

Party or Market?
Applying transitional media theory to the Chinese newspaper representations of elite
Chinese female athletes from 1949-2012

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Jennifer and Brian Hazelwood. They exposed me to the world beyond U.S. borders as a youngster, encouraged my curiosity about people in my neighborhood, and around the globe, and cultivated my love of travel and learning. Words are inadequate to express how much their unfaltering support and belief in me at every stage has meant to me – I am forever grateful.

Abstract

In exploring the relationship between media and society, a relevant question includes the media are an agent of social change or a reinforcer of the status quo (Glasser, 2007; Rosengren, 1981). In the People's Republic of China (PRC), the media serves as an ideological apparatus utilized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to maintain political and social control. Since its founding in 1949, the PRC has emphasized the role of elite female athletes in the maintenance of the CCP's ideological dominance by inspiring nationalist sentiment. Parallel to this has been the use of an authoritarian media model, characterized by Party propaganda, where the CCP maintained strict control over the media. From 1978 onward, however, economic reforms stimulated the marketization and commercialization of the media in China. The influence of the market is hypothesized to diminish the control of the CCP over the media and show indicators of a transition to a liberal market-based media model. As a subgroup of women in China, elite female athletes' representation has yet to be examined within the transitional media theory model. Though literature on the representation of female athletes in Western countries indicates female athletes are objectified and sexualized in the liberal market-based media model, there is no research on elite female athletes in China, a knowledge gap this thesis aims to begin to fill. A case study of China will be presented by drawing together several bodies of literature to examine female athletes in China. In addition, a pilot study content analysis was conducted on the newspaper representation of elite Chinese female athletes to test and potentially extend transitional media theory. The findings in this thesis suggest that transitional media theory does not currently account for the continuing representation of elite Chinese female and the CCP continues to maintain control of the newspaper media, despite the market forces taking hold in China. Instead, the growth in commercialization may not signal the end of the Party's ideological domination due to the incorporation of the market, but a shift in the Party's ideological framework, leading to more subtle forms of ideological domination. This thesis will argue that one of these subtle forms is enacted through the sport/media complex and the continuing use of elite female athletes to maintain the Party's ideological hegemony by inspiring nationalist sentiment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In exploring the relationship between media and society, a relevant question includes whether media are agents of social change or reinforcers of the status quo (Glasser, 2007; Rosengren, 1981). These questions are particularly salient and stimulating when examining a case in which major shifts in the dominant political ideology and transitions in the media simultaneously occur. Scholars have established that media systems and media representations of certain populations are inextricably linked with political systems and political ideology. This extends to countries in social, economic, and political transitions in a recent effort to understand transitional media in non-Western countries.

Sport has been a site of interest for scholars as it is intertwined with the structures, norms, and values of a society. Participation in sports also consistently reflects a nation's gender, racial, and class order and hierarchy. In addition, the athletes represented in the media also aid in directing activity toward the maintenance of the existing gender order (Mannheim, 1936). This is one of the main reasons research is conducted on female athletes and, in the case of China, why the media are a vital component of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) ideological control.

While substantial research has been conducted on Western media representations of female athletes, little exists, at least in English, outside of the West. This research proposes to draw on and test the theoretical perspective of transitional media theory by examining the representation of elite female athletes in Chinese newspapers to provide insight into whether the CCP continues to employ the institution of sport to maintain

ideological hegemony, despite the marketization and commercialization in the media occurring due to economic reform. Put another way, do capitalist economic reforms result in a challenge to the communist ideological hegemony in China? To do this, Chapter 2 will provide the main variables of interest and a brief overview of the case of women and sport in China. Next, Chapter 3, the theoretical framework, will present the gaps this thesis aims to fill by bridging what was learned in Chapters 2 examining how the literatures of sport, gender, political ideology, and media in China challenge transitional media theory. Chapter 4 provides a pilot study content analysis of photographs of elite female athletes collected from Chinese newspapers from 1949 to 2012. The purpose of this pilot study is to provide empirical evidence to begin examining if or the ways in which the media representation of elite female athletes in the China have shifted and examine how this fits with the current understanding of transitional media theory.

Research Questions

The three main research questions for this thesis are:

RQ 1) What are the connections between elite female athletes' newspaper media representation, the institution of sport, and Chinese media's role in maintaining the Party's ideological hegemony through nationalist sentiment?

RQ 2) Does the transition from an authoritarian Marxist-media to a more liberal market-based media system affect the representation of female athletes in accordance with transitional media theory?

RQ 3) Does transitional media theory account for the representation of elite female athletes in Chinese newspaper media?

This research will contribute to the literature on feminist studies, sport sociology, and critical communications theory. The proposed research will test and potentially extend existing transitional media theory by examining and comparing a particular subset of women's representation in the media, elite female athletes. Studying female athletes' representation in the media will give insight into whether female athletes look similar how women in general are represented in transitional media cases previously identified by scholars or if female athletes are represented differently and thus begging the question of whether sport offers one exception to the transitional media trend in the case of China.

Feminist scholars have conducted research in Western liberal market-based countries on media representations of women and a growing number of studies have emerged on East Asian women (Lee, 2009). There are also several studies analyzing the media representations of women in the period of China's transition from a communist media model to a liberal market-based model over the past four decades (Chen, 2010; Luo & Hao, 2007; Yu, 2009). While the research objectives of these three studies were not theory testing or building, transitional media theory remains largely detached from empirical data, save for a few (Luo & Hao, 2007; Xin, 2012; Yu, 2009; Zhao, 1998; Zhao, 2000). In addition, no research has been conducted on whether female athletes' media representation in China reflects the findings of previous studies in other, mainly Western, countries or if the representation of Chinese female athletes provide an exception to what is expected under transitional media theory in the case of China.

Significance of Study

Little research has been conducted on media representations of female athletes outside of the “Western” countries or Western media sources. Indeed, while Western countries are typically characterized by a market driven media model, which represents groups in various ways, countries that do not fall into the same media model, due to varying political, economic or ideological slants, may produce differences in media representations of female athletes. In addition, only research on the representation of women (non-athletes) in China has been conducted. Currently, no research has been conducted on the media representation of female athletes in China within the transitional media framework. This thesis, therefore, aims to begin to fill the knowledge gap on the representation of elite Chinese female athletes in Chinese media sources.

This thesis brought together several bodies of literature to specifically give context to the case of China. As media systems become more complex and theoretical models in place become less applicable by being too simplistic, context becomes key when testing and potentially extending theory. Due to the relative newness of transitioning media systems and theory, it is necessary to test this theory in context, as this has been the critique of past media systems theory and one that transitional media theory seeks to address. This thesis is also unique in that the pilot study results are put within the framework of theorized media models, which other content analysis of media representations of female athletes has not done. This thesis’s examination of sport media adds the emerging body of work being conducted within transitional media theory and

adds to the sport media literature, connecting what is being observed through the content analysis conducted for this thesis with broader theoretical media theories.

The choice to conduct a content analysis as a way to explore and test this theoretical phenomena represents the methodological significance of this thesis. The use of images as a proxy to examine the economic and political shifts in China, as well as highlight a particular group that may provide a counterpoint to the transition theorized to occur, provides a significant method to examine this phenomenon.

The reason elite female athletes are of interest is due to their historical significance and their use by the Party as exemplars of the communist ideological principle of gender equality as well as their success on the international stage and ability to inspire nationalist sentiment through their sporting success. Framing both the case study of China and the pilot study within transitional media theory will also serve to both test and potentially extend theoretical knowledge.

This thesis also aims to point out the importance of recognizing the historical development of sport, in particular its relationship with gender, along with how it intersects with political ideology in a particular context. In addition, beginning to elucidate the influence of political ideology, which informs the values and modes of communication seen as valid, may help scholars become more reflexive about the context in which their own work takes place. For instance, in the United States the government seemingly interferes little with the sport/media complex relative to China. Those in decision-making positions at media-producing organizations often have the power to determine the amount and type of coverage. Cooky, Messner and Hextrum's (2013) work

indicates that these individuals' decisions appeal to an audience that has preferences embedded in institutional and ideological frameworks characterized by deep-seeded beliefs and values with regard to gender and sport. To detach media representations from the ideological framework and the political and cultural historical context, diminishes the work from the full understanding of how power, and what power, is reproduced through the media.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Overview of Concepts

Representation

The concept of representation connects meaning and language (including images) and culture. While there are three main theories to representation, including reflective and intentional, the constructionist approach, which states that *things* do not mean in and of themselves, but rather people construct meaning using representational systems made up of concepts and signs, will be used for this thesis (Hall, 1997a).

Beginning simply, representation is the production of meaning through, in the case of this thesis, images based on concepts in people's minds. Before people can meaningfully interpret these images, a system of concepts and images need to be formed that can stand for or represent the world (Hall, 1997a). A conceptual map is first formed with the organization, arrangement and classification of complex relations of concepts. A conceptual map must be shared in order for people to correlate their concepts and ideas with certain spoken sounds, words or visual images so that these images can then carry meaning; these are also known as signs. Hall (1997a) posits that things, concepts and signs lie at the center of the production of meaning in language. The process that links these three components together is called representation.

While Hall (1997a) explains language and representation in depth, the basic key concepts include: 1) meaning is not fixed, rather people construct meaning using representational systems of concepts and signs, 2) meanings are produced within specific

historical moments and culture, there is no singular universal “true meaning,” and 3) the interpreter is as important as the author in the production of meaning (Hall, 1997a).

In order for representation to be meaningful, the meaning of it must be shared. As the descriptive level where consensus on meaning is widely agreed upon, denotation is key. In order to link the descriptive level to broader themes and meaning, including general beliefs and conceptual frameworks, Hall (1997a) introduces Roland Barthes’ two-step process where representation takes place. First, signifiers, or the elements of an image, come together to form a sign. An example would be a female athlete holding a gold medal in front of a large Chinese flag. Second, the message or sign is then linked to a broad ideological theme, rendering it the signified, in this example it might be nationalism.

In order to connect signifiers and the signified, some scholars argue there needs to be a meta-language, one that focuses on narratives, groups of images or discourses that operate across a broad area of knowledge. It is here that Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse proves useful. Relations of power and knowledge production concerned Foucault more than relations of meaning through discourse. Discourses define and produce the objects of knowledge and they govern the way a concept can be meaningfully talked about. Dominant discourses also reflect dominant perspectives while structuring the way people make sense of what cultural knowledge is true and what is not (Black & Mascia-Lees, 2000). Post-structuralists, for example, uses discourse to explain that structures in our society are in fact powerful socially constructed phenomena. Foucault argued that the interconnectedness of discourse and power creates systems of

knowledge that reinforce the understanding of a particular discourse as truth. As a result of viewing a given discourse as “normalized”, competing discourses may be actively silenced (Black & Mascia-Lees, 2000). Note, however, that discourse does not operate only at a meta-level, but at the level of the individual where forms of behavior can reproduce relations of power (Hall, 1997a). For example, Hall (1997a) writes that according to Foucault, “It is discourse, not the subjects who speak it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the *episteme*, the *discursive formation*, the *regime of truth*, of a particular period and culture.” (p. 55) The idea that the subject is produced within discourse renders the subject a bearer of its particular power and knowledge.

Media representations are the ways in which media portray particular groups, communities, ideas, experiences or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective (Hall, 1997a). Hall (1997b) posits that power and ideology attempt to fix meanings and that media representations operate as a site for these power structures to work. Indeed, control of image meaning through these power structures allows for the control of symbolism, which is a fundamental part of the maintenance of power. Regimes of truth can then effectively be maintained by the control of media representations by those in dominant power positions. This idea will be further elaborated on in the following section on ideology and hegemony.

This has been a very brief overview of representation and the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings. While referred to throughout this thesis, representation denotes the construction of elite female athletes in Chinese newspapers according to

identified themes. It is key, however, to introduce the complexity of representation in relation to ideology and media.

Ideology

Scholars disagree on the meaning and importance of ideology. Indeed, McLelland (1995) writes, “Ideology is the most elusive concept in the whole of social science” (p. 1). This makes ideology an essentially contested concept with no singular definition. Sargent (2009) defines ideology as a system of values and beliefs regarding the various institutions and processes of society that is accepted as fact or truth by a group of people providing a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be. Coakley (2009) offers a similar definition of ideology as a web of ideas and beliefs that people use to give meaning to the world and make sense of their experiences, e.g. beliefs and ideas about class and race create an ideology around the two institutions. Current critical concepts of ideology extend the analysis of ideology from the intentional to the unintentional, making ideology a function of social process. Viewed from this perspective, the ideological function of media, for example, goes beyond the explicit promotion of an ideological doctrine to the seemingly autonomous codes and conventions of news production (Zhao, 1998). Moreover, instead of deeming ideology as merely an explicit and static set of doctrines, ideology can be perceived as an active process, operating on the level of common sense and everyday consciousness and discourses. The critical literature typically links ideology to relations of domination, and to point to something as being ideological implies a critique of relations of domination. Thompson (1990), for example, proposes to conceptualize ideology “in terms of the ways in which the meaning

mobilized by symbolic forms serves to establish and sustain relations of domination” (p. 58).

Within this context, symbolic forms that serve to sustain the CCP domination, even though they do not explicitly promote political doctrines, are also serving an ideological function. Both sport and the media, which will be discussed in the following pages, serve to sustain CCP ideological domination. This transforms the complexity of ideology into something understandable. Examining and contextualizing an ideology, such as how sport and the media function in the political ideology in the case of China, allows for a more complete understanding of the pervasive impact of ideology on society.

The combined communist and nationalist ideologies in China are enforced and maintained through the authority of the state; this renders them political ideologies. According to Sargent (2009) the political system is the way societies make decisions about their most important values, or rather the political system is an authoritative allocation of values for a society. Shaped by the authority of a particular nation-state, which is defined as a sovereign state whose citizens are relatively homogeneous in factors such as language or common descent, an ideology becomes a political ideology when appropriated by the state (Nation-state, 2013). Sargent’s definition of ideology coupled with Mannheim’s (1936) formulation that ideology is a highly flexible conceptual construct that works to cultivate an adherence to a set of political and cultural ideals, directing activity toward the maintenance of the existing order, will provide the basis for the discussion of ideology in this thesis.

Sargent's (2009) description of ideology in many ways reflects the hegemonic process. The concepts of ideology and hegemony are related but distinct concepts. In the context of media, ideology is a system of ideas and representations through which people use to make sense of their relations. Both ideology and hegemony are related to the ability of the privileged or powerful groups to oppress/control the oppressed/powerless. Ideology, therefore, is a way for those in power to disguise or distort reality to legitimize the existing social structure. Hegemony, which was coined by Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, is the way those in power coerce the oppressed into giving their consent. Lull (2011) describes the relationship between ideology and hegemony stating, "Gramsci's theory of hegemony...connects ideological representation to culture. Hegemony requires that ideological assertions become self-evident cultural assumptions...Its effectiveness depends on subordinated peoples accepting the dominant ideology as...common sense" (p. 34). With this, hegemony can be thoroughly integrated into everyday reality and go undetected.

The cultivation of a "common sense" reality spans both ideology and hegemony. Willis (1982) refers to "common sense" in his discussion of ideology. When an ideology is so deeply ingrained in a particular society that it is rarely acknowledged or questioned; it becomes part of the culture's "common sense." Indeed, Willis (1982) notes that ideology only exists through its manifestations at the level of concrete circumstances within the zone of common sense, within what is taken to be reality. An underpinning of ideology is *Weltanschauung*, which means "world view." It is the prism through which a person or group of people view the world. While ideology often refers to the patterned

beliefs and attitudes of a person or group of people, it can also be understood as a general and coherent *Weltanschauung* (Rousseas & Wiles, 1981). This directly connects to the way nationalism is built and sustained. By instilling in its citizens a belief system, typically including the superiority of this belief system, the leaders of the nation are working to develop nationalism as a thin ideology and a main component for supporting the nation's *Weltanschauung*. Without nationalism as a "thin" ideology that makes citizens feel that being part of the nation is an inherently valuable quality, political ideology might not have as much traction in society.

