about, wanting to be, and “making it” as a modern woman than as a spectator.

Therefore, the initial appeal of Cosmopolitan is its cover photos and headlines that offer “entrée” into various worlds. By reading the magazine, the initial interest in getting access deepens to matters of efficacy on the one hand, and a concern for balance on the other. In turn, these functions raise issues of internal coherence and moral character. Thus the magazine can be seen as drawing up into its semantic web those women considered “on the move” and likely to be interested in refashioned self definitions that cover a wide range of issues. The targeted women are thus empowered to be more “mobile” without being a threat to the local culture.

CONCLUSION

Taiwanese Cosmopolitan is not just a popular cultural artifact in a global consumerist world. It is a revealing social phenomenon of considerable complexity. Viewed from the perspective of social change, Cosmopolitan can be seen as a vehicle for the Chinese cultural modulators to filter, reprocess and reconcile values from Chinese tradition and Western globalization in today’s Taiwan.

Treating Cosmopolitan as a window reveals a layered image of modern womanhood mediating Chinese and Western values. The surface aspects of women (make-up and fashion) are Western, but as you move from pictures to text, there is an influx of Chinese views that define deeper, internal aspects of womanhood.

Here, Cosmopolitan operates as an arena for intersecting cultural contexts from diverse sources. But the very capacity to achieve such a mix of influences provokes the question of whether there is not some filtering of the material to start with. The absence in the local edition of certain articles appearing in Western editions suggests that the local Cosmopolitan is functioning as a filter. Yet even here the filtering is not perfect: Values from both cultures “creep in.” The creep-in is not as serious as it might appear, for the Western values are marshaled with respect to strategies-as-means, while the local values are re-
established as moral ends. Thus the global and the local can co-exist harmoniously on two different levels within the magazine.

Finally, the Taiwan Cosmo has enabled potentially conflicting values to be brought into some productive alignment. Beyond this, however, the magazine may have wider significance by showing how modernization need not mean “Westernization,” even if it creates veneers of Western images. This is a challenge worthy of deep study: The Taiwan Cosmo not only has enabled the potentially conflicting values to find some mutual inter-meshing, but also can aim to transform local Chinese values in a way that gives them global significance. In this context, the peripheral “tail” wags the central “dog”—alluding to a post-colonial theme. The ultimate test of this will be when issues of Cosmopolitan in Rome, Istanbul, Sydney or New York translate some of the Taiwanese articles into their languages.

NOTES

i The “sister countries” include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Britain, Czech Republic, France, German, Greece, Holland, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Latin America, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey. The global/Western ingredients in the Taiwanese edition are mainly from English editions (i.e., United States, England and Australia).

ii The Marketing Department of the Taiwanese Cosmo edition provided these figures.

iii The 1996 circulation figures of Cosmo in Australia and in the U.S. were about: 100,000 with a population size about 18,000,000 in Australia; 2,559,853 with a population size about 250,000,000 in America.

iv Throughout the entire paper I use the term “Taiwanese women” as women in the contemporary Taiwan society. “A Taiwanese modern woman image” means a modern woman image for women in Taiwan. The word “Taiwanese” here does not have any ethnic connotation (e.g., Taiwanese versus Mainlanders).


vii Cai Huimin, “Li Zi di meili bu shefang” (When love is concerned, Li Zi is unlike other young people), Kemengbodan, December 1995, pp.94-7.

viii Cai Huimin, Huang Yixin, Ye Darong, and Wu Peiwei, “Shen nuren jiaoren nanyi kangju” (Cosmo girls are talking about allure), Kemengbodan, September 1996, pp.122-9.

ix It has been found that Hong Kong readers were not interested in the sex articles and perceived the topic as “Western” or “foreign.” So, the local editors were induced by the parent company to publish very few such articles (Leung, 1996).

x See Chang (1999a) for research on contrasting sexual practices between different Chinese societies (i.e., Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan).

xi Since the number of cases of topics other than “relationships” and “sex” is quite small (2 - 9), presenting or interpreting its percentage of global or local sources for each of these individual topics is not appropriate.

xii Rebecca Livingston (translator: Kai Li), “Yu yu xiongzhang di nanti” (Broccoli and burgers), Kemengbodan, July 1994, p.20.

xiii Editor, “Huo di yiran zizai” (Can women have a self in life?), Kemengbodan, July 1994, p.10.

xiv A Man, “Nuren di wancheng” (The completion of women), Kemengbodan, March 1997, p.28.

xv Editor, “Zixing di nuren cai mei” (Confident women are most beautiful), Kemengbodan, September 1993, p.8.


xvii Natalia (translator:Huang Meiguei), “Ni hen ai ta, ta que bu ai ni” (You like him a lot, he likes you a little), Kemengbodan, July 1992, pp.80-3.

xviii Dianne (translator: Zheng Chunwen), “Xiaonanren dong hong” (Give love a chance, give him a chance), Kemengbodan, December 1995, pp.73-5.


xx ibid.

xxi ibid.

