

Who's the Man?

An Exploration of Contemporary Chinese Urban Middle Class Men's Expressions of Masculinity

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore expressions of masculinity in contemporary urban China amongst young middle to upper class Chinese Men. The thesis focuses on expressions related to material and physical aspects of masculinity. More specifically the focus lies on masculine expressions in relation to grooming, material possessions, wealth and consumption. Physical expression relating to the male body and sexuality is also explored. The research is based on interviews with informants and observations made in Shanghai and photo analysis of a monthly fashion editorial in the Chinese version of the male fashion magazine GQ (Gentlemen's Quarterly). During Mao Zedong's ruling period gender-barriers were nearly eradicated, and consumption was a non-subject. Due to the past thirty years of enormous economic growth in China, the country has seen the appearance of a consumer society. This thesis argues that expressions of masculinity in contemporary urban China appear to be increasingly centred on material possessions, consumption and wealth, and can to some degree be said to be a defining factor of masculinity. The male grooming industry has grown significantly in the past few years but is still relatively young. Male grooming appears to be gaining increasing acceptance as a factor of masculinity, despite some people still viewing grooming as effeminate. The appearance of a metrosexual form of masculinity seems to be becoming increasingly visible, and can be connected with a middleclass expression of masculinity. Furthermore, bodily expressions of masculinity seem to be influenced by Western images of masculinity and there seems to be a discrepancy between what the average Chinese male body type is and what is viewed as the most masculine type of male body.

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1 Introduction

“To value the different definitions, we have to know their meanings, implications and significance. Until we are at least aware of the meanings of the codes and symbols they use to represent ideal manhood, we are talking at cross-purposes.”¹

- Kam Louie

Representations of masculinity vary within an enormous spectrum. Rambo, the macho man with his hyper-muscular physique, proclivity towards violence, and non-emotional, no-frilly attitude to life; David Beckham, the metrosexual, sporting a well chiselled body, perfectly styled hair and a wardrobe equivalent to the size of a very fashion conscious woman; and Charlie Sheen – a man notorious for his promiscuous womanizing, are all different types of masculinities expressed through certain behaviours, physical attributes or material possessions.

This thesis will explore how masculinity – the characteristics associated with men - is expressed amongst young contemporary, urban, middle to upper class Chinese men. The group I examine are middle to upper class Chinese men, between the ages of 18-33. I have chosen this age group because they were all born after the beginning of the reform period (1979) and they also all belong to the group born under the Birth Control Policy. I define ‘middleclass’ using McKinsey & Company’s calculations and divisions of China’s economic classes as they are anticipated to be in 2015. Individuals earning 40,001-100,000 Yuan per year are then defined as *middle class*². Upper class is defined as anyone with higher financial income than the middle class. I will analyse photographic representations of models in the photo series “Fashion Well” in the Chinese iPad version of the male magazine “GQ” (Gentlemens Quarterly) and interviews and observations with informants in Shanghai. The focus of the analysis will be on material and physical expressions of masculinity. More specifically the thesis will explore the role of grooming, fashion and the body in relation to how masculinity is expressed through photo analysis and interviews.

Under the leadership of Mao Zedong (1949-1978), the state attempted to eradicate characteristic gender features through the removal of traditional labour divisions.³ The gender divisions are rapidly disappearing and Geng Song argues that a diversified transformation in

¹ (Louie 2002) P. 164

² (Farrell 2006)

³ (Croll 2000) P.135

the construction of masculinities has taken place in post-Deng society, influenced by several factors such as nationalism, and the men's movement in the West. Another influential factor concerns the anxiety about the quality of Chinese men. He explains this through articles posted in the media. One such example, according to Geng Song is an article from the Chinese media *Renmin Wang* (人民网; People.com). They wrote that countries such as the United States, Japan, Germany and Russia all have strong and forceful men, whilst the weakening of Chinese men was a major contributing factor towards the decline and humiliation of China that began with the opium war. Furthermore he connects the perceived emasculation of Chinese men to “the regimentation and mental ‘castration,’ as it were, imposed by the Communist rule on Chinese men, and particularly on male intellectuals.”⁴ He goes on to write that ‘real masculinity’ is viewed by the new-era literary scene as embodied within such characters as Rambo, and Takakura Ken.⁵

Since the opening up of China in 1979, contemporary Chinese society has entered a consumer age – an age where consumption is central in an individual's life. A consumer revolution appeared in China in the 1980s, and in 1999 policies were launched to promote increased consumption⁶. A slogan illustrating the reality of the move into a consumer age was even implemented, “Borrow money to realize your dream” (*jièqián yuánmèng*; 借钱圆梦).⁷

Geng Song, Zhang Li, Nancy N. Chen and Kam Louie all argue that a consumerist influence on masculinity, and masculinity as defined primarily in terms of wealth are becoming increasingly prominent. Zhang Li suggests that the re-emergence of gender differences and sexual desire in the public space manifests itself through differentiated longings by man and woman. For men, self-worth is reliant on a form of masculinity based on making enough money, having the right material possessions, or gaining political power.⁸ Louie agrees with Zhang Li writing, “with the advent of the consumer society in the twentieth century...Male ideals are increasingly those imbued with buying power. The result is that images of masculinity are moving away from their traditional core attributes of literary and cultural learning and martial expertise.”⁹ Geng Song writes, “Finally, as a result of the redistribution

⁴ (Geng Song 2010) P. 407

⁵ (Geng Song 2010) P. 407

⁶ (Yan 2009a) P. 207-213

⁷ (Elfick 2011) P.192

⁸ (Zhang 2010)P. 165-166

⁹ (Louie 2002) P.161

of wealth and power and the emergence of the nouveau riche in postsocialist society, masculinity is now primarily defined in terms of wealth.”¹⁰ Nancy N. Chen suggests that the connotations of masculinity in the contemporary Chinese context have shifted to accommodate a growing engagement with consumer culture and a market economy.¹¹

This thesis argues that masculinity and how it is expressed is a changing construction influenced by trends, politics and other societal and even biological factors. It will explore the current expression of masculinity in urban contemporary China amongst young Chinese men in the middle to upper class.

1.1 Research Questions

The main research questions are: How is masculinity being expressed by middle to upper class men in contemporary urban China, and to what extent is consumption a form of masculine expression amongst them? Two sub-questions will guide the analysis: how is masculinity represented in the monthly photo fashion series “Fashion Well” in Chinese GQ? How do Chinese men residing in Shanghai express masculinity?

Some research has been completed within the field of Chinese masculinity; however, it is rather limited.¹² Kam Louie proposes a theoretical framework for Chinese masculinity, discussing masculinity from a dichotomous categorization: *wen* (文; scholar) and *wu* (武; martial). Van Gulik discusses sexuality in ancient China and touches upon historical masculinity analysing physical expressions of masculinity in ancient China.¹³ Geng Song analyses the discourse of masculinity in modern day Chinese popular culture by examining three popular television drama series: *The Big Dye House* (*Da ranfang*), *Halfway Couples* (*Banlu fuqi*), and *Unsheathing the Sword* (*Liangjian*).¹⁴ In the paper, "Consumption, Class Formation and Sexuality: Reading Men's Lifestyle Magazines in China", Geng Song and Tracy K. Lee analyse the construction of consumerist middle-class masculinity by focusing on men's lifestyle magazines.¹⁵ Tiantian Zheng analyses masculinity by focusing on the sex

¹⁰ (Geng Song 2010) P.410

¹¹ (Chen 2002) P. 50

¹² For previous work see: (Louie 2002); (Song and Lee 2010);(Zheng 2006); (Gulik 2003);(Chen 2002); (Ross 2010); (Louie and Low 2003)

¹³ (Gulik 2003)

¹⁴ (Geng Song 2010)

¹⁵ (Song and Lee 2010)

industry and how consumption of sex can be seen as a criterion to evaluate one another's deference, reliability, self-control, and sexual potency.¹⁶

As China is becoming a vastly different society than it was pre-1979, it is important to analyse how masculinity is being expressed in a society that is not bound by strict Communist ideology. The media has been given freer reigns in the past few years, and a market for male magazines is claiming its space in the media industry. An exploration of masculine expressions can help understand some of the impacts of social forces sweeping through China today, such as the problems with the marriage market, and the increasing number of involuntarily unwed bachelors due to the Birth Control Policy. It can also shed light on the problem related to social stratification and inequalities, and a better understanding of the relationship between genders in contemporary China. It will also provide insight into what an urban Chinese man considers to be of importance in the construction of a masculine identity, and what factors may be influential in *defining* a masculine identity. There are vast cultural differences between the West and China, and as foreign companies try to understand one of the largest consumer markets in the world, it is important to consider what masculinity entails in a Chinese context and how it may be different from a Western perspective.