According to Willis (1982), in order for a political ideology and *Weltanschauung* to develop, there are three stages of progression – definition, reinterpretation and rebirth. In the case of China, the communist political ideology can be traced through the three stages of ideology. Willis (1982) suggests that ideology begins with the ideological force of definition, meaning the foundational text for the ideology. In this case, it is the Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The second stage is the reinterpretation of discrepancies in the specific social sub-regions, meaning the reinterpretation of communism by Mao Zedong of China. The third and final stage is the located rebirth of ideology in which ideology functions in a certain cultural context and, for the purposes of this thesis, in the specific realm of sports. Sargent (2009) offers a way of conceptualizing the categorization of ideologies writing:

In most open societies in which many ideologies are recognized and accepted, conflict within the individual is unlikely to become important...On the other hand, in a closed system with only one official ideology, an individual who

holds beliefs counter to that ideology will probably become intensely aware of the difference and be affected by it. (p. 5)

In the cases of China, a closed system approach is useful in that there is one dominant pervading ideology that, coupled with nationalism, has a tremendous impact on women's participation in sport and representation in the media. The ways in which China's "political leaders use the language of the dominant ideology of their country to justify their actions", and particularly the impact of this on women's participation in sport and representation in the media, is the main focus of analysis in this thesis (Sargent, 2009, p. 5).

As briefly noted, sport is used to a great extent in nationalist discourse and is employed in China to reinforce and maintain the existing political order – communism. The task of inculcating the communist political culture in the citizens of the nation-state means providing a way for socialization and political integration to cultivate a belief system in the citizens in order to bind them together psychologically as a society, and add to the creation of a coherent *Weltanschauung*. The family unit, education, mass media and sport are often the primary agents of this socialization, which allow the political system in countries like China, and specifically those at the head of the political party, to directly control these socialization programs (Park & Park, 1990).

In addition, as a central organizing principle of society, the addition of gender as a variable in the primary agents of socialization mentioned is not arbitrary. As a communist state, China embraced the ideological promise of gender equality though, arguably, this commitment went unfulfilled. Sport, however, plays a role in the process of socializing

members of China into the belief system that gender equality is a reality and women and girls are important in the project of using sport to promote communist ideals. Indeed, women's role in nationalism and communism proves to be a cornerstone for China.

In order to best understand the relationship between the institutions of gender and sport it must be contextualized within a particular culture and historical context. In the case of China, the dominant ideology of nationalism combines with communism to cultivate an adherence to a set of political and cultural values and beliefs, which directs activity toward the maintenance of the existing gender order and comprehensive dominant ideology (Mannheim, 1936).

Media, Ideology and Hegemony

For representation to be meaningful to audiences it is necessary that there be shared recognition of people, situations and ideas. All representations, therefore, are embedded in ideologies. Levi-Strauss (1958) argues that ideas and beliefs are encoded into texts and images, while others are left out in order to give a preferred representation. Power is often reproduced through the media either in an effort to reflect the power structures in society or, put another way, maintain the ideas, values and leadership of the dominant group. This is a core idea of Gramsci's hegemony described briefly above.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony means that the dominant group in society, or the dominant political party, maintain dominance by securing the consent of the subordinate through the negotiated construction of ideological and political consensus, which includes both dominant and dominated groups (Strinati, 1995). This does not mean that

reaching consensus is always a peaceful process. In the case of China, this can be seen with the Tiananmen Square events. In addition, hegemony requires constant readjustment and renegotiation, which will be seen through the CCP's negotiation of the market in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Hegemony, like *Weltanschauung*, is understood as "common sense", an all-encompassing worldview where the dominant ideology is practiced and spread. As discussed in the section on ideology, the way in which media represent aspects of life, and in the case of China the way the largely government controlled media represents people, events, etc., serves to cultivate an adherence to a set of political and cultural ideas that direct activity toward the maintenance of the existing order. The widely held ideas or beliefs tend to be seen as "common sense", a general and coherent *Weltanschauung* (O'Sullivan, Dutton & Rayner, 1998; Rousseas & Wiles, 1981). Indeed, critical questions to ask when analyzing media representations include what sense of the world is it making? What does it imply?

A hegemonic view of society indicates that media texts and images are representations reinforcing dominant ideologies in society and the role of media in authoritarian Marxist media are to circulate and reinforce the dominant ideology. The use of media to maintain a political hegemony in China can be seen through the tight control of the CCP over the media, including the propaganda that was prevalent during the rule of Chairman Mao Zedong (Chan & Qiu, 2002). An understanding of hegemony, therefore, provides insight into the relationship between media and power. Lull (2011) further describes, "according to Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony, mass media are tools that ruling elites use to perpetuate their power, wealth and status [by

popularizing] their own philosophy, culture and morality.” (p. 33) Using the concept of hegemony and analyzing how the media functions, the role it plays in mass culture, and how this role reinforces hegemony, will play largely into the use of media in China. Later in this chapter, the case of China, providing further context by focuses on the historical development of women in sport and their role in maintaining the CCP’s political hegemony.

Gender

Gender is a central organizing principle of social life that both shapes and is shaped by society. Examining gender, therefore, forces people to reevaluate institutions and issues believed to be self-evident and delineates gender as being static. This is particularly salient when analyzing different cultural perspectives on gender (Ackers, 1992).

Gender is socially constructed, meaning that the socially defined expectations of gender are determined through people’s social interactions with one another under particular social, political and economic conditions which can vary from place to place and from time to time. There is a propensity to base understandings of gender on sex categories (Ackers, 1992; Coakley, 1990). Indeed, West and Zimmerman (1987) point out that assignments to gender categories are often made on the assumption of biological differences based on body adornment and behavior. In this way gender differences enter into sex categorization, and the clear differentiation between the two disappears. Making the distinction between social understandings of gender and the biological understanding

of sex is necessary in order to comprehend the gendered processes of intersectionality, which illuminates the diversity and historical-cultural specificity of women's experiences and gender relations (Ackers, 1992).

Martin (2004) suggests that studying gender as a social institution allows researchers to focus on gender as a structure, one that has origins in the development of culture. Gender as a social institution echoes West and Zimmerman's (1978) concept of "doing gender" in that practicing gender is central to the structure of gender as an institution. The idea of "doing gender" implies that gender, instead of being an innate quality, is instead a social construct that is enacted and displayed through interactions and behaviors performed by individuals. Examples of "doing gender" include the division of labor – what is labeled "women's work", which often includes the household duties of cooking, cleaning and childcare – or simply following the restroom signs that separate men and women (West & Zimmerman, 1978). Individuals are then judged based on their compliance with these gendered societal expectations and those that defy these expectations and step outside of this accountability structure are called out for not "doing gender" correctly according to the society in which they reside. In addition, if gender is considered an institution, it is a characteristic of collectives, institutions and historical processes - highlighting not only the cultural variation of gender across time and space but also gender's variegated properties (Martin, 2004).

In laying out the criteria for defining social institutions, Martin (2004) presents the case for gender as a social institution. Some criteria for defining a social institution include the following: institutions are profoundly social and characteristic of groups;

institutions both constrain and facilitate behavior or actions by a societal or group member; institutions are organized in accordance with and permeated by power; and finally, institutions continuously change (Martin, 2004). According to Martin's (2004) four criteria, gender can be defined as a social institution and it is often intertwined with and helps inform other institutions, such as the state. For example, Acker (1992) points out, "the term 'gendered institutions' means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distribution of power", which the state has much control over in China (p. 567). Therefore, when the state turns particular practices into law - everything from criminal laws to developing policies around physical activity - they often contain a gendered element. The state then enforces these practices and laws through rhetoric and the framing of national concerns in congruence with institutions, such as gender (Martin 2004). As Ackers (1992) and Martin (2004) suggest, gender as an institutional structure allows researchers to analyze its origins in the development of particular cultures, which, among other social ideas, informs social understandings of beliefs about physical ability (Coakley, 2009)

Gender in China functions as a dichotomy – men and women – which is familiar to Westerners. As China has undergone dramatic shifts in ideology over the past century, the social construction of gender too has changed with society. This indicates that while gender has continued within dichotomous categories, the attributes associated with men and women are not fixed.

Gender in China In addition to communism, Confucianism plays a role in how gender is understood in China. With a history of more than two thousand five hundred years, the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius became deeply engrained in Chinese society. Among other practices, Confucius emphasized filial piety, which for women includes the three subordinations (Bolao, 1984). Filial piety for women involved paying respect and being submissive to her parents, her in-laws, husband, male relatives and her own sons. The three subordinations were imperative for a woman to fulfill her filial piety duty and they included being subordinate to her father in youth, to her husband when married, and her son if her husband passed away. The three subordinations have informed gender roles in China for centuries (Bolao, 1984).

The shift away from the Confucian construction of gender that took place in China as a result of the Communist Revolution in 1949, reinforced the idea of gender as a social construct. Indeed, preceding the Communist Revolution, the cultural influence of Confucianism informed Chinese gender roles beginning in the sixteenth century, ranging from division of labor in household duties to gender bias in physical activity in which women were viewed as weaker, delicate and suited only for certain activities (Matsuda, 2006; Powers, 1976). During the onset of communism in China, however, Confucianism was ardently suppressed, including the ideas of women as weaker. Regardless of the state's efforts, however, some elements of Confucianism did survive the communist revolution and have manifested themselves in many ways, including the attitudes toward the training of elite female athletes.

In China, the shift away from Confucianism's overt influence on society, with regard to gender, was strongly tied to the rise of nationalism, which is a belief instilled in a nation's citizens that: 1) their country is superior and 2) being a member is an inherently valuable quality (Anderson, 1991). The decline of Confucianism and the rise of nationalism occurred in China just before the country's Communist Revolution in 1949. Gender roles and attributes started shifting prior to China's 1949 Communist Revolution with the rise of the reformist Nationalist party in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Nationalist party, which was largely comprised of Chinese intellectuals statesmen and constitutional reformers, had already begun to denounce ethics and superstition and to argue that China's weakness in its recent history was due to the physical weakness of Chinese women, who had bound feet and were kept in a state of submission and servitude due to the widespread Confucian cultural ideals; notably this was among upper class women, as they could afford to be immobile (Brownell, 1995). Continuing into the beginning half of the twentieth century, reformers saw "oppressed Chinese women" as a symbol of China's weakness as a nation. Physical education and sports for women, therefore, became inextricably linked with building a strong nation and a Chinese nationalist ideology (Brownell, 2008). From the beginning, therefore, Chinese nationalist ideology was intertwined with gender ideology and greatly influenced sport policy throughout the latter half of the twentieth century (Morris, 2004).

Understanding gender as a social construct indicates that the attributes associated with men and women have changed over time as society has changed. From the oppressive ideology of Confucianism that directed both government and society for

nearly four centuries to the Communist Revolution in 1949, the socially acceptable and promoted behaviors and characteristics for men and women have changed. Under Confucianism, women's roles were subordinate to those of men of all ages; they were expected to be domestic, filial and held to the highest moral standard (Ebrey, 1993). In contrast, CCP leader Mao Zedong's slogan, "The times have changed, men and women are the same", reflects not only the communist ideal of gender equality but also the CCP's desire to erase Confucianism's influence on society (Honig, 2002, p. 255). Though the long and pronounced Confucian cultural heritage continues to play a role, there have been considerable alterations to the construction of gender in China.

For nearly two thousand years, Chinese society was ardently traditional and strictly patriarchal. The Confucian cultural heritage mandated strict gender roles for both men and women. "Doing gender" for upper class women, for example, involved being relegated to the home and being subservient – recall the three submissions discussed earlier. In addition, the practice of foot-binding also served as a way to restrict women's movement and keep them from going outside the home. In Confucianism, sons were favored which stemming from the cultural norm that, when married, daughters would move into their husband's home, whereas sons would stay and take care of aging parents along with their wives. Parents without sons were then left with minimal or no care in their old age. In addition, sons could work and support their parents as well as carry on the family name, both seen as inherently valuable qualities associated with men (de Boer & Hudson, 2005).

In China, “doing gender” changed dramatically after the Communist Revolution under CCP leader, Mao Zedong. The Maoist period, particularly during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), was characterized by “gender erasure” or “socialist androgyny” (Liu, 2002, p. 150). “Doing gender” consisted of women wearing similar military-style dark clothing, cutting their hair short and wearing no makeup. Liu (2002) notes that this image of the “liberated” female comrade with her military-style clothing and short hair, was “celebrated in the literature of socialist realism [and] invented for the purpose of abolishing the patriarchal discriminatory construction of gender. [Instead] they end[ed] up denying difference to women” by making male characteristics the gender neutral (p. 150). Since the end of the Maoist period in 1976, however, the enforcement of this “socialist androgyny” has subsided and “doing gender” in China is becoming similar to what is seen in the West.

Sport

Sport does not have a singular precise definition, but for the purpose of this thesis sport will be used to refer to the elite sport level (Benn, Jawad & Pfister, 2011). Sports have long been under the mandate of the state in many countries and have often been used to promote national unity and exhibit national strength as well as to sort out international political issues. For example, countries competing to top the medal charts at the Olympics or athletes making powerful political statements, particularly athletes displaying solidarity between warring countries. Intertwined with the structures, norms, and values of a society, sports participation consistently reflects a nation’s gender, racial, and class order and hierarchy (Hartmann-Tews & Pfister, 2003). In addition, according to

Coakley (2009), the rituals of sport engage more people in a shared experience than any other institution or cultural activity. Hoberman (1984) reiterates the integral role sport plays in society stating, “Sport [is] made an instrument of policy and thus a part of the political culture as a whole. It has been appropriated by observers with ideological interests and thereby been integrated into a political Weltanschauung” (p. 83).

Both ideology and gender expectations have an impact on many institutions in society. The institution of sport effects those within the culture as well as representing what that culture values to the rest of the world by observing who participates. The ideology of the culture and nation through which sport is understood creates both opportunities and barriers for athletes depending upon the prevailing national conceptions of race, social class, and, in this case, gender. In many cases, sports participation and who is allowed to compete in sports consistently reflects the country’s gender order and hierarchy.

China’s communist system was based on Soviet Union’s model. Similar to Soviet Russia, the CCP controls both the political and economic system, though the commercializing of the market in the early 1990’s has led to a shift in the media, in particular, which is the premise of this thesis (Hoberman, 1984). Sport too falls under government control and its significance is evident in the political undertones of how and why sport is performed and the varying emphases on competition throughout the last half of the twentieth century.

Nationalism

The term nationalism is often used in texts as being self-evident (Ranchod- Nilsson & Tetreault, 2000). Delving deeper into the way scholars define nationalism, however, elucidates not only the varied understandings of nationalism but also the instrumental role of nationalism in the ideological production of social institutions by defining “the nation” and designating its membership (Ranchod- Nilsson & Tetreault, 2000). In addition to the cultural approach, the role of nationalism in politics proves to be an area focused on in most literature on the subject. States often swathe their objectives in nationalist terms to either get public backing or to justify political decisions. It is thus worth beginning broadly by exploring how nationalism is defined, then moving into how the state uses nationalism to suit its political objectives.

According to Anderson (1991), nationalism arises from an awareness of membership in the nation where being a member is an inherently valuable quality. Bell (2009) builds on this by adding that a sense of national consciousness develops that exalts one nation over all others and focuses primarily on the promotion of its culture and interests. The national consciousness Bell (2009) refers to is actively created and cultivated through the imagination, which creates an imagined community. Interaction on a regular basis, however, is needed to make this imagined community “real”. By interacting regularly or participating in ritualized activities, such as reading the national newspaper or listening to a national radio station, the members of a national community recognize their special and exclusive bond to one another. As will be discussed later,

sport contributes to and is important to nationalism because it constitutes a charged interaction ritual out of which imagined national communities arise (Bradley et al., 2002).

The core of nationalism ultimately “instills a belief in citizens that their country is important and superior to other countries, and that their individual identity is strongly tied to the nation.” (Bell, 2009) Breuilly (1985) lays out what constitutes “a nation” and echoes Bell (2009) but concedes nationalism is only a political doctrine used to exercise state power. It is important to note that though Breuilly (1985) describes nationalism as purely political in the three assertions of nationalism he lays out, there are many indications of nationalism’s sociocultural impact. Breuilly’s (1985) first claim is that a nation exists with clear and particular character, while the second is that the “interests and values of [a] nation take priority over all other interests and values”, aiding in the development of a national consciousness (p. 3). Lastly, the nation must be independent and at least attain political sovereignty. Breuilly’s (1985) outline of what constitutes a nation provides a base on which to understand how nationalism is subsequently built and helps cultivate a national consciousness. The focus on the system of beliefs and values from which nationalism arises ties into the discussion of the concept ideology, specifically nationalist and political ideology.

Nationalism and Gender

While nationalism wields a considerable amount of power when combined with certain ideologies, such as communism, greatly influencing the citizenry in areas such as female athletes representation in the media, it may have little impact when combined with other ideologies. According to Freedon (1998), nationalism is not a distinct dominant

ideology, like communism, but rather a “thin” ideology that takes on different characteristics depending on the distinct dominant ideology, such as communism, to which it is connected. A driving component in China’s communist ideology is nationalism, where winning medals in sporting competitions for the motherland and inciting nationalist pride, for example, is paramount to maintaining the primacy of the communist ideology. Wrapping sport in the language of nationalism is often used as a tool to promote pride in the state and the ideology under which athletes are produced. As noted earlier, China’s interpretation of their communist ideology promotes gender equality, which is evident in the country’s sporting policies and practices at the elite level. Even outside of sports, the link between strong women and a strong nation is a trend that has persisted in present-day China (Brownell, 1995; Ryang, 2000).