Howard Halpern (translator: Ho Yanqing), “Cong chikuan danlian di miqing zhong fusheng” (Getting on you’re your life after love addiction), Kemengbodan, July 1994, pp.114-5.


Ye Darong, “Shen yang di nuren gang ai qong xiao zi” (When you earn more than he), Kemengbodan, December 1995, pp. 84-8.

Cai Huiming, “Ta bu cha, ta shi wo di qingmi airen” (Mr Perfect is not your only choice), Kemengbodan, December 1995, pp.80-2.

Wu Yomei, “Fengshou di yishu” (Hello…and goodbye soon), Kemengbodan, July 1994, pp. 124-5.

Lynn Snowden (translator: Wu Shuang), “Shui shuo ni zhi nen yunyo yige qingren?” (Who says you have to have just one lover?), Kemengbodan, September 1996, pp. 96-7.

Wan Yi, “Ruguo haoyo di laogon xiyin ni” (Help! Your best friend’s man is making a pass at you), Kemengbodan, December 1995, pp. 146-7.


Zhong Yaqing, “Xianrenzhong zhi lian” (In love with a married man: it’s a hell!), Kemengbodan, September 1993, pp.22-24.

Lynn Snowden (translator: Wu Shuang), “Shui shuo ni zhi nen yunyo yige qingren?” (Who says you have to have just one lover?), Kemengbodan, September 1996, pp. 96-7.


Wan Yi, “Jizheng yedanye lianren” (Hurry up to get yourself a lover before Christmas), Kemengbodan, December 1995, pp. 130-2.


Ye Darong, “Ruhe rang nanren yuxian yusi” (What’s on his mind about oral sex), Kemengbodan, September 1996, pp. 90-2.

Ye Darong, “Nuren zai 20, 30, 40 sui xuyao shen yang di xingshenhuo” (What do women want their sexual life during ages of 20, 30, 40), Kemengbodan, March 1997, pp. 120-4.


Li Ang, “Bukeyi luanmo” (Don’t touch), Kemengbodan, September 1996, p.10.

Li Ang, “Xingsaurao vs xinggaochao” (Sex harassment vs sex orgasm), Kemengbodan, July 1994, pp. 36-8.
“Gongwubuke di miantan EQ” (Complete handbook: how to ace the interview, make them say “We want you”?), Kemengbodan, March 1997, pp.96-102.

Susan Kleinman (translator: Wu Wenqi), “Ruhe chengwei yige chenggong di nu zhuguan” (Becoming the kind of boss you’d like to work with), Kemengbodan, September 1993, pp. 108-11.


Cai Huiming, “Zouxian baiwan nienxing di hanglie” (How to get a real raise?), Kemengbodan, September 1996, pp. 132-5.


Ibid.

This sort of sexual articles do not exist in the Hong Kong edition of Cosmopolitan either. See Leung, 1996


Zhong Yaqing, “Xianrenzhong zhi lian” (In love with a married man: it’s a hell!), Kemengbodan, September 1993, pp.22-24.

Falangxisi, “Ta guo di shi qingfuje” (Mistress’ Valentine’s Day), Kemengbodan, September 1993, pp. 252-5.


For examples, in a 1991 Social Change Survey of a random sample of 2,488 respondents in Taiwan conducted by the Institute of Sociology in Academia Sinica, for the proportion of women agreeing with the statement “financial security is an advantage in marriage” decreased by year of schooling: 70.6% for elementary school level, 54.1% for junior high school level, 38.6% for high school level, 27.3% for junior college level and 13.8% for university and above (see Table 1 in Tsai and Yi, 1996, p. 140). Such attitudes also varied by residential areas: 55.2% of rural regional women, 48.3% of women in major cities and 41.6% of women in Taipei, agreed with this statement (see...
Table 3 in Tsai and Yi, 1996, p. 152). For the statement “People without children lead empty life,” women’s (positive) attitudes toward this statement varied significantly by different educational levels: 82.5% for elementary school level, 65.8% for junior high school level, 51.5% for high school level, 30.8% for junior college level and 26.4% for university and above (see Table 2 in Tsai and Yi, 1996, p. 149). Agreement with this statement also varied by residential areas: 66.5% for rural regional women, 62.6% for women in major cities and 56.9% for women in Taipei (see Table 3 in Tsai and Yi, 1996, p. 154).

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Chang, Dr Jui-shan

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