1.2 Short Outline of Thesis

In chapter two I will present the research methods used for this thesis - content analysis and fieldwork. I will provide reflections tied to the fieldwork, justifications for my decisions, and discussed problems tied with the methods used. Chapter three discusses the theoretical basis for the analysis. I use three different theories: *hegemonic masculinity*, *Chinese masculinity theory*, and *social constructionism*. Chapter four analyses Chinese men's use of grooming products and how grooming could increasingly be becoming part of a Chinese masculine expression. By using material from GQ and the fieldwork I analyse to what extent grooming is considered acceptable for Chinese men. Chapter five focuses on materialism and consumption in connection with masculinity. I argue that material wealth is closely tied to Chinese masculinity. In chapter six I focus on the body as an expressive tool of masculinity, and analyse what type of male body or bodies seem to be considered the ideal by GQ and the informants. I will also touch upon the topic of sexualisation in relation to Chinese men and

¹⁶ (Zheng 2006)

masculinity. Throughout the chapters that analyse expressions of masculinity I will also consider to what extent a global influence on Chinese masculinity is visible.

2 Methodology

“To learn without thinking is unavailing; to think without learning is dangerous.”¹⁷
- Confucius

The thesis explores expressions of masculinity in urban contemporary China amongst middle to upper class men by answering two main questions: How is masculinity being expressed by middle to upper class men between the ages 18-33 in contemporary urban China? To what extent is consumption a factor of masculinity amongst middle to upper class men in urban contemporary China? To answer these questions I chose a triangulation of methods by going to Shanghai for five weeks to conduct fieldwork, where I interviewed and observed men in public spaces. I combined this with content analysis of GQ. This chapter will discuss the methodological choices I made, the path that led me to choosing the research design I did and the research experience in itself. I will reflect upon the choices I made, and the reasons for making these choices. I will begin by discussing validity, reliability and quality within qualitative research. This will provide a basis for the rest of the chapter as I will analyse the quality of the methods I used in relation to methodological theory. Following the discussion of research quality, I will discuss the research design I used including the fieldwork I undertook, and content analysis of GQ.

2.1 Research Quality

There are many viewpoints concerning what characterizes a good qualitative research study. Cathrine Fangen writes that qualitative research produces completely different forms of data than quantitative research.¹⁸ Furthermore she writes, “You will never be able to achieve a representative range in a statistical sense. The point is not gaining a statistical representation either, the point is rather to find a good example, either as an extreme case, or a more typical case, which may exist in similar variations other places.”¹⁹ As such different criteria need to be used in determining the research quality.²⁰ Kvale writes that quality is related to the researcher doing good craftsmanship in order to be able to elucidate and counter that which may be detrimental to the quality of the research.²¹

¹⁷ (Bloom and De Bary 1999) P. 47

¹⁸ (Fangen 2004) P.195

¹⁹ (Fangen 2004) P.51

²⁰ (Fangen 2004) P.195

²¹ (Kvale et al. 2009)P.176

Although there are conflicting ideas of what is categorized as “good research” there still needs to be certain criteria followed so as to be able to determine what constitutes “good research”. We need to determine how we can know when qualitative research is of good quality, how we know that we have researched what we intended to research, and how reliable the collected data is.

To determine these questions, one needs to consider validity which can be split into two criteria: *internal validity*, and *external validity*. Internal validity concerns to which degree your findings really map out that which you set out to explore. External validity concerns to what degree your findings can be generalized to other contexts that are similar to the one which your research has been completed in.²² In relation to internal validity for this thesis, I ask: how do I know that the questions I have posed, the observations I have made answer the research questions? And how can the content analysis of GQ answer the research questions?

External validity is also described as *reliability*. The reliability of data related to interviews is considered to be quite complex. Interviews are always a subjective rendition of something an individual has experienced. Furthermore, the findings are based on the researcher’s understanding and interpretation.²³ The same can be said of content analysis – the results will to a certain degree depend on the researchers understanding and interpretation. It is therefore important, as Bruce L. Berg writes, that content analysis “must be sufficiently exhaustive to account for each variation of messages content and must be rigidly and consistently applied so that other researchers or readers looking at the same messages would obtain the same or comparable results.”²⁴ As follows, the questions that need to be posed when considering the reliability of the research are: Have I described the research design wholly? And is the research transparent?

2.2 Research Design

In this thesis I wish to research expressions of masculinity in-depth, based on the experiences and opinions of informants with a complementary combination of content analysis, observation and semi-structured qualitative interviews. Therefore I decided to employ a

²² (Fangen 2004) P. 195

²³ (Fägerborg 2009) P. 55; (Fangen 2004) P. 31

²⁴ (Berg 2009) P. 342

triangulation of research methods: semi-structured interviews, observation, and content analysis of Chinese GQ.

I found the combination of three different methodological approaches appropriate and useful for this project. It has provided empirical data seen from different viewpoints; however, there are both positive and negative aspects to consider when choosing this approach. David Silverman argues, "...multiple methods are often adopted in the mistaken hope that they will reveal the 'whole picture'. But this 'whole picture' is an illusion which speedily leads to scrappy research on under-analysed data and an imprecise or theoretically indigestible research problem. For instance, multiple methods may tempt novice researchers to move to another dataset when they are having difficulties in analysing one set of material."²⁵ I have attempted to counter this problem by strictly dividing the analysis into findings from the interviews, GQ, and observations. When appropriate I discuss the findings in relation to one another. The reason for this division is to keep from entering the 'trap' Silverman warns novice researchers of: using one set of data to complement another insufficient data set.

Gary Thomas argues, "...different elements of your research, related to different questions, will almost certainly need different methodological responses from you."²⁶ Grønmo highlights several advantages to a triangulation of methods. It can strengthen the confidence of the validity of the results if the data from the two methods point in the same direction. If the data points in different directions, you will get a more nuanced description and wholesome explanation of the problem.²⁷ Furthermore Denzin suggests that multiple data-collection procedures, multiple theoretical perspectives, and multiple analysis techniques are all included in triangulation. This will increase the depth of understanding research can generate.²⁸

As this is an exploration of *Chinese* masculinity, Stig Thøgersen points out that there are benefits to triangulating research done on China as, "In a highly literate – some would say text-obsessed – society such as China, documentary sources are essential to most social science studies...if we look at China *exclusively* through written sources we obviously get a quite distorted picture... This is, of course, where interviews, direct observation of social

²⁵ (Silverman 2010) P. 134

²⁶ (Thomas 2009) P. 140

²⁷ (Grønmo 1996) P. 98-99

²⁸ (Berg 2009) P. 8

practice, and surveys come in.”²⁹ For this reason, it seemed appropriate to chose a triangulated research design.

2.2.1 Content Analysis

Berg states, “Content Analysis is a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings.”³⁰ Holsti elaborates by saying content analysis is “...any technique for making inferences by systematically and *objectively* identifying special characteristics of messages”³¹. I have chosen to base the magazine analysis on the iPad version of GQ (Gentlemen’s Quarterly; from here on, the iPad version of GQ will simply be referred to as “GQ”). The iPad version has a limited selection of the articles from the paper version of GQ. The paper version also has more advertising than the iPad version. I chose the iPad version of the magazine mainly due to practical reasons, as it was more easily available than the paper versions of GQ. As the iPad version is free it may be more easily available to both the men at the lower end of the income sector and at the higher end. The iPad version can also be read on smartphones. GQ is one of the newest male magazines on the market, launched in October 2009. As I am researching middle to upper class men in urban China, the profile of GQ’s target audience coincided with the parameters I had set for the group of men I would research. GQ China’s reader is on average 32 years old, has a monthly income of 8,726 Yuan, has a yearly fashion (clothes and accessories) of 12,047 Yuan, spends 1,744 Yuan yearly on grooming products and 1,715 Yuan yearly on cologne.³² The magazine was also the most frequently mentioned by the interviewees.

As this thesis focuses on material and physical representations of masculinity, I decided to take a visual approach when choosing material from GQ, rather than a discursive. Schroeder and Zwick argue that choosing a limited amount of visual material is useful because, “In this way, we follow interpretive work that focuses on a limited range of materials in order to make broader points about representation and identity in visual materials”³³, or more precisely for this thesis, representations of masculinity. I have chosen to analyse the fashion series “Fashion Well” (时装大片; *Shízhūāng Dàpiàn*) which occurs one to three times every

²⁹ (Thøgersen 2006) P. 203

³⁰ (Berg 2009) P. 338

³¹ (Holsti 1969) P. 608

³² (智族 GQ 2011 Media Kit 2011)

³³ (Schroeder and Zwick 2004) P. 35

issue (except February, 2012). I chose this photo series as a fashion photo series focuses on the visual expressions of a man – the appearance of the body and material styling. Prior to choosing the photo series I went through all the material available in one year of GQ. I attempted to choose material based on grooming, fashion and the body. I found that this method was *too* subjective as I was deciding what was suitable or unsuitable based solely on my opinion and wanted to have a more objective method of choice. I decided therefore to choose a monthly reoccurring editorial as it would be a more objective method of choosing material. The photo series was one of very few monthly reoccurring editorials. I do not claim that the articles I have chosen are representative, rather that they are significant and compelling – worthy of close analysis. To have suitable a range of photo editorials to analyse, I looked at a year of “Fashion Well” editorials (September 2011-September 2012).