The literature surrounding gender and nationalism focuses on women being both the biological and social reproducers of the nation, as well as being responsible for raising children to extol the particular dominant ideological belief system in order to maintain the current political system’s dominant ideology and sense of nationalism. Women’s bodies, then, become the site of nationalist conflicts, as women are viewed as the vessel through which national culture is transmitted (Ranchod-Nilsson & Tetreault, 2000). As has been previously discussed, gender and its associated attributes have changed over time with shifts in society. Consider the Communist Revolution experienced in China, which largely sought to decimate ties to their Confucian cultural past and to begin implementing communist ideals, such as gender equality. As mentioned earlier, these efforts were not entirely successful, demonstrating that Confucianism and

the accompanying ideas surrounding gender cannot be ignored, even in the face of major social, political and ideological change.

Sport and Nationalism

Sport performs key functions in communist societies. Military preparation, increasing productivity and health and hygiene initiatives, building up international recognition, and cultivating nationalism, all contribute to the strengthening of the communist system in accordance with the state-controlled ideological design (Riordan, 1991). Not only do sports serve as a tool to build a strong and healthy society in case military action is needed to protect the motherland, for example, but sports also provide a way for the state to control the training and production of elite athletes. These athletes then go out and represent the political and ideological system under which they were produced in the international arena, in hopes of winning gold medals, all while inspiring nationalist sentiment back in the home country (Coakley, 2009). The sense of emotional unity created when watching a national team, for instance, rouses intense feelings of identification among a nation's citizens, which is at the heart of the relationship between sport and nationalism (Allison, 2005).

While there is a general familiarity with the relationship between nationalism and elite sport – recall watching the Olympics and rooting for the home country in a sport one does not regularly follow – there is a tendency to view sport as divorced from social and political phenomena, or else existing in a contained parallel environment to national politics and interests and having no consequences beyond its contained milieu (Allison

2005). Coakley (2009) states that sport aims to reaffirm national loyalty by alluding to the nation's history, traditions and place in the world order, both politically and economically. For communism in China, sport is deeply intertwined with the state's ideology and political interests. Sport, as stated previously, is a useful tool in the project of cultivating nationalism and loyalty from its citizens as well as a way to show the world the prowess of its athletes and, by extension, the primacy of its political system.

As was discussed previously, nationalism arises from the identity of individuals being in some way tied to the nation in which being a member is an inherently valuable quality. Not all citizens of a nation are elite athletes, however, and they must be incorporated into this physical culture. Sport, therefore, can be put into two categories, mass sport and elite sport, both of which work to cultivate nationalism through the shared experience of practicing sport or watching the national team compete. Mass sport epitomizes the communist ideal of building up a healthy society that is ready and able to defend the nation and its ideals. Mass sport is also typically infused with messages about the greatness of the communist system and the nation.

China had unique conditions that, when combined, allowed mass sport to take hold. For example, in a Western democracy, it is each citizen's right to decide whether or not to participate in mass sport. There may be a suggestion to get involved, but it cannot be enforced by the state. In contrast, the totalitarian communist ideological system that presides over citizens in China not only inform its citizens' social behavior but can also implement overarching policies, such as all school children doing the exact same

calisthenics in uniform rows before school and pledging allegiance to the Party leader and the state (Gordon, 2004).

In China, both mass and elite sport were used to create a healthier society, as well as improve China's international reputation. For decades – up until the mid-twentieth century – China was referred to as “The Sick Man of the Far East”. With the establishment of the new People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 came an equally new sporting culture. He Long, the head of the Ministry of Sports, determined, “We should take this label [Sick Man of the Far East] from our heads. Who is going to do this? Sport could undertake this arduous but glorious task” (Long quoted in Gu, 1997, p. 87).

Therefore, after the PRC was established, the new founding introduced an equally new sporting culture where a physical regimen for all citizens was not only encouraged but enforced. Indeed, after the Communist Party defeated the Nationalist Party, sports served as a way for the new country to express Chinese national representation and identity (Hong, 2008). Initially the All China Sports Federation was the leading sports body, later giving way to the State Physical Education and Sports Commission, commonly referred to as the Sports Ministry. Chairman Mao Zedong personally endorsed the Communist Party's ideal of equality between men and women, resulting in the Sports Ministry's initiative of organized sport for the masses as a means to build up a strong and healthy nation, improve productivity and develop a love of socialism among its citizens (Hong, 2003; Luo, 1995). In mass sport, women were the locus of nationalistic importance due to their role in bearing and raising children. In contrast, in elite sport the

communist ideal of equality and the sense of nationalism, the phrase used in sport schools of “Chinese first, woman second” epitomized the desire to put national identity first.

Gender, Sport and Nationalism

As noted, gender as an institution interacts with other institutions, including sport. Coakley (2009) asserts that research on the intersection of gender and sport typically focuses on two interrelated issues: fairness and equity, and ideology and power. Fairness and equity refers to sports participation patterns among women and girls in comparison to men and boys, gender inequities in participation opportunities and support for athletes, and finally strategies for achieving equal opportunities for women and girls. Ideology and power issues, on the other hand, refer to concepts such as the production and reproduction of gender in and through sports, the influence of gender on society and gender equity in sports, and finally, cultural and structural changes to the institution of sport that are required to achieve full gender equity in sports (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Coakley, 2009). Scholars attempting to understand the complex relationships between gender, sport, culture and power have made significant contributions to the study of gender, increasing understandings of how contemporary gender relations work (Birrell & Cole, 1994). In addition, Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault (2000) contend that it is necessary to go beyond how women are used in nationalist movements, including in sport, to “evaluate what nationalist movements do *for* as well as what they might do *to* them.” (p. 7) Evaluating not only how nationalism employs women to promote and

perpetuate the state's ideology but also understanding how women might impact nationalism, as elite athletes used to inspire nationalist pride, will be addressed later.

While many scholars who focus on gender and sport come from a Western perspective, the situation of women in sport in China is markedly different. In a state that actively points to the communist ideal of gender equality as part of their ideological doctrine and a significant feature of nationalism under communism (which promotes and rewards athletes who win gold medals regardless of gender) it would seem sportswomen in China are living in an ideal setting for the realization of gender equality in sport. Recall, however, the discussion of Confucianism and how it continues to seep through the training of athletes. Using the example of China, the development of the status of Chinese sportswomen will be discussed along with a few counterpoints to the supposed equality Chinese women are given under the state's communist ideology.

China's unique tradition in women's sport, a departure from the male-dominated athletic norm, reflects the nation's pervading communist ideology, history, subsequent policies, and the strong sense of nationalism ingrained in many of its athletes. The preferential status of women in sport in China is largely unfamiliar to Westerners who are accustomed to the historical development of sport as a male preserve (Hazelwood, 2012). In China, the impact of communism has led sport to be viewed as a tool of the state and an emblem of Chinese nationalist power rather than as a predominantly male domain. While women in Western nations were struggling to gain recognition as athletes, the Chinese have historically favored women as a means of demonstrating their nation's strength, most notably during the mid-twentieth century after the takeover of communism

in China (Dong & Riordan, 1999). China's dominant communist ideology countered Western gender stereotypes with the emphasis on women's ability to endure hardships better than men and on overwhelming nationalism, inspiring athletes' resolve to win glory for the nation who trains them (Brownell, 2008; Lewin, 2012).

To achieve gender equality that is crucial to the cause of the Chinese communist ideology, Chinese government officials have allowed women to participate in athletics indiscriminately since the PRC's, or New China's, inception. While Chinese female athletes saw great opportunity to participate in sport in New China, paradoxically predominantly male coaches believed they were easier to train due to the traditional Confucian idea that females are more obedient than males and subservient to them (Brownell, 2008). Despite the Communist Revolution pressing Confucianism out of society, hints of Confucianism continue to seep into the training of female athletes (Dong, 1999). Still, elite female athletes in China have the opportunity to participate in sport at an unprecedented level, making them vital to the government's desire to cultivate a nationalist mindset in its citizens in order to preserve the pervading communist ideology.

Historical Overview: The case of the People's Republic of China

Chinese Women in Sport

The Chinese communist ideology is based on Soviet Union's model, and similar to Soviet Russia, communism means that a single authoritarian party, the CCP, controls both the political and economic system (Hoberman, 1984). Sport too falls under government control and its significance is evident in the political undertones of how and why sport is performed and the varying emphasis on competition throughout the last half of the twentieth century. After China's Communist Revolution in the mid-twentieth century, China reconstructed many institutions and key ideologies in the communist image, including gender (Dong, 2003). To achieve gender equality, crucial to the cause of the Chinese communist ideology, Chinese government officials allowed women to participate in athletics indiscriminately. While Chinese female athletes saw great opportunity to participate in sport in New China. Despite the Communist Revolution pressing Confucianism out of the ideological framework, hints of Confucianism continue to seep into the training of female athletes (Dong, 1999). Nevertheless, female athletes in China have the opportunity to participate in sport at an unprecedented level, making them vital to the government's desire to cultivate a nationalist mindset in its citizens in order to preserve the pervading communist ideology. The absence of gender discrimination in Chinese sport indicates the rare position that Chinese sportswomen hold due to the impact of the communist ideology on sport and gender. The historical preference for

women also reflects the all-encompassing nationalist mentality, which is bolstered and reaffirmed through the communist ideology, as well as the utilization of the influence of the trace amount of Confucianism in the Chinese sporting mentality.

It is important to note that before the Communist Revolution, however, China was introduced to European ideas of nationalism in the late nineteenth century, often via Japan. The Chinese intellectuals, statesmen, and constitutional reformers of the time denounced Confucian ethics and superstition and argued that China's weakness in its recent history was due to the physical weakness of Chinese women (Brownell, 1995). Continuing into the beginning half of the twentieth century, reformers saw "oppressed Chinese women" as a symbol of China's weakness as a nation. Physical education and sports for women, therefore, became inextricably linked with building a strong nation and the Chinese nationalist ideology (Brownell, 2008).

From the beginning of the PRC, therefore, Chinese nationalist ideology intertwined with the concept of gender and greatly influenced sport policy throughout the latter half of the twentieth century (Morris, 2004). The unique status that women's sport possesses in China developed through the historical context of China's establishment as the PRC, the Great Leap Forward campaign, the Cultural Revolution, and its present trajectory. It is clear then that the communist ideology has promulgated the goals of the Chinese government to, above all, bring glory to the Chinese nation, which has been a prime factor in the ascendancy of women's sport. It is important to note that the underlying motives throughout China's recent sporting history elucidate the goals of the

Chinese government and governing sport bodies to bring glory to the Chinese nation no matter what the human cost.

The establishment of the PRC in 1949 included an equally new sporting culture. Indeed, after the Communists defeated the Nationalists, sports served as a way for the new country to express Chinese national representation and identity (Hong, 2008). Chairman Mao Zedong viewed sport as a tool for ideological education and a way to develop a national consciousness. Through strenuous physical exercise, Mao believed the national spirit would be awakened, and the development of a strong spirit of national unity would strengthen communist China (Speak. 1999).

Along with mass sport, the Party's concern at the onset of New China, as the communist state was referred to, extended to women's participation in sport. Hong (2003) notes, "[W]omen formed one of the most underdeveloped of China's resources, [therefore] women's bodies became one of the most crucial elements in the cause of the revolution." (Hong, 2003, p. 227) In fact, as Hong (2003) goes on to explain, "one of the main aims of the sports movement was to encourage more women to participate in physical exercise." (p. 225) The basis behind promoting women in sport was that the healthier the women, the healthier the future generations. Speak (1999) agrees, stating that women would be able to produce stronger offspring if they were able to practice calisthenics and other physical exercises. Further, due to the notion that all Chinese citizens had an obligation to participate in the re-construction and defense of the New China, women took up sports in large numbers in order to create a strong and healthy China, bolstering and reaffirming the Chinese nationalist and communist ideology.

Moreover, as Dong (2003) emphasizes, Chinese women “outstripped Western women in terms of equal opportunities in organized sport,” because at this time female athletes world-wide were vastly under-represented internationally, lagging behind men in terms of skill development in many sports (p. 13). In New China, however, women experienced equal opportunity to participate in sport due to the CCP’s ideological priority on equality and the nationalistic emphasis, which also afforded them equal facilities and training opportunities (Daprano, Hill, Shaheen & Titlebaum, 2009).

Competitive sport was not a primary concern of the Party at this time, taking a back seat to domestic development. Indeed, though China had been a member of the International Olympic Committee since 1923 and sent few athletes, as a diplomatic gesture, it was not until later in the twentieth century under communist ideology that competitive sport would become the Party’s main focus (Jones, 1999; Speak, 1999). As Western sports became more popular in China and as women’s participation in sport in the mid-twentieth century grew, the Chinese government began to recognize the power that Chinese sportswomen’s performances had on the international level both as a means of inspiring intense national sentiments as well as providing symbols of communist China’s prowess beyond its borders.

The Great Leap Forward (GLF) campaign, launched in 1957 by Chairman Mao, saw the onset of the elite sports system in China. It is important to note that the GLF had detrimental effects on Chinese society outside of sports, including between sixteen and thirty million premature deaths due to famine (Li & Yang, 2005). Sports, however, flourished during the GLF. The Sports Ministry’s response to the government campaign

was the establishment of the Sports Great Leap Forward initiative (Hong, 2003; Hong, 2008). Women were also prioritized during the GLF as part of the Sports Ministry's continual bid to build-up a strong nation as well as an first push toward elite sport. The Sports Ministry's GLF initially continued the trend of mass sport, but in 1961 the Ministry decided to channel its finite resources into the development of future champions, leading to the construction of sports schools, which today number around three thousand throughout China (Hong, 2003; Lim, 2008).

The goal of the Sports Ministry in the promotion of elite sport was to catch up to the world's best competitive sports countries in ten years through intensive training regimes that started potential star athletes in a given sport at a young age (Hong, 2008). Hong (2003) writes that the government's prioritization of elite women's sports was due to the Sports Ministry's observation that Chinese women's elite sports performances were drastically lower in comparison to the international standard, even though they received equal opportunity. To solve this skill level discrepancy, professional teams were told to recruit and train female athletes in larger numbers to catch up.

There is, however, some variation among scholars as to the reasons why women were the focus of the Sports Ministry. Hong (2003) attributes women's prioritization to the push to raise the standards of Chinese women in sport to the international level. Further, Hong (2003) connects women's high participation in sports to the Party's desire to show off elite sportswomen as evidence of gender equality and as an example of the superior communist ideology. However, Dong (2003) emphasizes that Chinese women were more similar to their international counterparts in regards to height and weight,

whereas the Chinese men were shorter and lighter, affording Chinese women greater competitive potential. Xu (2008) reiterates Dong's belief that the motives to gain national pride trumped the desire of the Party to display gender equality in New China. Xu (2008) observes:

At this point [during the GLF], the winning of gold medals, the raising of the national flag, and the sounding of the national anthem at awards ceremonies were considered essential to China's rise as a nation and its prestige in the world. (p. 73)

Both scholars agree, however, that the development of female athletes was essential in showing the superiority of the communist ideology, and that the glory that came with winning could not have been achieved without hard training (Hong 2003). For such reasons as these, the Party encouraged thousands of girls and women to develop their sporting talents through government-run sports schools (Hong, 2008).

The GFL saw a distinct end in 1966 with a strong movement to reinstitute a "pure" communist state. The period of 1966 to 1976 was known as the Cultural Revolution and aimed to denounce all capitalist and bourgeois powers. The Revolution was defined by an Orwellian "1984" atmosphere in which Chairman Mao encouraged girls and boys, men and women, young and old, to hold each other accountable in upholding the communist ideals. Sport initially came under attack as a result of this exhortation, as elite athletes began to be viewed as favorites and members of the bourgeoisie in their specialized, government-sponsored training facilities. During this period, young people were prevented from developing their talent and coaches lost their

futures; the entire physical education system shut down (Jones, 1999). In addition, because “pure” communism does not support competition, the element of competition in sports was increasingly eliminated (Dong, 2003). From 1971 on, however, China began competing again, but only with other countries that shared its political ideology. The severe funding cut for elite sport programs was a setback in the Sports Ministry’s goals for China to become a top sporting country (Dong, 2003; Whitby, 1999).