Silverman writes, “The analysis of visual data can be very complicated and, in some hands, can be so over-theorized that one feels that the theoretical tail is leading the empirical dog”.³⁴

To keep the analysis as simple as possible I asked five questions:

- How often are specific brands mentioned?
- What kind of material possessions are portrayed in the photos?
- How is male grooming visible in the photos?
- What kind of male body types are portrayed?
- What is the interaction between male and female models?

The five questions led the analysis and helped categorize the information available in the photos.

There were limitations to the choice of the content. It was highly fashion focused which could have led to an overrepresentation of fashion-related material an underrepresentation of grooming concerning masculine expressions. A broader range of material could have been useful, however as I was conduction research within a time and page limit it was important to narrow down the material for analysis.

2.2.2 The Qualitative Interview

As the thesis explores *Chinese* masculinity in urban *China*, from a combination of content analysis and Chinese men’s perspectives, I needed to collect interviews in an urban area of

³⁴ (Silverman 2010) P. 243

China. Conducting my own interviews would provide me with the necessary empirical data to answer the question concerning masculinity from the perspective of Chinese men.

Semi-structured interview

Thomas writes that the “semi-structured interview provides the best of both worlds as far as interviewing is concerned, combining the structure of a list of issues to be covered with the freedom to follow up points as necessary.”³⁵ The interview schedule I used was prepared prior to my departure. As well as having topics I wished to examine, I had prepared a list of questions that would help me enter into a conversation concerning the topics.

To begin with I was only conducting street interviews, and halfway through my time in Shanghai I was getting many of the same answers when I approached people on the street. I wished to expand on the information I was getting so I rephrased some of the initial questions and add a few topics on which I had not obtained any information. It was useful to review the interview schedule as I ended up with increased insight into several topics.

As the sit-down interviews were towards the end of the fieldwork, I used both of the interview schedules I had used for the street-interviews. As friends introduced me to the informants, it was easier to have a semi-structured interview for two reasons: firstly they all preferred speaking English with me (I offered both Chinese and English as language options), and they seemed to be more comfortable with me presumably because a common friend had introduced us. This allowed me to use the interview schedule as a guide, at the same time as I was able to ask several follow-up questions.

Selection of site

Shanghai was an obvious place of choice to do the fieldwork for three reasons: firstly I was more interested in doing research on the urban male population of China rather than the rural. Secondly, I have more contacts in Shanghai than other cities in China. They could act as “gatekeepers” – individuals or groups who are in a position to allow access to a research setting.³⁶ Thirdly, after I decided to research middle to upper class men, Shanghai seemed like a fitting place to go as it is considered to be one of the most modern and affluent cities in

³⁵ Thomas, 2009. P. 164.

³⁶ (Berg 2009) P. 206

China. The city would provide the potential of meeting informants from the upper to middle class strata of the population.

Once I had arrived in Shanghai, I planned to go to places where I believed I would run into the type of men I wished to interview. Initially I tried going to Starbucks and similar coffee places – my thought being that anyone willing to pay for a relatively expensive cup of coffee would be an indication of their higher income. As soon as I entered the coffee places I understood that this would not be the place to look for informants as people were often socializing in groups, working or in general seemed unapproachable. I felt like I would be disturbing them, and it did not feel like the right place to conduct interviews. I decided to go to areas of Shanghai where I knew there were many high-end retailers such as Hermès, Tiffany's, Prada and Apple that would draw middle to upper class men to the area. Xīntiāndì (新天地) was the first place I completed interviews. It is a restored Shíkùmén (石库门) lined with cafés, restaurants and a few shops. Right outside this area there are many high-end stores selling cars, jewellery, clothing and technology. As the area is quite touristy, I was only able to interview three informants, as all the other men I approached were 'out-of-towners'.

Next I went to the Pǔdōng (浦东) area. This is the financial centre of Shanghai, with an abundance of malls filled to the rim with luxury products in any form, shape or design one could imagine. I trawled through this area, but there were few men to get in touch with. This may be because I was there during the daytime, and I should have gone later on in the afternoon. I was able to get four interviews in this area. The mall I was able to get the most interviews in was *Plaza 66*, located on Nánjīngxīlù (南京西路). It has all the big name luxury brands – Louis Vuitton, Prada, Dior etc. I spent quite a few days in this mall as I found it was easier to get in touch with informants at this location. There were more people in general at this mall than in Pǔdōng, and people were relatively easy to approach.

Selecting informants

Before leaving Norway I contacted my friends in Shanghai and asked if they would help me find interview objects. By asking my friends to help me find suitable informants I would be guaranteed to find at least a few informants that were in the category I wanted to interview. I said I was interested in talking to “relatively affluent men living in Shanghai between the ages 18-35”. My friends all assured me this was not a problem and we would talk about it some more after my arrival.

After arriving in Shanghai, I soon realized that I had not thought about the fact that they were all busy and working, and that finding a time for me to meet their friends would be more challenging than I had envisioned. As Berg points out, using *gatekeepers* can be both useful and a hindrance as they are in a position to “grant or deny access to a research setting”.³⁷

Before leaving, I had also decided that I would do some “street interviews” where I would talk to men on the street, in shopping malls and at cafés, so while I waited to meet the “sit-down interviewees” I went about attempting to interview men I thought looked like they belonged to the group I was researching.

In all the areas I chose as research sites, I would casually walk around outside the stores and observe the pedestrians to see whom I thought might be interesting to talk to (I felt it would be an infringement on the stores if I attempted to approach informants in the stores without asking permission to do so. As there were limited amounts of people in each store, it would have been a waste of time to ask each store if I could have spent some time in their store). Before approaching the potential informant I would look at their clothes and accessories, and see if they had expensive shopping bags (Louis Vuitton, Dior, Prada etc.). I viewed the items as outward symbols pointing me in a superficial direction as to whether or not they would meet my appointed informant requirements. Most of the time I managed to suss out the type of man I was interested in talking to, other times I did not.

I was feeling confident before I started the interviews, but I soon realised that getting in touch with the men I wished to interview was considerably more difficult than I had initially envisioned. As Sæther writes, “To do fieldwork is a conscious way of dealing with being a foreigner. The fieldworker is acutely aware of her lack of understanding of how things work.”³⁸ From previous stays in China, I have become accustomed to Chinese curiosity and interest in my ‘foreignness’. Due to this impression, I have always considered the Chinese to be easily approachable. With this attitude in mind, I arrived in China and assumed that just about everyone would want to talk to me. I soon realized that this was not the case, and after my first day of interviews I returned home, quite deflated and with the realization that Sæther was correct in her observation that doing fieldwork reinforces your notion of being an

³⁷ (Berg 2009) P. 206

³⁸ (Sæther 2006) P. 47.

outsider. The next day I went back out to the malls, with a fresh (and definitely more realistic) outlook, and an acceptance that I would have to approach at least five men to get one interview. In the end I was able to collect 20 “street” interviews before I began the “sit-down” interviews.

I completed six sit-down, semi-structured interviews with friends and colleagues of friends. I found these six interviews to be very useful. I had two friends who acted as gatekeepers and helped me get in touch with these six informants. It was useful to have friends introduce me to interview objects as they were not as sceptical as the informants I randomly encountered on the street. I was therefore more easily able to have in-depth conversations with them right away.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Interviewing

Kvale describes an interview as a place where knowledge is produced by two people exchanging viewpoints (*inter-view*) concerning a topic of interest to both parties. He writes that the qualitative research interview’s goal is to try to understand the world from the interviewee’s point of view, and to discover how they experience the world.³⁹ As I explore men’s expression of masculinity from two perspectives: men themselves and the media, interviewing allowed me to gather descriptions of how the interviewee experienced topics surrounding masculinity.

For this project interviewing was a good choice of method in many ways. Kothari argues that there are positive and negative sides of personal interviews and that securing spontaneous responses to questions is one such advantage not found through the use of questionnaires⁴⁰. I was able to ask the informants exactly what I wanted, and I was able to observe their body language and reactions to questions as well as documenting their verbal responses. I would not have been able to observe the entirety of the informant had I opted for questionnaires. By doing both sit-down interviews and street interviews I was able to get in touch with many different men – not just friends of friends who may have had the same opinion about many matters as they were in the same social sphere.

Having pointed out the benefits of doing interviews, I also want to reflect upon the challenges

³⁹ (Kvale 1997) P. 17

⁴⁰ (Kothari 2004) P. 98

tied to this choice of method. Kothari argues that there are several weaknesses of interviewing including high expenses, a possibility of bias of interviewer and respondent, unapproachability amongst higher income groups leading to inadequate data, and interviewing being time-consuming. He also argues that the presence of the interviewer could lead the informant to provide imaginary information and that an effective interview presupposes an established rapport with the informants, as it would facilitate free and frank responses.⁴¹ In terms of the accuracy of the information acquired, I have no way of knowing what was truthful and what was fictional. As such I have to accept all the information as truthful and be aware that some information could be fictitious. The most dominant problem was getting in touch with higher income groups. The lower income groups such as taxi drivers, sales people in small shops, hairdressers etc. were very open and willing to talk to me. The problem was getting in touch with what appeared to be higher income groups, as they always seemed to be busy or very sceptical towards my intentions. The few I did manage to contact without gatekeepers, asked many questions as to what I was studying, why and how their responses would be used. The five weeks I had in Shanghai to collect data was very limited. It left me with 26 interviews, which is a relatively small sample of informants. As Silverman points out, how many cases one needs depends on the research problem.⁴² Although an increased number of interviews could have been useful, I felt that as I was combining content analysis with interviewing, 26 interviews was sufficient to answer the research problem.

On a personal note, one of the problems with the type of interviewing I chose (semi-structured street and sit-down) was that the street interviews very seldom gave me the opportunity to go in-depth. I did not realize this beforehand and as such I had not prepared enough sit-down interviews. Knowing what I know today, I would opt for an increased number of sit-down interviews using several gatekeepers as I found that most of the analysis I will be doing was triggered by these types of interviews. What the street interviews provided were opinions and insights that back up the analysis triggered by the sit-down interviews.

Language Barriers

I had not practiced Mandarin since August 2010, and so my Mandarin is somewhat limited. I had to spend a sizeable amount of time preparing vocabulary and the interview guide I used.

⁴¹ (Kothari 2004) P. 98

⁴² (Silverman 2010) P. 193

Sæther writes, “There are many possible language strategies; studying Chinese is one, relying on interpreters another, but none of them can guarantee that no information is lost. . . . However, insufficient language skills do not inhibit learning, even though it might complicate the process.”⁴³ The fact that my Mandarin skills were not at a completely fluent level provided certain challenges such as being able to ask follow-up questions on certain issues where I did not have to the necessary vocabulary. Other times I would be able to ask the question, but I would miss some of the meaning in the response.

Unfortunately it was not possible to record all the interviews because the situation was often stressed and the informants only had limited time to talk with me. Adding another factor - starting up a recording device, became too clumsy and I found that notes were a better option. Many of the informants did not want me to record the interview, and so that became a restriction in itself. I was able to record some of the interviews and it was useful to go back and listen to them when I did not fully understand what they were saying. Even though I at times had trouble understanding everything being said (especially if the informant spoke with a dialect), I found that most of the interviewees were very considerate and polite and spoke clearly and slowly once familiar with my level of mandarin. The linguistic challenges may have caused some information to get ‘lost in translation’ as I was unable to ask appropriate follow-up questions concerning comments I perhaps did not fully comprehend until after I had revisited the interviews. In retrospect I should have set up more appointments with informants and prepared them beforehand that my level of Chinese was limited and for that reason I wished to record the interviews.

I used a friend as a translator for some of the interviews, which was very useful in the beginning as she gave me moral- and linguistic support. She helped familiarize me with terms I would not normally use and she would even ask follow-up questions on her own initiative that were very useful for my research. I decided to continue on my own after a few interviews for two reasons: firstly, she was busy with her own work and I did not want to impose; secondly, as much help as she was, having her there alienated me from the informant as they would (naturally) rather speak with the dominant Mandarin-speaker. This would make it difficult for me to follow their conversation and often lead me to miss out on opportunities to ask follow-up questions of my own.

⁴³ (Sæther 2006) P. 43-44.

Ethical concerns

Before starting the actual interview I informed the interview object what I was a student from the University of Oslo. I also made it clear that any questions they were uncomfortable with, they were free to choose not to answer. The interview object was also informed that the interview was anonymous, and keeping with that I did not ask for their names. In some cases I interviewed friends of friends, and as much as they were curious about how their friends answered my questions, I made it clear that I would not reveal what we had talked about in these particular interviews.

Masculinity is not as controversial as other topics concerning China. I was, however, unsure of how the men I interviewed would react if I asked about their concepts of what masculine identity entailed. I did my best to keep a neutral attitude, use neutral wording and not react when asking questions and receiving answers. I did not find that any of the interviewees were offended during the interview process. Only two of the interviewees did not want to state how much they earned.

3 Theorising Masculinity

Masculinity is found in all parts of the world, but manifests itself differently from culture to culture and is influenced by a number of factors. Culture certainly has an impact on the construction of masculinity, and media seems to be another one. R.W. Connell⁴⁴ suggests that there seems to be certain expressions of masculine characteristics that are more likely to be categorized as masculine than others. Masculinity in China today has risen out of a long history. This chapter will discuss hegemonic masculinity, Chinese masculinity in terms of wén/wǔ (文/武) and analyse the media's role in socially constructing the gender.

Kam Louie's theory on Chinese masculinity examines masculinity in a Chinese cultural and historical context, but to a limited extent examines how globalisation and social constructionism plays a role in defining masculinity in contemporary China. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity provides a more generalized theoretical framework that places masculinity in a globalised context. That provides a foundation for better analysis of how Chinese masculinity, influenced by a globalized world, manifests itself today. As this thesis is using the Chinese edition of the magazine "GQ" to analyse masculinity I also examine how the media plays a role in the social construction of gender.

3.1 Hegemonic Masculinity

This thesis analyses how masculinity is expressed in China today – in a monthly fashion editorial of a male magazines and by men in different social contexts. Connell argues that “hegemonic masculinity is very public...it is tempting to think that it exists only as publicity”, but to solely focus on media images would be a mistake as “they [media images] need not correspond to the actual characters of the men who hold the most social power – in contemporary societies the corporate and the elites.”⁴⁵ R.W Connells theory of *hegemonic masculinity* provides a framework to better understand and analyse expressions of masculinity in the media and by men in different social contexts.

⁴⁴ R. W. Connell has undergone a sex change, and is now a woman. To avoid confusion I will be using the pronoun “she”. She is now known as Raewyn Connell rather than Robert William Connell.

⁴⁵ (Connell 1987) P. 185

3.1.1 What is Hegemonic Masculinity?

Hegemony is a term, borrowed from Antonio Gramsci's theory on class relations in Italy⁴⁶, where the basic premise is that "man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas".⁴⁷ Bryn Williams summarizes hegemony as "the process through which ideas, people, and concepts become dominant in a given economic/cultural system"⁴⁸. Hegemonic masculinity was formulated on the basis of Gramsci's idea of hegemony and was formulated as being "...understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue."⁴⁹ Connell furthermore explains hegemony, in terms of hegemonic masculinity, as "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contest of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes."⁵⁰ It means that power achieved by violence *is not* hegemony. Rather, hegemony is ascendancy achieved i.e. through religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing and welfare/taxation policies.⁵¹ This means that hegemonic masculinity has to be achieved through a set of social structures, rather than rhetorical or violent forms of demand. In short, hegemonic masculinity can then be described as the power of one particular group of men over other men and women.

Further Connell points out that hegemonic masculinity is often a model-form of masculinity that is widely accepted, but the characteristics of the cultural ideal(s) do not necessarily need to closely correspond with the personalities of the majority of men. Fictional characters played by actors such as the actor John Wayne or even non-fictional characters very remote from real life, such as Muhammed Ali may encompass the characteristics that win the role of hegemony.⁵²

3.1.2 Constructing Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell writes that hegemonic masculinity is a *social construction*, always constructed "in relation to various subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women."⁵³ Furthermore

⁴⁶ (Connell 1987) P. 184

⁴⁷ (Bates 1975) P. 351

⁴⁸ (Williams 2008) P. 54

⁴⁹ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) P. 832

⁵⁰ (Connell 1987) P. 184

⁵¹ (Connell 1987) P. 184

⁵² (Connell 1987) P. 184-185

⁵³ (Connell 1987) P. 183

“the interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works”.⁵⁴ The different forms of masculinities are proposed as a four-tier hierarchical construction recognizing these components: *dominant masculinity*, *complicit masculinities*, *marginalized masculinities* and *subordinate masculinities*.⁵⁵

Dominant masculinity refers to the social expectations of the ways in which men should ideally act. Kahn writes that Connell argues the ideal in Western nations include men being competitive, wealthy, aggressive and heterosexual. *Complicit masculinity* supports dominant masculinity, but is not in and of itself dominant. It hopes to gain rewards for likening the dominant group, whilst to a certain extent being aware that you are not part of the dominant group. The groups of men that are on the outskirts of dominant masculinity are referred to as *marginalized masculinity*. The dominant group often overlooks their interests and perspectives. The last group, lowest on the hierarchical order, is the one referred to as *subordinate masculinity*. As well as being marginalized, this group is also subjugated. Feminine behaviour is one such behaviour associated with subordinate masculinity.⁵⁶

Although hegemonic masculinity is a recognized theoretical base for the study of masculinity and gender relations as it to a certain extent acknowledges the diversity of men’s lives, it does not go undisputed.⁵⁷ Some of the criticisms directed at hegemonic masculinity concerns itself with the over-simplification of a highly complex phenomenon – namely masculinity. Michael Moller accuses Connell’s theoretical framework of “obscuring the researcher’s ability to see masculinity in any terms other than ‘political’” because it distances itself from other frameworks.⁵⁸ Wetherell also points out the problematic “aspirational goal” of hegemonic masculinity, rather than the “lived reality for ordinary men”, and how it questions the “appropriateness of a definition of dominant masculinity which no man may ever actually embody.”⁵⁹ Although I agree with these criticisms, I have found hegemonic masculinity to be helpful in recognizing that there are different types of masculinity in China. As hegemonic masculinity is quite a vague concept, open for interpretation, it makes it possible to translate

⁵⁴ (Connell 1987)P.183

⁵⁵ (Kahn 2009) P.32

⁵⁶ (Kahn 2009) P. 32-37

⁵⁷ (Jefferson 2002) P. 69; (Moller 2007) P.263; (Demetriou 2001) P. 337; (Whitehead 1999) P. 58; (Hearn 2004) P. 58

⁵⁸ (Moller 2007) P. 264

⁵⁹ (Wetherell and Edley 1999) P. 337

into a study of Chinese masculinity. It accepts that there is not *one* type of masculinity, and that the definitional parameter of masculinity is constantly changing. It also recognizes that one type of masculinity could be considered dominant. Although recognizing Chinese hegemonic masculinity is not the main topic of this thesis, it serves as a useful basis for reflecting upon what may or may not be acceptable forms of masculine expressions. The next part will discuss the influence on masculinity in a gendered world order, and how it is possible that globalization influences the definition of masculinity.