Sports, however, would later come to play a vital role in the Cultural Revolution as a reflection of the communist ideology that everyone is equal and is able to succeed if they work hard. Within this framework, gender equality was forcefully promoted to counteract the deep-seated discrimination against women in greater society. Chairman Mao reiterated this stating, “Times have changed, and women and men are equal. Whatever men can accomplish women can as well” (Mao cited in Dong 2003, p. 81). Women were encouraged to behave and dress like men, and this, in turn, strongly and positively affected the attitudes toward women in sport (Dong, 2003). While recognizing the issues associated with “male” being set as the gender-neutral, sportswomen in China benefitted from the new pure communist ideological emphasis on women’s emancipation in greater society as the “local and national government and sports bodies provid[ed] equal opportunities, in terms of finance, coaching and training to young girls who had sports talent and a worker-peasant-soldier background.” (Hong, 2003, p. 230) Although athletes had to recite Chairman Mao’s words before and after each training session and competition, sport was available for all women in all sectors of society if they showed athletic promise and potential to bring glory to the motherland (Dong, 2003).

China's re-entry into the international elite sports arena came in 1969 with the end of Cultural Revolution's more destructive "Orwellian" phase (Dong, 2003). As previously mentioned, monetary investment in sports had fallen drastically in the early years of the Cultural Revolution due to the belief that elite sports signified a bourgeoisie mentality. Starting in 1969, however, funding for sport quickly grew and women's sports began to improve rapidly.

The slogan "friendship first, competition second" was widely used in China during the Cultural Revolution (Xu, 2008, p. 72). Another slogan hung in every sports school and training hall reading, "Win glories for the motherland." (Dong, 2003, p. 87) These contradictory messages can be attributed to the tight political control on athletics at a time when athletes were meant to act one way but think another. Athletes were ambassadors and represented China's communist ideology. They had to act according to the will of the Party to serve its political ends. Used as political tools, sportswomen and sportsmen were rewarded for sacrifices made to improve relations with other countries, which involved both befriending and beating their opponents. The first slogan regarding friendship implied that friendliness to competitors was paramount in bringing goodwill to the country, as athletes were trained that, no matter what the result, they should keep smiling and be amiable. Saving face was a large part of the Chinese friendship strategy because even if they lost they were able to claim some sort of superiority over their opponent. In spite of this smiling veneer, even when losing, winning glories for the Chinese state remained the primary, if covert, goal (Dong, 2003).

The early years of the Cultural Revolution, with its disapproval of competitive elite sport, resulted in a shortage of young athletes. This led to the “training brigade for young athletes,” in which students were recruited by sports schools and trained to rapidly make up for the lost time in China’s participation in the international sports arena (Dong 2003, p. 88). The intensive training favored during the Great Leap Forward returned to the scene of Chinese sport. A shining example was the Hunan provincial women’s gymnastics team. The team trained three hundred and thirty-five days a year, and each week they trained nearly sixty-two hours. The result was a national championship in 1972 and domination in Chinese gymnastics throughout the following decades, although it should be noted that many of the young women did suffer serious injuries as a result of their intensive training (Dong, 2003). Rigorous training continues to be a crucial part of the production of Chinese athletes and, in the decades following Chairman Mao’s death in 1976, such strenuous conditioning, coupled with other incentives, unleashed China’s immense sporting potential, a tradition that would later turn into its dominance on the international sporting scene.

Another set back to China’s plans to achieve sporting dominance was the introduction of the One Child policy adopted in 1979. The policy negatively affected the number of young people involved in sport. Particularly in cities, parents focused all of their energies, hopes and aspirations on their single child (Dong, 2003). Parents hoped their children might be able to achieve what they had failed to accomplish and have everything that was unavailable to them during the Cultural Revolution. As a result, the emergence of “little emperor syndrome” came about where spoiled children could not

handle the hard work required for success in sports. Parents wanted the best for their children, but also wanted to make their lives comfortable. Dong (2003) notes that due to this phenomenon few parents encouraged their children to participate in sports and only two percent of parents during this time wanted their child to become a sports star. The number of students enrolled in the spare-time sports schools also dramatically declined going from around three hundred thousand in 1977 to just over two hundred thousand in 1984 (McElroy, 2000). The desire for parents to create a comfortable life for their one child in addition to overfeeding and lack of physical exercise led to the prevalence of obese children (Dong, 2003). The One Child policy and the resulting “little emperor syndrome” threatened to further reduce the talent for future elite athletes beyond the damage done during the Cultural Revolution.

Chairman Mao’s death ended the chaotic fundamental communist era. The Party began embracing pragmatic economic and social reforms, which also had a dramatic effect on elite sports (Dong, 2003). China’s years under Mao had severed many international ties, both sporting and economic. When Deng Xiaoping took over the Party in 1976, he initiated many economic reformations that aimed to accelerate China’s development and catch up with the West (Hong, 2003). By 1984, China’s economy was booming, and by 1990 the gross national income had risen by 149.35 percent since 1978 (Dong, 2003). The new economic prosperity allowed for more resources to be channeled toward the development of elite sport.

Sport also became a renewed source of diplomacy for the modernizing nation. The early success of the women’s volleyball team at the World Volleyball

Championships in 1979, followed by a series of subsequent victories, made sports “an immediate window to the world, through which China’s changing image was reflected.” (Dong, 2003, 97) The success of the Chinese women’s volleyball team gave the nation a taste of international success and, as a result, a massive wave of patriotism swept the country, bolstering the nationalist ideology promoted by the government (Dong, 2003). Party officials, encouraged by prosperity and the success of elite sport, supported the construction of new and improved sport facilities, which ultimately “provided the basis for the steady Chinese advance on the world sporting scene.” (Dong, 2003, p. 98) Chinese sportswomen were highlighted as representatives of the new Chinese nation, demanding the attention of the whole world. Hong (2003) writes:

In 1981 the State Council announced that the whole nation should learn from women athletes and use their spirit in sport to create a new face of socialist modernization and reconstruction. Women athletes are not only models for new Chinese women but also for new Chinese men (pp. 232-233).

Chinese female athletes were increasingly recognized for their ability to succeed on the international stage. The government put a halt to the majority of the mass sport campaigns and instead emphasized elite sport training. In addition, the Sports Ministry created the Olympic Strategy in 1984, which aimed to achieve international sports supremacy by winning a lot of (gold) medals, with extra emphasis placed on the success of female athletes (Hong, 2003). Their slogan, “friendship first, competition second”, also disappeared with the onset of a medal focused China and was replaced with a new slogan, “Break out of Asia, advance onto the world.” (Xu, 2008, p. 197)

Chinese sportswomen played a vital role in the Olympic Strategy and achieved excellent results, winning medals at a consistently high rate. From the Strategy's inception in 1984, the budget for elite sports rose dramatically, and the government funneled resources into the sponsorship of Olympic sports that were most likely to produce medals at the Olympic Games, providing equal funding for women in sports perceived to win medals for China (Dong, 2003). Even though the overall number of athletes decreased between 1979 and 1992, the percentage of female athletes increased, demonstrating the priority of women in the pursuit of Olympic success (Dong, 2003). Between 1984 and 1992 Chinese female athletes won fifty-eight percent of the gold medals won by China at the summer Olympics, while women won all of the winter Olympic medals in those years (Dong & Riordan, 1999). Of course, many Chinese women benefitted from the special treatment allocated to those participating in sports supported by the Olympic Strategy.

Sportswomen's prestige in the eyes of the government did not discernibly influence the status of women in society. While the Chinese communist ideology preaches gender equality, the forceful implementation of equality throughout society faded after Mao's death, allowing Confucian ideas of gender roles to seep back into society. It is unclear, therefore, whether female athletes' impact made gender equality more of a society-wide priority, or if sportswomen were simply valued because of their medal winning potential. Dong (2003) quotes Luo Ping, a professor of sociology in Wuhan University in Hubei province, who holds up sportswomen as an important factor

in improving the status of women in China but also adds that women are valuable because of their medal winning ability. Ping explains:

The state and government give close attention and full support to women's sport. Without a doubt, the present performances of Chinese women in international sports arenas have contributed to the general promotion of Chinese women's status in society. I always say provocatively in my lectures: "Who dares to look down on Chinese women? Do it if you do not want gold medals!" (Ping cited in Dong, 2003, p. 107)

Though female athletes undoubtedly played a role in the push for gender equality in Chinese society, remnants of nationalist and Maoist thought nevertheless persisted in the government. As such, sportswomen continued to be viewed as Chinese first and women second. Female athletes were therefore prized because of their ability to win medals for the nation. Ping reiterates this idea, stressing that by supporting women in sports all of China benefits.

Female athletes exemplify the Maoist ideal in which the nation, the greater self, comes before the smaller self, the individual, and where all sacrifices made by the successful individual deserve respect and reward (Dong, 2003). Such rewards for successful performance in sport are not new to China. Social mobility through sports has been an important aspect in the nationalized sports-system model. The opportunities that await a successful athlete play a very big role in motivating parents to place their children in sports schools. In the early years of New China, there were few sports schools and many female athletes began training when they were fully-grown. At this time, athletes

were also given a job after their athletic careers were over, “thus providing them with a secure future.” (Dong, 2003, p. 182) In 1979, with the reinstatement of the elite sports, a pyramid style system of developing athletes began with spare-time sports schools and ended, for a select few, with training at the national team level. Over three-thousand spare-time schools are currently spread throughout the country, with more than one hundred and fifty thousand selected students attending each (Brownell, 1995; Whitby, 1999).

With the reinstatement of the elite system, athletes who won gold medals began receiving material and economic rewards. While rewards were given to both female and male athletes for good performances, it is interesting to note, “female athletes seemed to have lower class origins than their male counterparts in terms of the economic status of both their fathers and mothers.” (Dong, 2003, p. 182) This trend may have stemmed from the fear that, since gender equality in society remained and remains an issue, women from the lower class may have less of a chance of making a living. This fear then influences parents of females to view sports as a way for their daughters to improve their lives. An example comes from one of China’s most successful female artistic gymnasts, Cheng Fei. After winning six world championship gold medals and one Olympic gold, Cheng was rewarded with the equivalent of \$150,000 in cash plus bonuses for each gold medal. Further, her family received a house on behalf of the government for her accomplishments (Barboza, 2008). Such monetary benefits of sport are alluring, especially for parents who are looking to raise their family’s socioeconomic status.

Chinese sportswomen have undoubtedly benefitted from the nationalistic mindset in terms of the opportunity to participate in sport, spurred on by their medal winning potential, which has been heavily capitalized on by the government. Another factor altogether that adds to women's high participation in sport in China is the utilization of traditional Confucian thought concerning women. Indeed, female athletes are thought to be better able to endure the hardships of training because women are meant to take on and deal with the difficulties of being a woman under Confucianism. Riordan and Dong (1999) write, "Women are socialized from childhood to be obedient, particularly to men; and since most head coaches are men, female athletes rarely violate regulations and schedules laid down by male coaches." (p. 174)

Coupled with the Confucian influence on female athletes, there was a strong belief among Chinese elite trainers that women could train harder than men (Brownell, 2008). Brownell (2008) cites Ma Junren's athletes, so named the "Ma Family Soldiers" because of their astonishing long-distance running abilities (p. 117). Ma coached a team of hand-picked female long-distance runners, specifically chosen from a "peasant" stock because, according to Ma, they were used to enduring difficulties and would therefore be able to endure running a marathon a day at high altitudes. This sentiment was reiterated by the deputy secretary-general of the Chinese Association of Sports medicine explaining, "The Chinese female athletes can withstand hardships better than men." (Brownell, 2008, p. 117) This assertion stemmed from the idea that, because the communist ideology emphasized gender equality, Chinese sportswomen were blind to the issue of gender hierarchy, which was prevalent in most Western sporting traditions where women often

felt they had to train harder to prove their worth as athletes. Chinese sportswomen, therefore, did not train harder than men in order to compensate for their social inferiority, but rather to win gold for the motherland (Lewin, 2012).

There is little evidence against this claim of women's inherent penchant towards submission to men. One exception comes from He Zhili who was the women's table tennis world champion in 1987. She won the world title by refusing her coach's orders to purposefully lose to her teammate, which was a strategy devised to guarantee Chinese dominance in world table tennis. Her actions defied the norms of a female athlete's obedience to her coach. In addition, she was seen as putting her individual desires before the national and collective interest. The government heavily criticized He and she subsequently lost her chance to compete in major tournaments, eventually moving to Japan in 1989 (Dong, 2003). Despite the strong actions of He and the example of individual initiative that she provides, she remains one exception to a norm that left many young female athletes with a socially conditioned aptitude for hard work and obedience, reinforced through the "philosophical traditions of Confucianism." (Riordan & Dong, 1999, p. 174) While the government attempted to rid China of Confucianism and replace it with the beliefs and values of communism, including gender equality, it continued to manifest in the training of female athletes, which, while physically and psychologically damaging in some cases, continues to produce high caliber female athletes (Barboza, 2008).

In the 1990s and on through the 2012 London Olympic Games, Chinese female athletes have been well represented on Olympic delegations and have continued winning

medals (Olympic, 2012). Indeed, in the 1993 track and field world championships in Stuttgart, Germany, six Chinese women dominated the long-distance events, winning six of the nine available medals. Shortly after in China's Eighth National Games in Beijing, seven female runners shattered the world records in all three long-distance running events. The Chinese sports world praised the world record-winning runners for attracting the world's attention and demonstrating China's contribution and growing dominance in world sports (Brownell, 2008).

While success at international competitions remained a high priority and women continued to win medals at a higher rate than men, the 1990s in China saw a loosening of the state controlled sport system as market forces began to affect female athletes. The equal financial resources given to both men's and women's sports in China began to shift in the mid-1990s with the commercialization of men's sports teams, particularly soccer and basketball. Women's team sports were not deemed to have the same money earning potential, even though the women's teams were in the top five in the world, while men's were not (Brownell, 2008). The argument for this capitalist-style professionalization was to improve Chinese men's potential to win Olympic gold medals. Chinese women still benefitted from state sponsorship and continued winning medals. The slackening of state control on athletes allowed for some highly successful Chinese athletes to escape the rigorous training regimes and living conditions and turn to opportunities arising from the growing commercialization of sport in China. Although the capitalist-style professionalization became more prominent in the mid 1990s, state sponsorship continues

to support sport schools and national training centers while nationalistic sentiments fueled the desire for more medals and athletic prowess.

The 2008 Olympic Games were held in Beijing, China. Beijing's winning bid to host the 2008 Games was a victory for the Chinese as it provided them an opportunity to welcome the world and stand as a respected nation in the global community (Xu, 2008). The state looked to use sport as it had throughout the years – as a representation of the nation's strength and progress. The Chinese were well aware of the link between sporting events and national pride and between international prestige and worldview. Morris (2004) points to the significance of China's success in sport writing, "Today, the medals won and records set by Chinese athletes in Olympic and other international competitions are understood as unquestionable proof of China's superpower status in the world and of the ruling Chinese Communist Party's hegemony within the PRC." (p. 244) Nationalism and a desire to prove the success of China's communist system, therefore, was key in producing successful Games as well as successful athletes. The pressure to win medals, especially gold medals, was high during the preparation of athletes before and during the Games. China sent the largest athlete delegation with six hundred and thirty nine members and also sat at the top of the leader board with a total of fifty-one gold medals. Women earned fifty-three percent of the gold medals and fifty-seven percent of the overall medals won by China, along with setting five Olympic records, again dominating the medals won for China (Olympic, 2012).

In summary, the history of China's communist policies aimed at promoting women's sports to inspire nationalist sentiment, while at points utilizing deeply ingrained

Confucian gender roles as a tactic to produce female athletes. According to the enduring nationalistic attitudes held in China today, athletes who sacrifice for their country are to be praised and rewarded. Since women have been the focus of New China's sports policies, they have sacrificed the most and, as a result, won the most. The impact of the Chinese communist ideology has greatly influenced women's participation in sport, where the use of female athletes to bolster a nationalist agenda served to maintain the existing communist-nationalist ideology. In the following section, a brief history of media in China since 1949 will explain how many of the policies in this last section impacted the media.

Media in the Peoples Republic of China

After the CCP came into power in 1949, China was propelled by a series of ideologically driven movements, including "Thought Reform" from 1951-52 followed by the GLF campaign and then the Cultural Revolution. Media played a major role for the CCP, including the establishment of a Department of Propaganda. Indeed, the principles of Party journalism in China was a result of the influence of the Soviet model, Marxist-Leninism, and from the CCP's interpretations of Lenin's view of the function of the communist press (Chan & Qiu, 2002). Where Lenin stated newspapers should be "collective propagandist...[and] also a collective organizer of the masses."(Lenin, 1901, p. 17) Mao elaborated by arguing news agencies should function as "propagandists of the Party's policies." (Mao quoted in Xin, 2012, p. 38) This line of thinking continues to inform the relationship between the central government and the media, though, as will be

discussed, rapid marketization and commercialization in the late 1980's may have an impact on the direct link between the Party and the media.