3.1.3 Hegemonic Masculinity Globalized

Connell proposes that “if we recognize that very large scale institutions such as the state are themselves gendered... and if we recognize that international relations, international trade and global markets are inherently an arena of gender formation and gender politics, then we can recognize the existence of a world gender order”. By using this as a definitional background Connell argues that mass media (especially electronic media) is a transmitter of the globalization of gender; however, as research has shown that audiences are very selective in what they receive through media messages, the media only plays a fractional part in the globalization of gender construction. She further argues that gendered institutions, such as the military, states, bureaucracies, corporations, capital markets, labour markets, schools, law courts and transport systems, call into existence specific patterns of practice. That a Westernized army will see a different type of collective violence than a pre-colonial army, and that the stock market sees certain patterns of calculative egocentrism are examples of such practices.⁶⁰

Connell writes, “we might propose...that the hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world gender order is the masculinity associated with those who control its dominant institutions: the business executives who operate in global markets, and the political executive who interact with them.”⁶¹ She goes on to describe this as *transnational business masculinity* with characteristics entailing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties, and a declining sense of responsibility for others. Tony Jefferson is critical towards the proposition of a dominant masculinity which is accepted as hegemonic on a global scale because, as he writes, “Dominance is a necessary but by no means a sufficient condition of hegemony, since...a notion of consent is crucial to the latter. Thus, while the new ‘transnational business

⁶⁰ (Connell 1998) P. 10-11

⁶¹ (Connell 1998) P. 16

masculinity' may be dominant in the world gender order it is certainly not, in my understanding of the term, hegemonic".⁶² I, personally, am not persuaded that 'transnational business masculinity' is dominant or hegemonic as I have difficulty conceptualizing a single 'world gender order' with one type of hegemonic masculinity. Although I can recognize that masculinity, globally, is inter-influential, I agree with Jefferson's reasoning, as hegemony is reliant on consent which is unlikely to reach a world-wide consensus.

If one does recognize a "world gender order", then it is possible that China has only in the past 30 years had the opportunity to influence or gain influence through all the factors that influence the changing state of hegemonic masculinity (international relations, mass media etc.), as they only opened their metaphorical doors in 1979. As such it is relevant to consider contemporary Chinese masculinity within a global context.

3.2 Theorising Chinese Masculinity

Kam Louie has written an extensive analysis of Chinese masculinity, "*Theorising Chinese Masculinity*", where the analysis is based on literature and films. He analyses the historical development of Chinese masculinity in terms of *wen* and *wu*, and illustrates how they can be related to the manifestation of masculinity from Confucius (551–479 BCE) to Jackie Chan (1954-). As the study of Chinese masculinity is relatively limited, Louie's theory is one of few works that takes a historical approach to pinpoint certain concepts (*wen* and *wu*; 文/武) that have resonated throughout Chinese history. Although he does not fully manage to describe how *wen* and *wu* are relevant in contemporary China, it is possible to argue that his theory is important in analysing Chinese masculinity, as *wen* and *wu* have arguably influenced Chinese masculinity throughout centuries. By taking a historical approach it may help to better analyse expressions of masculinity in contemporary China.

Louie argues that Western and Chinese masculinities have been described as fundamentally different.⁶³ Louie and Edwards describe the stereotypical Occidental male as embodying characteristics such as toughness, courage, and decisiveness and as having a proclivity to violence, an adventurous spirit, a preference towards physical rather than oral expression of thoughts and a callous attitude to sexual relations (also recognized as a 'macho man').⁶⁴

⁶² (Jefferson 2002)

⁶³ (Louie 2002) P. 8

⁶⁴ (Louie 1994) P.138

Although there is a tradition of the ‘macho male’ in China as well – *yīngxióng* (outstanding male, hero, 英雄) and *hǎohàn* (good fellow, 好汉) - it is not the predominant one. In China, Louie argues that the cerebral male model is historically seen as the dominant masculinity rather than the macho male model. Using Western paradigms of masculinity to view Chinese masculinity is therefore inappropriate and will only prove that Chinese men are “not quite real men” as proposed Sūn Lóngjī (孙隆基).⁶⁵ In a cross-cultural examination where the ideal masculinity was a Westernized masculinity he concluded that Latin American and Mediterranean men were the masculine ideal, and that Chinese men were eunuchs⁶⁶. This is a strong example illustrating why an analysis of Chinese masculinity solely based on Western masculinity theory is misleading. Analysis of Chinese masculinities should therefore not base itself on Occidental normative traditions, but rather conceptualise an Asian contextual framework as a base for analysis.⁶⁷

Although the last chapter of *Theorising Masculinity* briefly discusses Chinese masculinity in an international context, the theory does, to a certain degree, lack analysis of the impact of globalisation on contemporary Chinese masculinity. However, the theory does illustrate the importance of why Chinese masculinity should be analysed through a different cultural reference than an Occidental one.

3.2.1 Core Concepts: ‘Wen’(文) and ‘Wu’(武)

Kam Louie proposes the dichotomous concepts of *wen* and *wu* (文/武) in his book “Theorising Chinese Masculinity”. He argues that the concepts are central when discussing Chinese masculinity. *Wen* refers to scholarly achievements, the cultural or civil, and *wu* refers to the characteristics of masculinity such as physical strength expressed through martial prowess.⁶⁸

The masculine ideal has changed throughout history (further discussion in section 3.2.2). At certain times, a balance of *wen* and *wu* was expected, at other times, one was preferred over the other. An important note is that *either* was considered manly.⁶⁹ Confucius and Guang Yu

⁶⁵ (Louie 1994) P.138

⁶⁶ (Louie 1994) P.138

⁶⁷ (Louie 1994) P.138

⁶⁸ (Zhengming 1996) P. 2

⁶⁹ (Louie 2002) P.11

represent *wen* and *wu*, respectively. Louie argues that linking the concept of *wen* and *wu* with the scholar and sage Confucius, and military leader Guang Yu (220-280 AD) is paramount as he writes, “in China Confucius is worshipped as the greatest man of scholarly learning, and Guan Yu as the greatest man of military prowess”.⁷⁰

It is possible to argue that Confucius has had an influence on most parts of Chinese society, and masculinity is not an exception. Louie argues that one of the goals for neo-Confucians (originating in the Tang dynasty) was to attain the status of sage (*shèngrén*; 圣人). It was, however, considered to be impossible for the average man to attain such a status. Instead they strived to attain the status of *jūnzi* (君子, ‘gentleman’; ‘refined man’; ‘virtuous man’) which was closely connected with *wen* - reiterated several times in the *Analects*.⁷¹ To attain the title *junzi*, the *Analects* stated that “the *junzi* had to be well-versed in *wen*”. One of the subjects Confucius taught was *wen*, which presumably meant literature, music, archery, charioteering, writing and mathematics. The other subjects he taught were ethical concepts (behaviour, loyalty and faith).⁷² This illustrates that *wen* comprises a proper education, and as such is the scholarly part of the dichotomous concept of *wen* and *wu*.

Guan Yu (160-221AD) was a military leader at the end of the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD) and the beginning of the “Three Kingdoms” period (220-280 AD). He was thought to be illiterate and even though he made no attempt to save “China” he achieved the status of “imperial god” by the Ming dynasty. The image of Guan Yu is integral to both Chinese culture and the Chinese concept of masculinity. Characteristics of Guan Yu include not being able to commit treachery and villainy, having immovable self-control, and strong moral fibres (illustrated through his unwillingness to succumb to women). His physical description is “well-built... with a long beard and a red face”. The character of Guan Yu defines *wu*-masculinity in an interesting way as his actions (saving a woman from being raped; avoiding the sexual advances of the “most alluring of all women in the Three Kingdoms”) show that *wu*-masculinity features including physical size, martial prowess and brutality are insufficient in making a real *yingxiong* (hero 英雄).⁷³

⁷⁰ (Louie 2002) P. 23; (Zhengming 1996) P.2

⁷¹ (Louie 2002) P.44

⁷² (Louie 2002) P. 45

⁷³ (Louie 2002) P. 23-29

By analysing Confucius and Guan Yu, it is possible to see the basic formation of hegemonic masculinity in a historical Chinese context. Confucius promotes a cerebral, scholarly form of masculinity, which is central at certain points in history, and Guan Yu promotes a military, physical masculinity. One thing that is clear from the early conception of masculinity is that a combination of *wen* and *wu* seems to be necessary to achieve what was regarded as masculine. This will be discussed further in the next section.

3.3 Chinese masculinity: A Historical Perspective

As described in section 2.3.1, scholars such as Kam Louie and Louise Edwards have argued that the male model within Chinese masculinity can include both *wen* and *wu*, and at certain points in history, the constellations of *wen* and *wu* have experienced shifts in balance.⁷⁴ “The Four Measures” (*Sidù*; 四度) and “A Synopsis of Discourses” (*Lùn Yuè*; 论月) describe the importance of balance of *wen* and *wu* at early points in history (ca. 250-150 B.C).⁷⁵ The texts state: “The one who uses two parts civility and one part martiality is the king.”⁷⁶; “To begin in civility and end in martiality: this is the Way of Heaven and Earth.”⁷⁷ *Wen* and *wu* in this case are interpreted as civility and martiality, respectively.⁷⁸ The Analects also presents the balanced dichotomy of *wen* and *wu* in the phrase, “There is no man who does not have something in the way of *wen* and *wu* in him”.⁷⁹ The three examples show that in early history, a balance between *wen* and *wu* was of utmost importance.

As stated above, the masculine ideal has not always been a balance of *wen* and *wu*. The fluctuating importance of physical activities throughout the dynasties has had a notable impact on the ideal of masculinity. During the Tang dynasty, men aspired towards a virile, martial appearance, growing thick beards, whiskers and long moustaches as well as admiring bodily strength, illustrating the importance of *wu* at this point in time.⁸⁰ During the Ming and Qing dynasties, a less martial impression was the ideal, as younger men without beards, moustaches and whiskers were commonly depicted; however, an athletic build was still

⁷⁴ (Louie 1994) P.140

⁷⁵ (Bloom and De Bary 1999) P.250

⁷⁶ (Bloom and De Bary 1999)P.250

⁷⁷ (Bloom and De Bary 1999) P.250

⁷⁸ (Bloom and De Bary 1999) P. 250

⁷⁹ (Louie 1994) P.140

⁸⁰ (Gulik 2003) P.188

appreciated and bodily strength was recognized as an attribute of a handsome man during the Ming period.⁸¹

Under the Manchu occupation, the Chinese, and especially the literary class, reacted towards the monopolization of martial arts by the conquerors, by regarding physical exercise as vulgar. They regarded athletic prowess as suited only to the “Qing barbarians” and Chinese professional boxers and acrobats. The ideal lover was at this time described as “delicate, hyper-sensitive youngster with pale face and narrow shoulders, passing the greater part time of his time dreaming among his books and flowers, and who falls ill at the slightest disappointment.”⁸² The proclivity towards a less military appearance, could illustrate an increased idealisation of *wen* masculinity, and a move away from a balanced combination of *wen* and *wu*.

During the Mao-period (1949-1978), gender characteristics were diluted as state socialism attempted to eradicate typical gender features and sexual desires in the public sphere. This included removing traditional forms of labour-division.⁸³ “Iron girls” (*tiěgūniáng*, 铁姑娘) were introduced – strong proletarian women could work just as hard as men and “hold up half the sky”. The introduction largely muted gender discourse in public, which further diluted the role of man/woman.⁸⁴ Men’s economic power was also reduced, and it has been suggested that the reduction of power (through the *iron girls* and economic downgrading) diminished their social status, impairing their manhood, “turning them into the obedient instruments of the authoritarian party-state.”⁸⁵ This period is an interesting era in terms of *wen* and *wu*. As *wen* and *wu* are specific to men, and can only be applied to women *after* they have, however superficially or transiently, transformed into men. This can be achieved by, for example, dressing as a man (such as Hua Mulan)⁸⁶, but the two concepts are in theory, not applicable to women. However, with the eradication of gender barriers, it is possible to argue that *wen* and *wu* could be applied to women during this period. If that would be the case, it would prove a further eradication of gender barriers and a drastic shift in the balance of traditional gender power (i.e. hegemonic masculinity), and emasculation of men.

⁸¹ (Louie 2002) P.6

⁸² (Gulik 2003) P.296

⁸³ (Croll 2000) P.135

⁸⁴ (Zhang 2010) P.165-166

⁸⁵ (Geng Song 2010) P. 407

⁸⁶ (Louie 2002) P.11-12

Geng Song proposes that in post-Maoist society economic reform and the opening to the outside world have eliminated both the Confucian and Maoist models of manhood. He describes this new era as having entered a “crisis of masculinity”.⁸⁷ At the same time as a “crisis of masculinity” has been declared, Louie writes that scholars are trying to prove that Confucius could be interpreted as accepting the concept of economic profitability, which is so central in the ‘new’ China.⁸⁸ This is problematic as the *Analects* explicitly state, “the noble person (*jūnzi*; 君子) is concerned with rightness (*yì*; 义); the small person (*xiǎorén*; 小人) is concerned with profit (*lì*; 利).”⁸⁹

As stated in the introduction, it has also been suggested that the connotations of masculinity in the contemporary Chinese context have shifted to accommodate a growing engagement with consumer culture and a market economy.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Zhang Li suggests that the re-emergence of gender difference and sexual desire in the public space manifests itself through differentiated longings by man and woman. For men, self-worth is reliant on a form of masculinity based on being able to make money, possess desirable material goods or gain political power.⁹¹ The shift in connotations of what masculinity entails could be viewed as one reason why some scholars are attempting to tie Confucian values to entrepreneurial and profitable activities. By proving that Confucius ratified economic profitability, it is once again possible to tie masculinity to a Confucian set of values (i.e. *wen* and *wu*) that are so central in Chinese society.

3.4 Reading Masculinity

Craig states that a key concept within men’s studies is that gender is a socially constructed concept and that the popular media has “long been considered to have an important role in defining and shaping the American culture, it follows that the media should be one focus of any study of men and masculinity”.⁹² Connell argues the same of media and the construction of a global masculinity (see section 3.1.3). In this section I will discuss how masculinity can be seen as socially constructed, followed by a discussion as to what extent the media influences the construction of a social reality, and thereby masculinity.

⁸⁷ (Geng Song 2010) P. 406

⁸⁸ (Louie 2002) P. 53-54

⁸⁹ (Louie 2002) P.54;(Bloom and De Bary 1999) P. 49

⁹⁰ (Chen 2002) P. 50

⁹¹ (Zhang 2010) P.166

⁹² (Craig 1992)P. 2-3

3.4.1 Masculinity: A Social Construct?

According to Kahn, the meaning of “constructivist” is literally “to build”. One way to explain the belief of social constructivist is to look at how they might consider the notion of colour. They would consider that colours exist because of a combination of factors allowing them to exist. The colour would change if any of the factors changed.⁹³ He explains that constructivist’s counterpart, the non-constructivists, would say that “real” colours look different in different situations, whilst constructivists would say that there is only an *experience* of colour that changes as contributing factors shift. As such, colour is viewed as being constructed. By using the constructivist method of looking at gender, one acknowledges that gender is a constructed concept based on social and historical factors.⁹⁴ Kahn explains that the basic assumption of post-modern philosophy is that humans gather information and process it based on their unique sense, and when describing the information, we have access to a “truth” that is constructed rather than being an *objective* truth.⁹⁵ How does this then relate to the construction of masculinity?

In Michael Messner’s study, “Barbie Girls Versus Sea Monsters: Children Constructing Gender” he outlines three factors he uses in the analysis of gender as a social construct: the interactional level, the level of structural context and the level of cultural symbol.⁹⁶ The interactional level concerns the behaviour of people that signals they are “doing gender”. The level of structural context refers to how one can understand different aspects in a certain situation can affect the specific situation and how people’s interaction could alter due to the aspects. The level of cultural symbol refers to what implications the behaviours have on a cultural level.⁹⁷

He applies the three aspects when analysing an incident he observed in LA. The soccer season is starting, and a ceremony is held to mark this. The boys’ team, “Sea Monsters” and the girls’ team, “Barbie Girls” clash, rhetorically and physically. This happens when the boys, initially fascinated by the Barbie-inspired float the girls have made, begin chanting “No Barbie! No Barbie!” after catching each other’s eye.⁹⁸ The behaviour observed is the

⁹³ (Kahn 2009) P. 88

⁹⁴ (Kahn 2009) P. 89

⁹⁵ (Kahn 2009) P. 88

⁹⁶ (Messner 2000) P. 767

⁹⁷ (Messner 2000) P. 780-781; (Kahn 2009) P. 90

⁹⁸ (Messner 2000) P. 767-769

interactional level.⁹⁹ The structural context is understood through the power and the structure of the ceremony in terms the gender division of who plans it and who is in positions of power.¹⁰⁰ Kahn writes that a social constructionist is interested in knowing whose voice conveys the knowledge, and as such it is important to know who is involved in a situation and who are in positions of power.¹⁰¹ The cultural level in this case would be e.g. the colours which carry culturally encoded meanings and that could be adopted by the children, potentially leading to a constructed division of gender.¹⁰²