Returning to the early 1950's, the CCP employed Lenin's ideas that in order for newspapers to be a Party propagandist organ, it must make all its contents embody the Party's view while, at the same time, educating people, raising their consciousness and guiding them to be good communists. The Party viewed itself as representing the interests of the people and, within this ideological construct, since the media are the mouthpiece of the Party the media also represents the views of the people (Zhao, 1998). Mao defined the function and duty of newspapers stating:

The role and power of newspapers consists in their ability to bring the Party program, the Party line, the Party's general and specific policies, its tasks and methods of work before the people in the quickest and most extensive way... Your [journalists] job is to educate the people, to let them know their own interest, their own tasks and the Party's general and specific policies. (Mao quoted in Zhao, 1998, p. 25)

The use of the media to communicate not only the policies but also the ideology imbued within the policies, indicates the Party's control on the news media and the persistence of ideological control through media..

In 1949, several news outlets existed but only one was deemed the legitimate national news agency in China, The Red China News Agency, or Xinhua News Agency as it was referred to post-1949. Xinhua served, and continues to serve, as both the most pervasive mouthpiece of the Party and as an example for other media outlets (Xin, 2012).

By 1954 there were one hundred and fifty one Party newspapers in addition to over fifty special interest newspapers (aimed at workers, farmers, youths, etc.) (Zhao, 1998). The CCP's control and subsequent propaganda increased during the GLF movement between 1954-66, in which the media, like the party, became increasingly divorced from the people. The news reports demonstrated this by the reporting of outlandish achievements made by the Party and high economic outputs – solidifying the status of the news media as a central tool of Mao's movement (Zhao, 1998). The Cultural Revolution brought about an even stricter control of the media, with all of the special interest newspapers ceasing publication in addition to several Party newspapers. While Red Guard tabloids, a publication beginning in 1967 that propagated the desire to return to pure communism, Mao Zedong Thought, flourished, only forty-three regular newspapers existed in all of China in 1967 (Zhao, 1998). It was only after the death of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution did the Party indicate that this deeply restrictive period in China was a deviation and a period when the press was not under the leadership of the Party, but in the hands of a few individuals in pursuit of power, Mao's wife Jiang Qing, for instance (Zhao, 1998). This dark period of Chinese journalism ultimately fueled the movement toward media reform in the post-Cultural Revolution era beginning in the late 1970's.

Prior to the economic reforms in the late 1970's in China, however, the dominant framework for analyzing Chinese media was an authoritarian media model characterized by mass propaganda (Chang, Chen & Zhang, 1993). In this model, the Chinese news media are tightly controlled instruments where the Party uses various forms of media to propagate its goals and promote changes in the attitudes and behavior of the people in the

early 1950's and 1960's. The Party's own conception of the media as its mouthpiece provided further evidence to support this interpretation. Within this model, the concept of ideology is narrowly defined as a set of comprehensive, totalizing dogmas, i.e., Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, while the ideological process is seen as a process of intentional political propaganda and indoctrination.

Despite the Party's continuing control on the news media and the persistence of old patterns of ideological control during the reform era, the mass propaganda and persuasion model is becoming increasingly inadequate. A growing body of literature has persuasively documented that the news media are moving away from the Party's political and ideological indoctrination. Lee (1990) captures this change with three main points. First, while Mao ensured that state influence and radical revolutionary ideology pervaded every domain of social life, the state is now less intrusive. Second, the post-Mao regime's relative de-emphasis on ideology has made it possible for various cultural genres and less ideologically loaded materials to surface in the media. Third, while Mao repeatedly launched mass mobilization campaigns to pursue his ideological vision as well as to bolster his own power, his successors have encouraged the media "to focus on promoting economic modernization instead of class struggle," leaving China "far less totalistic in the ideological arena." (Lee, 1990)

Since the launching of the reform in the late 1970's, China experienced increased commercialization and marketization in the media. The network of Party and non-Party newspapers returned, including English-language newspapers and by the mid-1980's the total number of non-Party papers exceeded the official Party organs, though these papers

do not constitute an independent public sphere – they are all ultimately subject to Party control (Zhao, 1998). Of the nearly 1,008 newly established newspapers between 1980 and 1985, only 103 were Party newspapers. However, the Party newspapers continued to dominate the press through frequency of publication and number of employees. By the end of the 1980's Xinhua News Agency was the largest news organization (which changed its official affiliation from the Party to the state after the 1949 revolution), *People's Daily* is the organ of the Party Central Committee and Central People's Radio (CPR) China Central Television (CCTV) are monopolies. These four news outlets top the Chinese news hierarchy and all central to the concept that underlies the Party's domination over the media, the "Party principle" (Zhao, 1998). Zhao (1998) summarizes the three basic components: "The news media must accept the Party's guiding ideology as its own; that they must propagate the Party's programs, policies, and directives; and that they must accept the Party's leadership and stick to the Party's organizational principles and press policies." (p. 19)

The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh National Party Congress in 1978, a significant and historic meeting that ushered in Chairman Deng Xiaoping's economic reform and open door policy, explicitly reasserted the use of media as a mouthpiece of the party (Zhao, 1998). The emphasis on propaganda for economic prosperity did not replace the political propaganda, but rather supplemented it. Since that time it has been argued by scholars that the increase in commercialization has not reduced the Party's hold on the media, but rather the Party's control has become subtler.

There are various interpretations of the implications of China's approach to development and the directions of political, economic, and social reforms. While the trajectory of Chinese media model continues to evolve, the official Chinese line has remained consistent over the past few decades: China is firmly on the path of building "socialism with Chinese characteristics" or developing a "socialist market economy," and a media model to sustain it (Zhao, 1998).

Returning to research question 1:

- 1) What are the connections between elite female athletes' newspaper media representation, the institution of sport and Chinese media's role in maintaining the Party's ideological hegemony through nationalist sentiment?

This first section has largely addressed this question and provided insight into the connection between elite female athletes and the CCP's ideological agenda. In addition, the use of media by the CCP indicates that the sport/media complex, particularly focusing on elite female athletes, may be important ideological apparatuses for the Party-state, where the coverage of female athletes in the media perpetuate the dominant ideology in society propagated by the CCP. Indeed, within the context of China, the use of sport and the media serve to sustain Party domination. It is within this context that the institution of sport, and elite sport and the media, may serve to sustain Party dominance and as a crux in sustaining the ideological hegemony. The nationalized sport system and production of elite athletes remains under the control of the government, serving to reinforce, albeit discreetly, the nationalist sentiments and reinforce the Party's ideological hegemony.

Representation of Female Athletes in the Media

The first part of the literature review will cover previous research on female athletes' representation in the media. Scholars have primarily studied media coverage of female athletes in Western countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, through the use of content analysis in print and television media. The two main focus areas have been on the amount of coverage and the quality of that coverage. Along with the focus on difference making through sport, scholars have also teased apart the different feminist orientations women's sports advocates use when considering the depiction of female athlete in the sports/media complex (Hardin & Whiteside, 2013).

A brief note on the term Western - Western originally had a geographic relevance, referring to cultures of western Europe. With the expansion of Western culture to former European colonies the term now includes the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, among others. The contemporary meaning of Western is imbued with cultural connotations of those countries with substantial European ancestral populations and cultural influences. Recognizing that there are cultural nuances taking place, the findings across Western news sources reflect a similar historical background where sport developed as a male domain and a bastion for the production and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity.

Western Media

The mass media creates, transmits and preserves significant cultural information (Bernstein, 2002). Indeed, Betterton (1987) notes the power of media to organize the ways in which society comes to understand gender relations and build consensus around what it means to be female and male. Combine the media's influential gender producing and gender affirming system with the institution of sport, which is both a difference and power producing system, and the resulting message is that sport is a male activity in which women play a subordinate and/or objectified role (Bernstein, 2002; Birrell & Cole, 1990). The sport/media complex's continual framing of female athletes in this way serves to stress certain aspects of female athletes over others, namely those believed to be of most interest and important to the desired audience (Palmeri, 2001).

In much of the literature on female athletes representation in Western media sources, the social construction of difference, where females and femininity are constructed and perceived as "other than" males and masculinity, often means that women are also constructed as "less than" men (Duncan, 1990). The representation of female athletes in sexual or passive poses serves to reify female athletes' "otherness" and continue to perpetuate the idea of women's "difference" in the context of sports (Hardin & Whiteside, 2013). The differential media portrayals actively serve the interests of one group, men, over another, women, and connotes a manifestation of inherent male superiority (Bernstein, 2002). Additionally, the descriptors used and linguistic practices in the media, both print and broadcast, reinforce existing gender-based status differences. This is done through the consistent articulation of male as athlete and the marginalization

of female athletes as “other”, which feeds the dominant discourse and upholds the ruling ideology of hegemonic masculinity in sport (Billings, 1999; Greer, Hardin & Homan, 2009; Kian et al., 2008; Pfister, 1989; Vincent, 2004). The pervasiveness of this dominant ideology in sport works to cultivate an adherence to a set of cultural values and beliefs, which directs activity toward the maintenance of the existing gender order, which continues to be reflected in the literature based on Western media sources (Mannheim, 1936, xxi).

In many cases the research analyzes the differential media treatment as well as the construction of difference between male and female athletes in sports (Birrell & Cole, 1990; Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Kane & Parks, 1992; Kane & Snyder, 1989; Willis, 1982). Sabo and Jansen (1992) note, “The skills and strengths of women athletes are often devalued in comparison to dominant cultural standards of male athletic excellence, which emphasize the cultural equivalents of hegemonic masculinity: power, self-control, success, agency, and aggression.” (p. 176) Presenting gender differences as biological or natural depicts males in the athletic context as “natural,” reinforcing the ideological system of hegemonic masculinity in sport as well as strengthening the patriarchal ideology in the larger social order in many Western countries (Reynaud, 1981). This is an example of “doing gender” in a way that naturalizes biological essentialism.

Previous scholarship on media representations of women’s sports and female athletes tends to focus on two main issues: the amount of coverage and the type of coverage, a majority of which has been focused on media in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. The patterns that continue to emerge from the research shows

female athletes and women's sport receive 2% of television coverage and averaged 2% in the print media (Cooky, Messner & Hextrum, 2013; Packer et al., 2014).

This is particularly startling since the rapid increase in girls and women's participation in sport and physical activity in the United States since the inception of Title IX in 1972, indicating the media has yet to catch up with the times (Coakley, 2009). When female athletes are shown in the media, however, they are often in non-action positions, reflecting stereotypical views of feminine ideals and are sexualized – ultimately serving to “trivialize or downgrade the seriousness and importance of women's sports” (Kane, 1989, 58; Knight & Giuliano, 2001). This is in addition to the descriptors used in the media that often diminishes female athletes' athletic abilities by focusing on their physical appearance and emphasizing their femininity; in other words, not focusing on their accomplishments or status as athletes (Cooky, et al., 2013; George et al., 2001; Godoy-Pressland, 2014; Kane & Parks, 1992).

A majority of scholars conclude that the underrepresentation of female athletes in both print and broadcast television media implies that they are non-existent in sport or of little importance when they are represented. This creates a false impression and denies the reality of women's athleticism and the growth in women's sports participation (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). Often justified by media outlets claiming to “show viewers what they want to see,” this underrepresentation in the media effectively ignores the vicious circle of the media's lack of coverage and the growth of women's sport because of insufficient funds (Cooky et al. 2013). This denial of coverage, in Gramscian terms, can

be read as a denial of power for female athletes, where they are constructed as unimportant by their failure to secure visibility (Wright & Clark, 1999).

This body of literature spans from the United Kingdom, to Canada and the United States with a few studies conducted in European countries as well as in Australia (Capranica & Aversa, 2002; Phillips, 1997). The conclusions drawn, however, are strikingly similar. With little variation, male athletes are typically presented in ways that emphasize their physical and athletic ability while female athletes, as noted before, are presented in ways that highlight their physical attractiveness and femininity. In addition, when female athletes are shown there are fewer representations of team or individual ‘masculine’ sports (Jones et al., 1999; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). Davis and Tuggle (2012) found that for NBC’s broadcast of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, 97% of the women’s events shown consisted of the six “socially acceptable” sports, including gymnastics and swimming, finding that NBC presented a highly gendered version of sport to its viewers.

Recent research, however, shows a shift towards more respectful representation of female athletes and women’s sports, though this is argued to be a function of small media markets or niche markets where women’s sports are the focus (Kane & Buysse, 2005; Cooky et al. 2013; McKay & Dalliere, 2009). Despite the growth of women’s sport, longitudinal research conducted on broadcast media coverage indicates the sport media are symbolically marginalizing women’s sports and the coverage is, in fact, declining (Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan & Messner, 2005; Messner, Duncan & Cooky, 2003; Messner, Duncan & Wachs, 1996). In the United States, Title IX reinforced an

ideological shift regarding women's capability in sport, largely due to the women's movement. Despite this, the amount of media coverage has increased little and the content of this coverage has shifted only slightly post-Title IX. Messner (1988) and others indicate that the media continue to resist any fundamental challenge to male dominance in sport, regardless of the growth of women's sport and the need for the media to alter its coverage is crucial to reflect reality.

The critiques of Western traditions of media coverage analysis are few, though relevant to this thesis. While several authors clearly define what they mean by sport and embed their analysis in the context from which they offered critiques, many scholars' arguments that sport is a male dominated institution or as a place where men's power and privilege over women is naturalized, are based on Western notions of sport as a male domain. While the Western construction of sport and its relationship to gender may hold true in other parts of the world, it must be placed under a critical lens when looking at different countries and cultural contexts. This is imperative when scholars are analyzing representation of female athletes in the media because if the understanding of gender and sport does not function as it does in the United States and other Western countries previously discussed, the analysis may be working off irrelevant categories and structures

Representation of Women in Chinese Media

The past three decades have shown a tremendous growth in research on media representation of female athletes—both amateur and elite—in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and several other Western market-based medias. There is, however, a

notable lack of research on the media representation of elite East Asian female athletes in their home countries, at least published in English (Jollimore, 2002; Knight & Giuliano, 2001; Knight & Giuliano, 2003; Shugart, 2003; Vincent, 2000; Vincent et al., 2002; Yu, 2009).

Media representations of women have been studied extensively over the past five decades, as evidenced by the last section, with a large body of research focusing on the representation of sportswomen in Western market-based media systems. While analysis of media representations of sportswomen in East Asian countries remains largely absent, save a select few scholarly articles (Lee, 2009; Yu, 2009), there is a growing body of literature on the media representation of women in East Asia (Luo & Hao, 2007). Indeed, studies on gender and media content can be traced back to the early 1960's (Carter & Steiner, 2003). Friedan (1963), the first feminist who did a content analysis of popular women's magazines in the United States, argued that the articles, fiction, and advertising in the women's magazines created an image of women fulfilled and happy in their roles as housewives and mothers. On the other hand, Gallagher (1981) suggests that in countries such as China the period from 1949 to 1976, showed the government-controlled media as strongly committed to the emancipation of women and seemed to offer exceptionally positive images of women, stressing women's contribution to economic and social development. Several media scholars have noted the difference between media in the United States and other Western liberal market-based media and the media in China, as well as other countries operating with a communist-Marxist media system.

Indeed, this distinction led scholars to develop theoretical categories in the 1950's to test and explain how political ideology impacts the media (Siebert et al., 1963).

While research has been conducted on elite female athletes' representation in the media in many Western countries and on women's representation in the media in China, no work has yet been done on the media representation of elite Chinese female athletes using Chinese media sources. This is the knowledge gap this research will begin to fill. In addition, some of the research on media representations of women in Chinese media has noted a shift in the representation of women though no scholars have taken the step to discuss their findings within the transitional media theoretical framework. The next chapter will provide both the theoretical framework and suggest how the media representation of elite female athletes in China may serve to test and potential extend this theoretical framework.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Recent literature notes that classical media theory lacks the ability to account for alternate models, particularly in the post-Cold War era and in the information age where an accelerated social and media transition are occurring across many parts of the world (Chan & Qiu, 2002; Roudakova, 2012; Zhao, 1998). Indeed, the established theories are mainly derived from empirical observations in Western democracies and are problematic when applied to the Chinese case (Xin, 2012). Scholars have begun to confront more mixed political and media systems than the standard frameworks described by various normative models developed in the 1950's and 1960's. Scholars have turned instead to developing and expanding transitional media theory to account for countries, such as China, whose media appear to be transitioning and becoming more market oriented. Transitional media theory, unlike the normative typologies described in this section, assumes that a shift or change is occurring in the media due to marketization, which also impacts the political and social systems, and allows researchers to compare normative expectations with actual occurrences. Assumptions about transitioning media systems by normative theories of media often place them on a trajectory from authoritarian model to a liberal market model wherein the media operate according to the principles of the free market economy, including media policies protecting business interests and content being driven by the consumer and a lack of government interference. In addition, the assumption is a democratic political shift will occur alongside this media transition, as either a driver or result of the changing media system. While transitional media theory

aims to test specific cases with the normative typologies, the theory allows for new theoretical insights based on empirical studies.

The various typologies of media theories reflect the diversity of media systems and the complex social, economic, political and ideological principles that organize ideas around the relationship between media and society. Simplistic and ethnocentric understandings of media systems and their processes of change have long plagued the study of media systems. In order to expand media theory to encompass the various media models, scholars have developed additional typologies to conduct comparative media systems research. These scholars are concerned with 'big questions' centering on the development of democratic governance and the consequences of large-scale transformations, such as commercialization and marketization. In many cases the transformation of the media is linked to the diffusion of Western (democratic) political practices or, conversely, that commercialization in the media will lead to a transition in the political system. In order to investigate the complete range of outcomes of a media system in transition there needs to be an acknowledgement of the embedment of the media in the political, economic and cultural institutions. In the following pages, a brief outline of the theoretical frameworks and resulting typologies of media will reflect the ways scholars have worked to account for various media systems. This will be followed by an examination of a more recent theoretical framework, transitional media theory, and how this framework begins to address the media transformations seen in the case of China. In addition, this examination will evaluate how transitional media theory may also

not account for this case's nuances, particularly those presented by the institution of sport, and thus rendering the theorizing of transitional media systems incomplete.

An early influential four-fold typology generated by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) in the *Four Theories of the Press* – which outlines authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist concepts of the press – came out of a normative theoretical perspective concerned with what the media *ought* to be doing in society based on social, political and ideological principles, rather than what may actually be happening. Though criticized for being embedded in Cold War politics, the key contribution of Siebert et al.'s work centered on an attempt to construct an explanatory framework that acknowledged the importance of factors external to the media system. When examining the link between mass communication and the processes of social change, the media often abstracted from the context in which they operate and, according to Siebert et al. (1956), "the press takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates." (pp.1-2) In their view, the press and other media sources reflect and reproduce the basic beliefs held by a society, though different cultures in each of these media systems may have varied principles and priorities. In addition, their typology ranked the four press types on an evolutionary scale culminating in the press model promoted by the West. This framework, however, was insufficient in capturing the varied social and political theories underpinning media policies around the world. Accounting for media systems that do operate within the typology or had hybrid qualities, was not within the scope of Siebert et al.'s framework.

What remains in subsequent theories of media is the expectation that mass media will lay the groundwork for modernization and political shifts towards democratic rule.

The early theories of media and the four-fold typology developed by Sibert et al. was critiqued in the 1970's as being an intellectual output of the Cold War that served to justify and preserve the leading role of the United States and display its advantage over the rival project of modernity advanced by Soviet communism. The theories developed by U.S. scholars in this time period reflected the Cold War bias as well as depicting modernization as a uniform process that culminated in the forms of society, economy, politics and media exemplified in the industrialized West. It is unsurprising that critiques of the theories developed in the 1950's and 1960's led to the construction of several other alternative typologies. Lowenstein (1970), for example, revised the four-fold typology presented by Siebert et al. to describe world press systems and developed a typology that categorized different press models with regard to their relationship with the political system as well as the different types of media ownership and differing levels of economic development of the media. This was followed by Altschull's (1984) typology that emphasized the economics of media as the key basis for describing press systems while Hachten (1981) remained focused on the media-politics relationship and added two additional frameworks – the revolutionary and the developmental – and merged the libertarian and the social responsibility models into a singular Western model of the press. The alternative typologies, and several others not included in this thesis, added significant insight into the various media systems around the world.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) offer a typology in *Comparing Media Systems* and proposed to examine the relationship between media systems and political systems. They proposed a threefold typology, based on empirical data from eighteen Western European and North American countries, that sought to distinguish media models with respect to type of involvement with two key factors: the market and the state, or economy and politics. At one end of their typology is the liberal media model, which is closest to the media system of the United States and is marked by a medium-sized press market, low politicization, a high level of journalistic professionalization and the dominance of market principles. The other end of their typology is the polarized pluralist model, exemplified in Southern Europe, and is characterized by small press markets, high politicization, low levels of journalistic professionalism and strong state intervention. The model that falls between the two ends of the typology is the democratic corporatist model, dominant in Central and Northern Europe, and falls in between the ends of the scheme on all four points. The three media models have their origins in the key characteristics of the political systems in which they operate.

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work heavily critiqued Siebert et al.'s typology as being a universalizing approach that did not recognize the nuances of particular media systems and was riddled with ethnocentric assumptions. Their 2004 work, however, exhibited similar pitfalls and their empirical limitations are easily identified, as their analysis is restricted to North America and Western Europe. Their continual search for models of media and politics as well as their commitment to analyzing relations between media and politics on a systems level, with specific attention to the dynamic and

changing media systems, resembles Siebert et al.'s typology. Recognizing this shortcoming, the two scholars published *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World* in 2012 in order to demystify the idea of a singular "Western media model" by showing first how media systems in the Western world developed under various distinct patterns according to particular historical conditions, rather than as abstract ideals of how media's relationship with society *ought* to look. Arguing that normative theories do not account for the actual arrangements connecting media and society, including hybrid or transitioning media systems, they then turned to other scholars in this anthology to challenge these normative theories and look beyond the Western case.

Scholars have begun to address the large-scale media transformations occurring around the world and study them outside of the normative frameworks outlined in the last few pages. Roudakova (2012) offers a processual approach that focuses on foregrounds processes rather than structures or systems in the interplay of media and politics. The difficulty with this approach is that it forces the researcher to accept the messiness and dynamism of media-political relations while still attempting to find a pattern in those relations and how they are maintained. In this approach, scholars focus on how the relations begin to change and question how to discern if the change is of historical significance rather than a shift to a particular situation that does not lead to large-scale change in the media-political relations (Roudakova, 2012).

This approach came out of an effort to understand the political transformation of the former Soviet bloc and asking the question of what comes next? (Verdery, 1996) Research focused on the transition paradigm believed the change worth paying attention

to was the transition from authoritarianism toward liberal democracy. As previously pointed out, conceiving of political shifts two dimensionally – either toward or away from liberalization – disallows researchers from a fuller understanding of history as it unfolds. By the end of the 1990s, many democratic “candidate” countries were getting stuck or lost in transition. Scholars began to discuss hybrid political regimes that combine democratic and authoritarian elements and developing typologies, such as competitive authoritarianism, to begin to explore alternative processes to the linear authoritarian to democratic model (Levitsky & Way, 2002). Roudakova (2012) found that, while the hybrid approach is useful in the desire to classify, the propensity to lump features together that the research does not know how to untangle is unsatisfactory to understanding the complexities of media-political relations. The processual approach, which can be interpreted as a typology of processes that aims to help identify what kinds of processes can and cannot be compared to one another, is both about the maintenance of order and the transformation of that order. Roudakova (2012) suggests bridging the macro with the micro with this approach through specific case studies, which is what this thesis will aim to do in the mini pilot study conducted.

Roudakova (2012) points out that while Hallin and Mancini (2004) do not focus on the ideological maintenance of state authority by the media, it is paramount to analyze how this is done. Governmental legitimacy is often maintained through mechanisms other than elections, and how media organizations “perform” the state to its citizens is one of the most important processes (Roudakova, 2012). Roudakova (2012) points out that there is a dearth of historically sensitive research on the state-media-society dynamic,

particularly on countries that do not fit neatly into the authoritarian to liberal democracy narrative.

Roudakova's processual approach regards media organizations as sites where different kinds of processes, political and economic for instance, intersect with and feed off of one another. Huang (2003) complements this approach and contextualizes it within the case of China, though renaming it as transitional media theory. Huang (2003) begins by reiterating the critiques of Siebert et al.'s Soviet communist theory of the press, which was then reconceptualized by Altchull (1984) as Marxist press, and both were generally applied to China. By the early 1990s, however, the literature of China's political economy suggested China had transformed from communism to a post-communist neauthoritarian state with a market mechanism, including a call for more press freedom and loosening of Party control (Pie, 1994; White, 1993). While orthodox communism and the communist media approach taken by Mao saw an end after his death in 1976, the post-Mao media reforms have followed a state-owned but market oriented model. Indeed, in 1992, Deng Xiaoping proposed more economic openness and the National Party Conference decided to embrace the concept of a "socialist market economy." (Zhao, 1998, p. 47) In addition, the reforms programs Deng introduced were designed to open up China economically while maintaining political power and legitimacy simultaneously (Chan & Qiu, 2002).

Huang (2003) offers transitional media theory as a non-normative approach, though recognizing that there is a history in media theorizations of evolutionary thinking with regard to transitioning political-media systems from authoritarian to democratic. On

one hand, the transitional media approach contends that media should be looked at in case-study form and there must be a recognition that “media do not constitute any single system with a single purpose or philosophy, but are composed of many separate, overlapping, often inconsistent elements, with appropriate differences of normative expectation and actual regulation.” (McQuail, 1994, p. 133) On the other hand, transitional media theory seeks to examine existing normative press models and compare a case’s supposed normative role with the reality of the press in the country through empirical studies, while at the same time providing new theoretical insights. The transitional approach also requires analysis of media with the complexities derived from the cultural, historical and ideological perspectives of a particular case.

The normative assumption is made within this transitional model, largely stemming from Siebert et al.’s (1956) narrative of the historical development the press in the West – going from an authoritarian model in which the press is subject to overt state control and to the liberation stage in which the press became financially and politically independent from the state and more accountable to the public through the market mechanism (Zhao, 1998). The press in China is often placed within this framework as going through a comparable process. This grand narrative has informed research and interpretations of the changes in the Chinese news media and it tends to oversimplify the complex process of transformation occurring in Chinese media.

China provides a unique case to examine transitional media theory, particularly when looking at the specific sport/media complex. After the PRC was established in 1949, the news media became central to the planned Party-dominated system and a

central tool for propaganda espousing the Party's political ideology. Fast-forward to the late 1970's and China's media saw an unprecedented boom with the newly implemented economic reforms, though media were still under tight government control. In the early 1990's, media were characterized by commercialization in China, though the Party continued to dominate and control media content.

Before discussing commercialization in China's media, it is important to give a brief overview of the uneven patterns of media liberalization in China. Chan and Qiu (2002) note that the variety of economic, political, and geographic factors in China have encouraged liberalization in some areas, while not in others. For example, media content that is political is regulated far more than what is apolitical. Chan and Qiu (2002) outline which genres have been liberalized and those that have not stating:

Genres that are traditionally close to the center of political power enjoy less freedom of expression than those at the political periphery. And media organizations in Beijing are under tighter control than those in the outlying provinces and districts...Content is the most decisive factor in this uneven pattern of liberalization. Direct political coverage is the least liberalized genre. The Xinhua News Agency writes official daily reports of political events that are then reproduced in the most prominent position on the front pages of newspapers...All means of public political communication play the role of "mouth-piece" for the CCP and a centralized agency operates on a daily basis to ensure that media organizations do not step beyond ideological boundaries. (p. 35)

The closer the genre is to the Party or are more prominent in covering political events are unsurprisingly under more scrutiny from the government on what they report. Chan and Qiu (2002) also note those less sensitive genres, such as entertainment, art and sport, enjoy less content control by the government. They posit that media topics of lifestyle and sport are subject to little censorship. However, media that have been traditionally controlled by the Party include newspapers and television, which are still largely regulated by the CCP's propaganda departments, while film, theatre and international media enjoy more autonomy. So while sport as a genre may be a less sensitive genre, newspapers, which are considered by the CCP to be the main conduit of ideological control, may be attentive to the representation of athletes and continue to adhere to ideological control of the Party (Chan & Qiu, 2002).

According to scholars, liberalization in Chinese media is occurring unevenly, but the growth of commercialization appears to be occurring across all media.

Commercialization in the media took place at the level of media policy where Liang Heng, an official responsible for newspaper management at the State Press and Publications Administration, proposed a gradual transformation of print media from government control to market control where Party organs, general interest national newspapers, special interests newspapers and army newspapers would be subsidized initially by the government, and evening papers, news digests, papers specializing in lifestyles and culture would be "pushed to the market" first (Zhao, 1998, p. 50). The economic reform and openness that began with Deng Xiaoping created a demand by foreign and domestic enterprises for advertising channels (Chan & Qiu, 2002). Zhao

(1998) finds that, “Although the Party has continued to attach great political and ideological importance to the media, as the economic reforms were implemented, it became increasingly clear that the state could no longer bear the entire [financial] burden even if it wanted to.” (p. 52) The paradoxical situation of media in post-1978 China is one that is at once changing while also remaining the same – this will be discussed more in the following section.

The key question is whether the marketization and commercialization processes are likely to transform the largest authoritarian country’s media system into a liberal-democratic system, and, most significantly for this thesis, question how this has or will impact sport media’s representation of elite female athletes. Nearly thirty years after the economic shift in the late 1970’s the question remains as to whether the marketization and commercialization trends have shown a shift in the representation of elite female athletes in China to how they are represented in Western liberal market-based media systems, such as in the United States, or if the institution of sport remains heavily under the Party’s ideological control and elite female athletes continue to be represented as athletes.

Media in China

Scholars have noted the expansion of the media market under the watch of the CCP, though the neo-authoritarian CCP maintains its ideological hegemony by continuing to control media content throughout the country (Chan & Qiu, 2002). China’s media system before the economic reforms in the 1970’s was characterized by a Marxist media system or authoritarian model, exercising control by mass propaganda (Chang et

al., 1993). There have, however, been significant changes in the CCP's priorities from 1949-1976, under Chairman Mao to post-1978 when Deng Xiaoping became Chairman of the CCP and, as previously mentioned, began the process of economically opening China to the world market.

The immediate post-Mao era (1976-1991) and the early 1990s (1992-present) will be two time periods looked at closely, as they represent drastic shifts in the process of marketization and commercialization in China, including the gradual integration of China's economy into the global capitalist system. Notably, however, the consensus among Chinese media scholars is that the shift beginning in the late 1970's has not substantially challenged the dominant role that the Party-state plays in media (Xin, 2012; Zhao, 2003; Zhao, 1998).

Zhao (1998) finds that though reform brought prosperity in the overall economy, the government's pursuit of economic decentralization left national state bodies underfunded. Therefore, the government's investment priorities became education and science, with its limited revenue, did not include the media (Zhao, 1998). Media outlets, such as the newspaper *People's Daily*, were responsible for both adhering to the Party line while also working to manage itself as a business enterprise. In addition to media outlets creating income to make up for the lack of government funding – advertising became the most important nongovernmental source of media revenue since its introduction in 1979 (Zhao, 1998). For example, the advertising industry grew from .118 billion yuan in 1981 to 6.8 billion yuan in 1992 with the number of advertising businesses growing at an average annual rate of twenty percent (Zhao, 1998). In addition,

transnational advertising and marketing significantly contribute to media commercialization, as foreign companies were keen to access the massive Chinese market. The centralized and monopolistic structure of Chinese news media made them ideal for effective advertising and several U.S.-based multinational corporations joined forces with Chinese companies to produce aggressive and effective advertising strategies (Zhao, 1998). It is important to note, however, that though the Party and government media organs remain entrenched in the media, meaning ideological control persists, the media have become business conglomerates (Chan & Qiu, 2002). No research was found specifically on sport media or advertising in sport in China.

While market forces began to rapidly penetrate every aspect of news media operations in China and commercialization occurred at a rapid pace, the CCP continued to insist that media be its mouthpiece and exercise almost total control in media censorship (Xin, 2012). Indeed, while the rapid growth in commercialization stimulated investment in, for example, extension in daily broadcasting hours or more television channels and the government began cutting subsidies to media outlets out of economic necessity.