3.4.2 Social Construction: The Role of the Media

Jim Macnamara writes that as mass media influences individuals, culture, social structures and political policy they additionally reflect social, political and intellectual views and attitudes.¹⁰³ From this it is possible to argue that media, due to its significant influence on the public, is an important factor in socially constructing gender. Craig writes as “...the popular media have long been considered to have an important role in defining and shaping the American culture, it follows that the media should be one focus of any study of men and masculinity”.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, Curran concludes, “The conviction... that the media are important agents of influence is broadly correct. However, the ways in which the media exert influence are complex and contingent.”¹⁰⁵

However, there is disagreement as to what extent media is instrumental in constructing social reality. Macnamara writes that sociologists and modern media scholars such as Mumford and Newbold point out that audiences extract information from the media based on their own reality, rather than passively absorbing media messages.¹⁰⁶ McQuail reverses the classic media question “what effect do the media have on people?” to “how do people use the media?”¹⁰⁷ The legitimacy of the reversion of this question is backed by psychologist, Leon Festinger’s findings, that people accept information that resonate with their views, but resist messages that do not agree with their attitudes.¹⁰⁸ It seems clear that the media is in the very

⁹⁹ (Kahn 2009) P.91

¹⁰⁰ (Messner 2000) P. 771

¹⁰¹ (Kahn 2009) P. 91

¹⁰² (Messner 2000) P. 773

¹⁰³ (Macnamara 2006) P. 1

¹⁰⁴ (Craig 1992) P. 3

¹⁰⁵ (Macnamara 2006) P. 64

¹⁰⁶ (Macnamara 2006) P. 68

¹⁰⁷ (Macnamara 2006) P. 68

¹⁰⁸ (Macnamara 2006) P. 65

least responsible for *some* of the influence on the social construction of gender, and as such it is relevant to analyse media when studying masculinity.

3.5 Conclusion

This thesis bases its analysis on three different theories that all enable better analysis of expressions of masculinity. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity illustrates that there are different kinds of masculinity, and proposes that one type of masculinity is hegemonic. This kind of masculinity is achieved through social ascendancy, and not through violence or rhetorical demands.¹⁰⁹ In the following chapters I will analyse factors of masculine expressions that could possibly be identified as expressions of a Chinese form of hegemonic masculinity. Connell's proposition of a global hegemonic masculinity has met criticism. Although it is not entirely convincing, it is reasonable to include the possibility of an international influence in the construction of masculinity in the analysis of contemporary urban Chinese masculinity.

Chinese masculinity theory, as proposed by Kam Louie, uses the dichotomous concepts of *wen* and *wu* as the basis for analysis of the development of a Chinese masculinity throughout history. The theory encounters obstacles when masculinity in contemporary China is considered, and as such it is important to combine Chinese masculinity theory with the aforementioned possibility of multiple types of masculinity.

In addition one needs to consider the role of social constructionism which can be used in the analysis of the media and its influence on the construction of gender. Constructivism literally means to build, and by using a constructivist model of looking at gender, one acknowledges that gender is a constructed concept based on social and historical factors. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is a socially constructed concept, built in relation to different masculinities and women. Following this, it is natural to consider the media's role in the construction of gender, and more specifically for this thesis, masculinity.

¹⁰⁹ (Connell 1987) P. 184

4 Groomed Masculinity

“It’s been kept underground for too long,” observes one sharply dressed ‘metrosexual’ in his early twenties. He has a perfect complexion and precisely gelled hair, and is inspecting a display of costly aftershaves. ‘This exhibition shows that male vanity’s finally coming out of the closet.’”¹¹⁰

-Mark Simpson

Kimmel writes that women have usually been connected with the concept of appearance and a preoccupation with beauty.¹¹¹ In 1994, Mark Simpson introduced the concept of “metrosexual” through an essay printed in the *Independent*, suggesting that the concept of fashion and beauty, usually connected with women had entered into the male realm. He described the metrosexual man as, “the single young man with a high disposable income, living or working in the city (because that’s where all the best shops are)...” The metrosexual also has, according to Simpson, a perfect complexion, styles his hair to perfection and at the same time shows interest for perfumes. He concludes that this behaviour is an indicator that men are finally becoming more appearance-focused.¹¹² Matthew Hall argues that in the West, declining levels of manual labour and the increasing exposure of the male body in the media has led to at least some men re-evaluating their appearance and repositioning themselves as consumers of fashion and style products. This essentially leads to a reconstruction of their ideas of what it is to be a man.¹¹³ Lisa S. McNeill and Katie Douglas argue that the emergence of the metrosexual could be said to be the most recognized expression of change of male consumption activities.¹¹⁴ Such a change could be an indication of a shift in factors related to the construction of masculinity.

The male grooming industry in China has seen a drastic rise in revenue in the last years, growing from virtually non-existence to becoming an \$800 million dollar industry in 2010.¹¹⁵ In 2007, *Nánfāngwǎng* (南方网) posted a discussion concerning the metrosexual man on their website. One of the discussants remarked that there seemed to be a change in attitude and that caring about your appearance was becoming increasingly acceptable stating, “传统观念认为，女性是最爱美的，但是现在，人们的观念发生了很大的变化，尤其是在大城市。几年前，如果一个男人对自己的衣着

¹¹⁰ (Simpson 1994)

¹¹¹ (Kimmel 1987) P.37

¹¹² (Simpson 1994)

¹¹³ (Hall 2011) P.12

¹¹⁴ (McNeill and Douglas 2011) P.449

¹¹⁵ (Mong 2011)

和外表太过在意，会被旁人耻笑为“女人气”或者“娘娘腔”。但是现在，很多男人都愿意把自己说成“都市美男”，这个词完全没有负面含意了。”¹¹⁶ (“According to traditional perceptions it is believed that women are the most beautiful, but now, people’s ideas are changing very much, especially in the big cities. A few years ago, if a man paid too much attention to his clothing or appearance, he could meet ridicule from other people for having "female characteristics" or "womanish mannerisms". But now, many men wish to call themselves "metrosexual" without the word having negative connotations.”)¹¹⁷

Despite metrosexuality being portrayed as something new in Chinese society, it may not be an entirely new practice in China. When the tomb at Mawangdui was opened, a series of grooming articles were found. Pieces ranging from combs to mirrors, and cosmetic boxes containing hairpins and silk ribbons were all found.¹¹⁸ This finding suggests that grooming in China is not a newfound concept; rather that it is a concept that is being revived and reformulated for the modern world. Furthermore it illustrates the acceptance of grooming as an aspect of masculinity in earlier periods of Chinese history.

This chapter will discuss to what degree male grooming is considered an acceptable part of masculinity in China. I will focus the discussion of male grooming based on interviews with my informants. As there was a lack of focus explicit on grooming in the “Fashion Well” photo series in GQ, I will reflect upon this. Grooming as a symptom of the middle-class and the role of grooming in terms of hegemonic masculinity in present day China will also be discussed. I will argue that grooming is becoming increasingly acceptable as a masculine form of expression, and even in some cases and situations a *necessary* tool.

4.1 To Groom or Not to Groom?

Connell discusses different kinds of masculinities. She points out that hegemonic masculinity is often a model of masculinity that is widely accepted, but the characteristics of the cultural ideal(s) do not necessarily need to closely correspond with the personalities of the majority of men.¹¹⁹ By looking at GQ and the informants’ views of male grooming and how these views differ it becomes apparent that grooming is still in an undecided phase concerning its acceptance into a masculine expression. It also becomes apparent that Chinese masculinity is

¹¹⁶ (Anonymous 2007)

¹¹⁷ My own translation.

¹¹⁸ (Shubin 2012)

¹¹⁹ (Connell 1987) P.184-185

composed of different types of masculinities and that some of the expressions are considered more acceptable and integrated into a construction of a hegemonic form of Chinese masculinity.

According to the report “Chinese Male Grooming Market Analysis”, male consumers in China are ready to spend more on cosmetic products. This is due to “rising affluence, increased product knowledge & exposure, and desire for better lifestyle”.¹²⁰ In 2009 the male skin care market increased with 27% and 40% in 2010.¹²¹ Currently, the hair care segment dominates the Chinese male grooming market.¹²² Grooming is not particularly conspicuous in terms of brands. Unless you enter a man’s home and bathroom, it is unlikely you will see what brand of products he uses. Even so, the male grooming industry in China is rapidly on the rise, so much so that Proctor & Gamble launched their first ever Olay for men line in China.¹²³ This indicates that men have other motives than conspicuous consumption as far as using grooming products are concerned.