The paradoxical situation of media in post-Mao China is one of changing while at the same time remaining the same. While Chairman Deng ushered in the economic reforms, the resulting open door policy introduced market logic into a Party-controlled media system. After a brief emergence of media democratization that threatened the Party's monopolistic control, the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown on the pro-democracy movement saw the tight political control re-imposed, though the market

forces continued to gain momentum (Xin, 2012; Zhao, 1998). After the Party's embrace of the market economy in the early 1990's, the current blend of market logic and Party logic developed – defining the media system in China. According to Zhao (1998) it is a system “full of contradictions, tensions, and ambiguities.” (p. 2) The intertwining of Party logic and market logic has left scholars questioning how to characterize China's current media system that does not fit into the normative models. Rather, the emergence of hybrid of transitional media models have come out in an attempt to make sense of China's unique case.

Transitional media theory has a historical mission to examine existing normative press models' theoretical adequacies by first comparing the actual society's news media in the real world with their supposed normative roles through empirical research and then provide new theoretical pursuits, when possible. In the case of China, several scholars have employed transitional media theory to begin to understand the media transition being observed through content analysis and to add new theoretical insights (Guo & Yu, 2002). While transitional media theory does indicate a transition – most often from communist Marxist-media to liberal market-based media – the testing of the theory allows for variation in models and entertains the possibility that the media system may be transitioning into a model not accounted for by the classic normative theories that have long been considered the premier media theories.

As one of the leading scholars on the transitioning market and media in China, Zhao (2012) points out that to bring the Chinese media system into a worldwide comparative project requires a recognition of its “Leninist and Maoist legacies in relation

to the worldwide struggles against capitalism and Western imperialism and an understanding of ongoing struggles between different universalisms and different regimes of truth – politically, religiously, or culturally inspired – and the ways in which these struggles have shaped the transformation of media and politics.” (Zhao, 2012, 150)

Since the 1980’s China has instituted several economic reforms that have forced competition between two grand ideologies – capitalism and communism – both of which have distinct impacts on the media (Zhao, 2003). The collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and the globalization of capitalism are forcing the remaining communist countries, namely China, to adapt to the changing environment. The CCP has molded China into a bureaucratic capitalist system that is working out how to fit into the global system while legitimizing its mandate to continue ruling under the banner of communism (He, 2003). The tightly controlled media in China now has a dual mission – to serve the Party and cater to the market. He (2003) found that media organizations, while integrated into the capitalist market, still function as a mouthpiece of the CCP, continuing to remind the population who is in power and of the official ideology. Several recent studies, however, have documented the gradual transformation of parts of the media system from a pure mouthpiece of the Party, one that promotes the legitimacy of the ruling party, to one that also aims to make a profit (He, 2000; He & Chen, 1998). As the ideological transition accelerates, there has been a re-focus to understand the role of ideology in the Chinese press among scholars. It is in this deciphering of the impact of political ideology on media where questioning whether sport media and the representation of female athletes will continue to reflect the dominant political ideology

or if the market forces will impact the representation of women's sports in a similar way to what is seen in the United States and other Western liberal market media systems.

Content analysis research on the representation of women in China from 1949-2003 showed a dramatic shift from the Marxist media's egalitarian representation of women as equal contributors of the political, economic and socialist culture, to the market-based representation of women as more submissive, family-oriented and increasingly objectified (Luo & Hao, 2007). Luo and Hao's (2007) content analysis work used the magazine *Women of China*, as their unit of analysis. While the content analysis in this thesis will focus on newspapers, which are largely government controlled, *Women of China* serves as an "official tool to publicize the achievements of Chinese women and promote the gender ideology of the Communist Party to the world," thus making it a comparable study (p. 286).

As noted, scholars' research on elite female athletes' in China documented China's unique tradition in women's sport reflecting the nation's pervasive adherence to its political ideology, history, subsequent policies, as well as the strong tie between sport and nationalism (Brownell, 2008; Dong, 2003; Hong, 2003; Xu, 2008). Currently, no research was found on the representations of athletes, let alone female athletes, in Chinese media. Research on Chinese sportswomen will serve as the starting point for beginning to conceive of how the transitioning media system may impact representation of athletes in Chinese media.

The historical preferential status of women's sport in China is largely unfamiliar to Westerners who are accustomed to the historical development of sport as a male

preserve. The literature on Chinese sportswomen present women as not only equal to male athletes but, in some cases, having a higher status in the state's nationalized sport system (notably not because of their gender but because of their medal-winning potential) (Brownell, 2008). In China, the impact of communism has led sport to be viewed as a tool of the state and an emblem of Chinese nationalist power rather than as a predominantly male domain. This may indicate Chinese female athletes are an exception to the transition occurring from egalitarian to more submissive, family-oriented portrayals seen in the research on Chinese women's representation in the media (magazines). As noted, China has historically favored women as a means of demonstrating their nation's strength, most notably during the mid-twentieth century after the takeover of communism in China (Dong, 2003). Gender equality was crucial to the Chinese brand of communism and as a result Chinese women were allowed to participate in athletics indiscriminately since the PRC's inception in 1949. The unprecedented participation of Chinese female athletes in elite sport made them vital to the government's desire to cultivate a nationalist mindset in its citizens in order to preserve the pervading communist ideology.

Comparing the findings from content analyses of media representations of women in China with that of elite female athlete representations will give an indication of whether female athletes' media representation are shifting in the same way women in China's media representation are shifting. If female athletes are continuing to be represented as true athletes, this sub-population of women may offer an exception to what scholars are finding with the trend of media representations of women becoming more

objectified and portrayed in “gender appropriate” roles with the growth of the market media in China. This may indicate that female athletes, and the institution of sport, are continuing to be tightly controlled or influenced by the CCP, perhaps due to the close ties sport had with upholding the nationalist and communist ideology during from the 1950’s to mid 1970’s in China and that continues today. Instead, China may represent a unique media system where female athletes continue to be represented as athletes because it is more favorable for the CCP and their commitment to communist ideology and promoting nationalism.

Examining the impact of marketization on Chinese media and the resulting type of coverage of female athletes is of particular interest and begs the question of whether the market will begin to dictate how elite female athletes are represented and if their representation begins to look like what is seen in Western liberal market-based media. Who or what controls the media system is a central component in beginning to decipher the impact of political ideology and media representation of female athletes. In addition, Daniel (2009) points to the potentially detrimental impact of the liberal-market media system if China’s media transition begins to represent female athletes in a similar way that Daniel’s and others have identified. Daniels (2009) found that sexualized images of female athletes led women and girls to self-objectify, avoid sports and, in some cases, not participate in physical activity at all. As noted earlier, the representation of women in Chinese media are beginning to reflect what is seen in Western media. It is precisely the aim of this thesis to begin to understand whether transitional media theory may explain how female athletes are represented in Chinese media.

Transitional media theory suggests that media representations in China will begin to look as they do in liberal market-based media systems. Empirical research by Chen (2010) and Luo and Hao (2007) indicates that the media representation of women in China reflects this, with women in Chinese media being objectified and portrayed in more traditionally feminine roles. No research was identified, at least in English, with regard to female athletes' representation in the media or within this particular theoretical framework. The pilot study conducted for this thesis will aid in answering the following research questions:

RQ 2) Does the transition from an authoritarian Marxist-media to a more liberal market-based media system affect the representation of female athletes in accordance with transitional media theory?

RQ 3) Does transitional media theory account for the representation of elite female athletes in Chinese newspaper media?

The results of the following pilot study, though not generalizable, may complement and reflect Chen's (2010) and Luo and Hao's (2007) studies or it may indicate that, for sport, transitional media theory may not work in the same way for female athletes' media representation as it does for women in Chinese media.

Chapter 4: Methodology

To understand the impact of political, economic and social changes on the Chinese newspaper media's presentation of female athletes, a pilot content analysis study was conducted in order to both begin to fill the knowledge gap outlined in the previous chapters and to test transitional media theory. While content analyses are difficult to generalize to a greater population due to each case's uniqueness and the method's inherent subjectivity, the strength of content analysis method lies in its flexibility and emphasis on context (Chen, 2010). The choice to conduct a pilot study is often used to pre-test or try out in preparation for a major study. While content analysis on media representation of female athletes has been conducted in the past, as exhibited in the literature review, no work was found on elite female athletes in China with Chinese media sources. To conduct this pilot study, images of elite Chinese female athletes from 1949 to 2012 were collected from Chinese newspaper agencies online databases – *China Daily*, *GuangZhao Daily*, *Peoples Daily* and Xinhua News Agency.

Pilot Study: Content Analysis

Content analysis method was chosen for this pilot study, as it is a well suited and often used method in communications research. In addition, in order to illustrate theoretical concepts in media, content analysis is frequently used to both test and extend existing theory. Content analysis requires a thoughtful handling of the “what” that is being communicated, which includes attention to context and existing theoretical

knowledge. Content analysis is an empirical inquiry focusing on a “contemporary phenomena within its real-life context and trying to answer “how” and “why” a certain phenomena exists (Yin, 2009). Therefore, to gain insight, and potentially extend transitional media theory, a content analysis of photographic images of Chinese elite female athletes in the online versions of Chinese newspapers was conducted. The purpose of this pilot study analysis stems from the discrepancy between research on women’s representation in the media in China and what the literature on Chinese elite sportswomen suggests about the role they play in maintaining the Party’s ideological hegemony within the framework of transitional media theory.

The content analysis presented here is a quantitative research method, entailing a systematic and empirical reading of a body of texts, namely newspaper images (Ball & Smith, 1992). Being a pilot study, this content analysis aims to make this study replicable and, in the future, more robust as to make valid inferences from the data to its context as well as provide knowledge and new insights into the particular media phenomena, transitional media theory, being studied (Krippendorff, 2003). Lastly, and particularly relevant to this study, the use content analysis aims at the recognition of meaning making and the acknowledgement that all texts are produced and read by others and are expected to be significant to them. From what was learned in Chapters 2 and 3, with regard to the importance of sport in China, along with the prominent role of female athletes and the continuing use of the media as a Party organ because it is viewed as a source of meaning making, the photographs in this study must be viewed as strategic choices made by the newspapers and, in turn, the Party.

Units of Analysis

This case study used photographic images ($n=204$) of elite Chinese female athletes from the online versions of Chinese newspapers as the unit of analysis. The newspapers chosen for this study are all based in China. *China Daily* was established in 1981, notably after the economic reforms made by Chairman Deng, and has the widest print circulation of any English-language newspaper in China. Published seven days a week by a majority Chinese editorial staff, *China Daily*, serves both foreigners and those trying to improve their English in China (China, 2015). It is also used as a guide to government policy in China, though notably *China Daily* offers a slightly more liberal take than Chinese language newspapers. *Peoples Daily* is a daily Chinese language newspaper and an official newspaper of the government. Established in 1946, *Peoples Daily* was directly controlled by the government from 1948 to 1966 and was one of the few sources of information during the Cultural Revolution for foreigners and Chinese citizens to figure out what the CCP was doing. During this time period, *People's Daily* was an authority of government policy and the prominence and visibility of the CCP in the official media communicated the power of the Party. *GuangZhao Daily* is a daily Chinese language newspaper established in 1952 and run by the GuangZhao municipal party. This newspaper also runs others newspapers and magazines in China. Lastly, Xinhua News Agency is the official press agency of the PRC and is a ministry-level department in the government and the sole news agency in charge of distributing important news related the CCP and central government. Established in 1931 as the Red China News Agency, it became Xinhua News Agency after the CCP took over in 1949.

Regarded as the most influential media outlet in China, almost every newspaper in China relies on Xinhua feeds for content, including photographs.

Sampling method

To collect images for this content analysis, a nonprobability sampling approach was taken. This was due to the lack of a complete database of all images published in Chinese newspapers. Due to the strict control of the media within China during the time period of 1949 to 1976, images collected were found through using the same search terms but with a specific athlete's name. Using the advanced search options available on the *China Daily*, *People's Daily* and Xinhua News Agency's websites, the search terms that were used for the newspapers' webpages were broad in order to capture all articles written about female athletes. Search terms include: sport, athlete, woman, female athlete, sporting, athletic, Olympian, world champion, medal, participant – all in various combinations. Searching continued until articles with photographs already collected began to show up again. In order to be used in this content analysis, the articles must have an image of a female elite athlete. Once an image was identified as female athlete, either by image itself, the title of the article or the caption, the image was pulled into a Microsoft word document with the URL pasted below and labeled with the name of the athlete, the sport and the year the image was published. Once all the images were collected for the pilot study, images were coded based on the themes outlined in the following section. Questions that guided the coding were: is the athlete in uniform or out of uniform? On the court/field or off the court/field? Actually playing the sport on court or celebrating on court? The images collected ranged from 1956 to 2012. The decision to

stop in 2012 was due to it being an Olympic year, where coverage of all athletes is presumably higher than in non-Olympic years. In addition, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games preceding the London 2012 Olympics, which would presumably follow stories of successful athletes in Beijing that would then be captured in the four years leading to 2012. Due to the nonprobability sampling approach the results of this pilot study will not be generalizable nor can any causation be claimed. Lastly, a second coder was used to produce an intercoder reliability. A random sample of images were drawn using a random number generator that represented twenty percent of the total number of images ($n=40$). An intercoder reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency among raters.

Thematic Presentation

Previous research on media representation of female athletes has identified seven thematic interpretations of the message being conveyed by the images. Only six of these themes will be used in this content analysis, as the theme “student-athlete” is not applicable in the Chinese case. The images in this content analysis will be analyzed using Buysse’s (1992) operational definitions of thematic presentation with one additional theme, celebration. These include:

1. True athleticism: operationally defined to include the definitions of an athlete who is portrayed in uniform, actively engaged in a sport activity and on the actual court or playing surface.
2. Posed athleticism: operationalized to include the definitions of an athlete portrayed in uniform but in a non-action pose (e.g., sitting, standing, kneeling

or lying down) and without other themes involved (e.g., a team who is in uniform and standing next each other for a team photograph).

3. Femininity: operationally defined as an identification with traditional “feminine” roles and/or appearances and/or fashion. Masculinity was operationalized to include identification with traditional masculine roles and/or appearance and/or fashion.
4. Sexual suggestiveness: operationally defined to include any sexually “provocative” pose, theme and/or fashion (e.g., “skimpy” outfits, and “come-on” expressions).
5. Sport equipment: operationalized to include equipment necessary for the sport (e.g., tennis racquet, table tennis paddle or balance beam).
6. Pop culture: operationalized as themes associated with movies, idioms, and/or songs in Chinese popular culture.
7. Celebration: operationalized to include either on court celebration or a podium celebration.

The images of elite Chinese female athletes were coded for the variables of sport, year photograph was published, and thematic presentation.

Results

The results show that of the $n=204$, the three themes presented were true athleticism ($n=111$), posed athleticism ($n=5$) and celebration ($n=88$). In the time period from 1949 to 1978, 50% of the images were coded as true athleticism and 50% showed

celebration. From 1979 to 1991, 57% of the images were coded as true athleticism with 29% coded as celebration and the remaining 14% as posed athleticism. Finally, the period of 1992 to 2012 had 54% coded as true athleticism, 44% as celebration and only 2% as posed athleticism. See Table 2 for more detail.

The photos were divided up into three time periods in order to identify if there was a shift in media representations of elite female athletes in China from the authoritarian media model to the, presumably, more market-based media model. China's media model in the first time period, 1949 to 1978, is characterized by an authoritarian media system (see Appendix I for an example). The second time period is 1978-1992, where 1978 marked by the opening up of China and the economic reforms, which ushered in the market media model (see Appendix II for an example). The third time period began in 1992 with the rapid commercialization of the media and continued to 2012 (see Appendix III for an example).

A second coder was used to perform an intercoder reliability analysis. The interrater reliability for the coders was found to be Kappa = 1.0 ($p < .0001$), 95% confidence interval (0.81, 1.0), which indicates almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Table 1: Percentage of Themes Represented 1949-2012

| Time Period | True Athleticism | Celebration | Posed |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1949-1978 (<i>n</i> =2) | 50% (<i>n</i> =1) | 50% (<i>n</i> =1) | 0% (<i>n</i> =0) |
| 1979-1991 (<i>n</i> =7) | 57% (<i>n</i> =4) | 29% (<i>n</i> =2) | 14% (<i>n</i> =1) |
| 1992-2012 (<i>n</i> =195) | 54% (<i>n</i> =106) | 44% (<i>n</i> =85) | 2% (<i>n</i> =4) |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| TOTAL (n=204) | 54% (n=111) | 43% (n=88) | 3% (n=5) |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|

By looking at the first period in contrast with the second and third period, research question two can begin to be answered.

RQ 2) Does the transition from an authoritarian Marxist-media to a more liberal market-based media system affect the representation of female athletes in accordance with transitional media theory?

Table I provides a brief outline of significant occurrences discussed in depth in Chapter 2 and highlights where a shift in media representation is presumed to occur according to transitional media theory.

Table 2: Significant Historical Points in the People's Republic of China

| Year | Significant Occurrence |
|---|--|
| <i>Authoritarian Media Model</i> | |
| 1951-52 | “Thought Reform” under Chairman Mao Zedong |
| 1957-1966 | Great Leap Forward campaign |
| 1967-1978 | Cultural Revolution (Mao dies 1978) |
| <i>Shift to Market-Media Model</i> | |
| 1978 | Economic reform and opening up of China begins |
| 1989 | The Tiananmen Square event |
| <i>Market-Media Model strengthened by commercialization</i> | |
| 1992 | Economic reform continues, privatization accelerates resulting in commercialization and marketization of economy |
| 2000 | China wins bid for the 2008 Olympic Games |
| 2008 | China hosts the Olympic Games |

Table 3 provides the three themes identified in this pilot study by the sports that were represented in the sample. Elite Chinese female athletes in volleyball and swimming were most often represented followed by diving, soccer and gymnastics.

Table 3: Identified Themes by Sport 1949-2012

| Sport | Number | True Athleticism | Celebration | Posed |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Air rifle | 1 | - | 100% (n=1) | - |
| Archery | 2 | 50% (n=1) | 50% (n=1) | - |
| Badminton | 10 | 50% n=5 | 50% (n= 5) | - |
| Basketball | 8 | 50% (n=4) | 50% n= 4 | - |
| Beach volleyball | 1 | 100% (n=1) | - | - |
| Curling | 7 | 43% (n=3) | 57% (n=4) | - |
| Diving | 14 | 86% (n=12) | 14% (n=2) | - |
| Fencing | 2 | 50% (n=1) | 50% (n=1) | - |
| Field Hockey | 5 | 80% (n=4) | 20% (n=1) | - |
| Golf | 3 | 33.3% (n=1) | - | 66.6% (n=2) |
| Gymnastics | 12 | 58.4% (n=7) | 33.3% (n=4) | 8.3% (n=1) |
| Hammer throw | 1 | 100% (n=1) | - | - |
| Ice Hockey | 3 | 67% (n=2) | 33% (n=1) | - |
| Judo | 5 | - | 100% (n=5) | - |
| Mountaineering | 1 | - | 100% (n=1) | - |
| Air Pistol | 7 | 43% (n=3) | 43% (n=3) | 14% (n=1) |
| Pool | 1 | 100% (n=1) | - | - |
| Rugby | 5 | 100% (n=5) | - | - |
| Sculls | 3 | 33% (n=1) | 67% (n=2) | - |
| Shooting | 2 | 50% (n=1) | 50% (n=1) | - |
| Skiing | 1 | 100% (n=1) | - | - |
| Soccer | 14 | 50% (n=7) | 50% (n=7) | - |
| Speed Skating | 11 | 55% | 45% | - |

| | | | | |
|---------------|----|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| | | (n=6) | (n=5) | |
| Swimming | 29 | 28% (n=8) | 72% (n=21) | - |
| Table Tennis | 8 | 75% (n=6) | 25% (n=2) | - |
| Taekwondo | 1 | 100% (n=1) | - | - |
| Tennis | 6 | 67% (n=4) | 16.5% (n=1) | 16.5% (n=1) |
| Track | 8 | 75% (n=6) | 75% (n=2) | - |
| Trampoline | 1 | - | 100% (n=1) | - |
| Volleyball | 23 | 52% (n=12) | 48% (n=11) | - |
| Water polo | 1 | - | 100% (n=1) | - |
| Weightlifting | 5 | 80% (n=4) | 20% (n=1) | - |
| Wrestling | 3 | 67% (n=2) | 33% (n=1) | - |

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The 1949-1966 period was an era of revolution and of tight government control over the media. The authoritarian media system during this time period served the practical needs for ideological and social control. Indeed, the CCP tightly controlled media by suppressing any dissent in order to maintain the status quo. With so few images available during this time period it is difficult to determine if elite female athletes were portrayed as was expected under the authoritarian, Marxist-media model, though the case study of China provided in Chapter 2 suggests that this would be the case. This time period under Chairman Mao is characterized by a tension between populist sport and elite sport, with training for elite sport being increasingly absorbed into the populist sport model and elite training became scarce (Shuman, 2014). The emphasis on sport for all and the lack of focus on elite training may be another reason for the lack of images of elite female athletes during this time period – there were simply so few. In addition, the economic situation in China was precarious and the limited funding became scarce during the GLF period. For example, in the Sichuan province the number of elite athletes began to decline from 778 in 1958 to 614 in 1960 and dropped further to 451 in 1963 (Dong, 2003). Once the GLF ended in 1966, however, officials decided to funnel the limited funds for competitive sport into supporting the very best athletes, demarcating elite sport from programs for the masses for the first time since the establishment of the PRC. Elite

athletics, therefore, did not play a large role for the PRC in the era of revolution and this may be one explanation for why so few images of elite female athletes can be located.

The period from 1966 to 1978 was an era where the Party continued to use state-sponsored sports programs to strengthen the masses of Chinese bodies and athletes for the purpose of national goals. By this period, the world of international sport served as a way for forging relations with other leaders and nations and as a way to market China's brand of socialism. However, the Cultural Revolution put an end to the short-lived focus of the government on elite sport and instead stamped out elite sport training in the name of returning to "pure" communism, which substantially impacted the number of elite athletes. The tight control over the content and dissemination of information reached its apogee during this time period. During the Cultural Revolution the Party line was published daily in the official newspaper of the Party and then copied in most newspapers in the country (Chan & Qiu, 2002). The lack of images for this time period reflects the continuing tight control of the media and the dearth of elite athletes due to CCP policies that negatively impacted elite athletes.

The period from 1978 to 1992 in China was characterized by economic expansion and China's return to the Olympic Games in 1984. The decentralization of media from the centralized control under the CCP increased autonomy of the media. Though, as was discussed, this decentralization was economically driven, since media, particularly newspapers and television, continue to be ideologically supervised by the CCP. The images in this time period show themes of true athleticism and celebration both on court and on the podium. The choice of using newspapers to show elite female athletes as true

athletes indicates a continuing adherence to the importance placed on sport by the Party, and particularly on female athletes. Thinking back to Chapter 2, the success of elite female athletes was seen as a window for the world to see the modernizing Chinese nation and the victories in sporting competition was meant to inspire nationalist sentiment and bolster the ideological platform promoted by the Party (Dong, 2003). Indeed, the 1981 State Council announcement that the whole nation should learn from female athletes about how to create and maintain this new face of socialism promoted by the Party is not only reflected in the images found for this time period, but indicates the emphasis the Party placed specifically on elite female athletes as essential to promoting and maintaining the ideological hegemony of the Party.

The onset of marketization and commercialization in the Chinese economy took hold in the period of 1992 to 2012. It is in this time frame where beginnings of the transition in media representation assumed by transitional media theory would begin to take place. The results of this pilot study indicate, however, that the newspaper representation of elite female athletes has remained consistent with what has been seen in the previous decades. As noted in Chapter 2, men's elite athletics became a priority in the early 1990's due to their commercial value, particularly for private groups coming into China and for the purposes of drawing a more global audience. Nevertheless, this pilot study indicates that the newspapers used in this content analysis, as mouthpieces of the government, have not resorted to representing elite female athletes in a way that may garner them more attention by reflecting what is perceived to sell in the global (Western) market.

Both the case study of China and the content analysis pilot study aimed to begin to address two of the research questions posed at the start of this thesis. The results have begun to fill the gap in knowledge and provide insight into the case of elite female athletes within the transitional media theory framework, and to challenge the framework itself.

RQ 1) How has the transition from a Marxist-media to a more market-based media system impacted the representation of female athletes in accordance with transitional media theory?

RQ 3) Does the transition from an authoritarian Marxist-media to a more liberal market-based media system affect the representation of female athletes in accordance with transitional media theory?

For RQ 1, both the case study analysis and the pilot study indicate that elite female athletes' representation in the news media remains consistent with the authoritarian media model in which female athletes continue to be represented as athletes due to their strategic importance in maintaining the Party's ideological hegemony. While there is no doubt that marketization and commercialization have impacted media in China, the findings in this thesis indicate that elite female athletes' representation in the newspaper media may be a point where the Party continues to maintain control despite the market's influence on the media, including the rise of commercialization and advertising discussed in Chapter 3, and the representation of other groups in Chinese media.

For RQ 3, within the expected evolution of transitional media theory, the lack of a change in the representation of elite female athletes indicates this group may be an exception to what has been theorized. The purpose of presenting the case of China and conducting a pilot study was to see if elite female athletes, and perhaps the institution of sport, provide a nuance to the existing theoretical framework in the case of China. These findings also support Zhao's (1998) suggestion that the liberalization of the market has tended to strengthen rather than undermine the Party's propaganda apparatus. Indeed, the idea that there is no tension between the market and the Party, but rather the Party is capturing the market implies that the newer commercialized media systems have been incorporated into a new hybrid commercialized/propagandist media model, which produces Party propaganda in a way that is subtler and therefore more effective.

Implications

The implications for this research largely center on both the theory-testing component and, as a result of the pilot study, adding to the theoretical knowledge in the particular case of China. In addition, this research points to the importance of recognizing the context in which a theory is being applied. Thinking back to Chapter 3, the typologies put forth by media scholars are useful for broad categorization and for the purposes of performing comparative work. Recognizing the impact of historical development of major institutions, in this case sport and the media, within the case of China with its particular political system and in relation to specific group, elite female athletes, allows scholars to question the broad categories and give insight into the nuances provided by

specific theoretical frameworks. The findings in this thesis suggest researchers and those using transitional media theory in the case of China and other countries, must take into account the specific intersection of economics, politics, and other ideological significant institutions, in this case sport, in order to test this theoretical framework.

For this case, while transitional media theory assumes the influence of the market will eclipse the influence of the Party in media, including the representation of female athletes, the combination of the case study and the pilot study suggest otherwise. The implications of the findings suggest that, in the case of representing elite female athletes, the CCP's fundamental concept of political communication and the propagandist role of media have remained the same despite the shifts in media during the economic reforms. Instead, the commercialization may not signal the end of the Party's ideological domination due to the incorporation of the market, but a shift in the Party's ideological framework, leading to more subtle forms of ideological domination. One of these subtle forms argued in this thesis, is through the institution of sport and the sport/media complex specifically.

Limitations

The limitations in this research largely stem from the lack of available data (images) of female athletes, particularly in the 1949 to 1980 time period, the reasons for which were discussed earlier in this chapter. Along with this, the ability to conduct searches in English may have significantly limited the number of images found, though

all of the newspaper databases used indicated searches in any language would draw from all branches of their newspapers.

A further limitation stems from the ability to use only English-language scholarly work done in this area. This is significant, as there is no doubt work being conducted in Mandarin that may have contributed to this study. In addition, access to databases only accessible in China and/or Mandarin may have limited the number of images found for this study. Lastly, to make this study feasible, other media sources, such as magazines, advertisements or television, were not included.

Future Research

There are several avenues where the research in this thesis can serve as a starting point. The first is to conduct a more robust study looking at the media representations of Chinese female athletes, which could include more newspaper sources and include Chinese language papers recognized for being more liberal (*Southern Weekly*, for instance). The inclusion of newspapers that are not as strictly controlled by the Party-state, as the newspapers chosen for this thesis, may provide yet another site for testing transitional media theory by comparing strictly Party controlled newspapers with less strictly controlled papers. This could also include looking at media sources other than newspapers and include magazines or television coverage in the content analysis.

Another interesting area for future research would be to look at the way foreign elite female athletes are represented in Chinese media to test whether the Party's adherence to female athletes being represented as true athletes is an adherence to ideological principles, namely gender equality, or if Chinese female athletes are unique

due to their historical significance in inspiring nationalist sentiment and maintaining the Party's ideological hegemony.

Looking at the media representation of specific elite female athletes that have broken away from the nationalized sport system, such as tennis player Li Na, and signed contracts with U.S.-based companies in comparison with athletes still in the nationalized sport system may provide a compelling comparison to evaluate if there is a difference between the media representation of Chinese female athletes that break away from the government run sport system versus those who remain within the government controlled sport system.

Lastly, since much of the work on media representations of female athletes in the Western countries focuses not only on type of coverage but amount, comparing the amount of coverage between male and female elite athletes in Chinese media may be an area for future research in the context of China, but also for comparative work.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine the case of elite Chinese athletes' representation in the media within the framework of transitional media theory in order to test and add to this theoretical body of knowledge. The results indicate that the influence of the Party continues to pervade in spite of the market forces, which have been shown to impact women's media representation in China.

Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, female athletes have played a role in the maintenance of the Chinese Communist Party's desire to inspire nationalist pride and

maintain ideological control. While the early decades of the PRC saw ups and downs with regard to the status of elite sport, the focus of the government to create a strong and healthy nation endured, and the focus on women and sport has remained consistent. In China, one of the main ways the Party communicated with the people was through the media. China's media, since the founding of the PRC, have been characterized by strict government control and what may commonly be referred to as a propaganda model, but classified in media theory as an authoritarian media model. Under this model it can be presumed that athletes, and sport in general, were used to promote the ideals of the party both through nationalist sentiment and through winning abroad. Chairman Mao Zedong was in power from 1949 until his death in 1978. Upon his death, his predecessor, Deng Xiaoping, initiated a series of economic reforms that opened China's economy, resulting in the subsequent decades of both the commercialization and marketization of China's media. The commercialization and marketization of the media over the past four decades has challenged the dominant role that the Party plays in every aspect of social life. In China, this marketization and commercialization neither equates to media privatization, nor implies the decline of state ownership. This shift has recently become the focus of a handful of scholars. The supposed transition of China's media to a more market-based model is hypothesized to impact how various groups are represented in the media, including women under the transitional media theory framework. Research had been conducted on women's representation in the media in China (where a shift in representation was noted from 1949-2009) but no research existed on the representation of Chinese elite female athletes in the media, a knowledge gap this research began to fill.

The reason elite female athletes are of interest is due to, as mentioned, their historical significance and use by the Party as exemplars of the communist ideological principle of gender equality as well as their success on the international stage and ability to inspire nationalist sentiment through their sporting success. Elite female athletes, therefore, are of particular interest as a group to explore the hypothesized tension between the Party and the market. The findings of the case study and the pilot study suggest that the liberalization of the market has tended to strengthen rather than undermine the Party's propaganda apparatus. Indeed, the idea is that there is no tension between the market and the Party, but rather that the Party-state is capturing the market and the new commercialized media systems and incorporating them into a new hybrid commercialized/propagandist media model which produces Party propaganda in a way that is more subtle, and therefore more effective. The continuing representation of elite female athletes as athletes in the newspaper sources selected suggests the market has not had the hypothesized impact of transitional media theory, and it is thus worth recognizing the continual power of sport and of elite female athletes in inspiring nationalist sentiments. In the case of select newspaper media representations of elite Chinese female athletes – Party rules.

Researcher Positionality I approached this research with having done previous in-depth research on female athletes in China and Japan. My interest in proposing this research was influenced by my graduate assistantship in the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, which has produced work on media representations of female athletes in the United States, along with my intense interest in the case of China's female athletes. In my previous research I noticed the dominant political ideology in China starting from 1949 afforded Chinese female athletes unparalleled opportunities to participate at high levels in sports and the communist-nationalist combination appeared to be at the root. I continue to be intrigued by the case of female athletes in China and the intersection of this literature with media studies and theory.

A significant consideration is my position as a Westerner, who does not read Mandarin, to conduct academic research on China. I must be aware that the images used in this thesis come from a particular mix of cultural, social and political frames and it is imperative that I am well versed in the historical and contemporary literature regarding sport, women, politics and culture in China. It is critical that I, as the researcher, conduct the study with the utmost consideration for the context within which this phenomenon is occurring.

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Appendices

Appendix I



Athlete: Zheng Fengrong
Sport: High Jump
Year: 1956
Theme: True athleticism



Athlete: Pan Duo
Sport: Mountaineer
Year: 1975
Theme: Celebration

Appendix II

Athletes: Chinese volleyball team

Sport: Volleyball

Year: 1982

Theme: True Athleticism



Athlete: Ma Yanhong

Sport: Gymnastics

Year: 1984

Theme: Posed athleticism

Appendix III

Athlete: Le Jingyi
Sport: Swimming
Year: 1994
Theme: Celebration



Athlete: Guo Yue
Sport: Table Tennis
Year: 2007
Theme: True athleticism



Athletes: National Volleyball team

Sport: Volleyball

Year: 2011

Theme: celebration