The male grooming market is still in its early stages in China, with female beauty and health products dominating the market. Based on a Euromonitor International report, *The Independent* reported in 2012 that, “In the last five years, China has seen an explosion of marketing towards men. From glossy Chinese and imported magazines to L’Oreal’s use of actor Daniel Wu to represent its men’s cosmetics line, urban Chinese men are now surrounded by images of the less-masculine, better-groomed metrosexual male...”¹²⁴ In the same article Shaun Rein, Managing director of China Market Research Group, was cited saying, “Chinese men are now more concerned with appearances and projecting an image of success... First, they were spending on watches and pens and shoes as a status symbol, then five years ago they were focusing more on apparel, and in the last three years there is a real upsurge in male cosmetics.”¹²⁵ As more Chinese men begin to participate in the purchasing of grooming products, the increase in consumption of male grooming products could indicate a growing acceptance of a more “groomed” form of masculinity. The metrosexual male image could be marking its entrance into the Chinese form of masculinity, just as it did in Europe in the early nineties.

¹²⁰ (Anonymous 2012)

¹²¹ (Zhigang 2011)

¹²² (Anonymous 2012)

¹²³ (Anonymous 2010)

¹²⁴ (Anonymous 2010)

¹²⁵ (Anonymous 2010)

Although there seems to be an increased acceptance of male grooming products, I found that when broaching the subject, not all the informants were as accepting, or naturally inclined to discuss the matter. There seems to be two different views as far as the informants' acceptance of using grooming products. When the informants were asked if they used grooming products (*huàzhuāngpǐn*; 化妆品) some were embarrassed and would either laugh or become uncomfortable and look away. A plainly clothed 29-year-old man with a standard, no-fuss hair style, laughingly replied “no” to the question, do you use any cosmetics/grooming products? (*Nǐ yòng huàzhuāngpǐn ma?* 你用化妆品吗?), and elaborated his response by saying that he felt cosmetics/grooming products were a little feminine (*nǚxìng de*; 女性的). Informant 21, a 28 year old man, with a simple hair style, appearing well-dressed and wearing a discrete D&G t-shirt and jeans also became slightly uncomfortable and embarrassed when I asked if he used cosmetics, and answered with a short and simple “no” (*bù yòng*; 不用). Their responses illustrate the scepticism that still seems to remain to some degree in contemporary China.

Some of the other informants were more open about using lotions and creams for their face. A 32 year old man working at an international law firm, replied openly that he used “balsam” for his face. A 29 year-old informant who worked at an international marketing firm wore trendy clothes and precisely styled hair explained that he did facials at home and that he used moisturisers and cream for acne. In general the grooming products men said they used were intended for facial use, and none of the informants pointed to cosmetics or grooming products for the rest of the body (such as body creams and scrubs or perfume). This could indicate that although there is a tendency for men to use increasing amounts of grooming products, as is reflected by sales numbers, it is still in an early phase and has not yet been fully accepted as a completely open expression of masculinity.

In their study of male grooming products in New Zealand, McNeill and Douglas noted that many of their informants would admit to using these kinds of products, but that they would legitimise their use through claims of functionality. They wanted their grooming choices to be seen as utilitarian rather than self-indulgent.¹²⁶ Through the interviews I completed, there seemed to be a similar utilitarian attitude amongst some of the informants. One informant

¹²⁶ (McNeill and Douglas 2011) P. 452

said that he used moisturisers, and cream for acne because he had very bad skin; another said he only used something to wash his face with and when asked what kind of a brand the face wash was he replied, “It is just some Chinese brand” (*zhǐ shì yīxiē zhōngguó de páizi*; 只是一些中国的牌子). He was not too concerned with what he used, just the practical function of what he used the product for – cleaning his face. This could indicate that there is utilitarian legitimation process for the use of grooming products amongst Chinese male consumers participating in the grooming industry. The notion that male consumers wish to legitimize their use of grooming products is confirmed by An Jinfang who writes that men and women in China look for two different things in cosmetic products. Men look for health and wellness, whilst women look for health and beauty.¹²⁷

One challenge concerning the analysis of the use of grooming products by men is that there seemed to be a difference in understanding as to what grooming products (*huàzhuāngpǐn*, 化妆品) included. It was unclear whether some of the informants took it to mean make-up, and were embarrassed or uncomfortable for this reason, or if they took it to include body and facial products in general. To clarify, it would have been beneficial to use a more precise formulation to explain what was meant by *huàzhuāngpǐn*. It could also have been useful to ask what the informants understood as “*huàzhuāngpǐn*”. Unfortunately this did not occur to me before leaving China upon the completion of the fieldwork.

4.2 Grooming and Foreign Influence

In chapter three I discuss Connell’s proposed notion of a “world gender order” which is based on a recognition that large-scale institutions, such as the state, are gendered and that international trade and global markets act as areas for gender formation and gender politics. Although the concept of a “world gender order”, or a “hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world gender order” is problematic, transcontinental influence on gender is reasonable to consider. As argued in chapter three, if one does recognize a “world gender order”, then it is possible that China in the past 30 years, has had the opportunity to influence or *be* influenced by global factors that impact the changing state of global hegemonic masculinity, or a world gender order (international relations, mass media etc.). As such it is relevant to consider contemporary Chinese masculinity within a global context.

¹²⁷ (Jinfang 2011) P. 11

In September 2012, Euromonitor reported that there was a double-digit growth in sales of grooming products in Latin America and a low single-digit gain in Western Europe. Western Europe remains the largest market for men's grooming products, with Latin America closing the gap to just over US\$2 billion, down from US\$5 billion in 2007. This could indicate that the traditionally macho Latin-American culture could be increasingly accepting the metrosexual expression already anchored in the West. Euromonitor furthermore reports that Asia Pacific will be the second biggest contributor to growth after Latin America and that “the region's potential for the men's grooming market remains largely untapped. Considering the promise of skin care products incorporating features from women's skin care, like whitening and hyperpigmentation, it is the region to watch for men's grooming.”¹²⁸

Men's grooming is predicted to be one of the fastest-growing categories in the grooming sector, predicted to add approximately \$4 billion to its global value size by 2014, according to Euromonitor International. According to Carrie Lennard at Euromonitor International, due to changing attitudes among men globally about grooming and a shift in key emerging regions away from manual work toward white-collar jobs, sales are set to rise.¹²⁹ If we follow Connell's theory of a world gender order, then male grooming seems to be one of the factors that could increasingly be considered to be incorporated into the construction of a global masculine expression. Male grooming seems to be gaining acceptance on a global basis, and as China is a relatively new market, it is plausible that this is a trend that will increasingly affect Chinese men's view of grooming in the next few years. It is especially plausible when considering the positive attitude amongst many of the informants concerning male grooming products, as discussed previously in this chapter.

Although it seems like the increase in sales of grooming products in China is due to a change in global masculine trends, the Chinese masculine expression has not always been foreign to grooming. Gu Yueqing has written an article summarizing the use of cosmetics by men during the Sui and Tang dynasty. He writes that a special kind of perfume was used as early as the Han dynasty amongst men, but that it was during the Tang dynasty it became in vogue. Men would wear chrysanthemums in their hair, and the use of makeup such as foundation and even lipstick became usual during the Tang dynasty.¹³⁰ At the same time, Van Gullik has

¹²⁸ (Tyrimou 2012)

¹²⁹ (Lennard 2010)

¹³⁰ (Yueqing 2012)

described the men during the Tang as aspiring towards a virile, martial appearance, growing thick beards, whiskers and long moustaches as well as admiring bodily strength, illustrating the importance of *wu* at this point in time.¹³¹ Although there appears to be different types of masculinity during this period, the martial form of masculinity would presumably still have to commit to upkeep of beards, whiskers and moustaches. Grooming can therefore arguably be seen as a prominent factor of masculinity as early as, at least, the Tang period. What expressed the hegemonic form of masculinity during this period is uncertain, but grooming seems to have been an important factor of masculinity. To determine the use of grooming and its relation to masculinity in ancient China, the subject would require further research.

In America, as well as in China, plastic surgeries amongst men have seen a remarkable increase in the past few years. The American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons reported a 121% increase since 1997, which is when the organization first started tracking these numbers. American men underwent more than 800,000 cosmetic procedures in 2011.¹³² This indicates the growing importance of physical beauty amongst men. It was also reported that due to the economic downturn of the past years, many highly qualified men have found themselves competing for the same job openings as younger individuals than themselves. A further assumption is that this could be the reason one has seen an upsurge in sales of treatments and products to maintain a youthful appearance.¹³³

China Daily reported in 2011 that Chinese men were increasingly using grooming products due to high demands in the professional world.¹³⁴ According to their interviewees, looking good was important during job interviews as it could help you get a job where there were many applicants. This relates to the situation in American, discussed above, where older men have to compete for the same position as younger men. Grooming products could be seen as a tool to present an improved image of yourself. Forbes reported that Korean men were in increasing numbers using makeup in their everyday life. It is becoming more acceptable to use eyeliner, rouge, foundation and lipstick and it is often used in working environment to give better first impressions. During the interviews I used the Chinese word 化妆品 (huàzhuāngpǐn) and the English phrase “cosmetics or grooming products” when asking the informants about their cosmetic preferences. By using these words I opened for the

¹³¹ (Gulik 2003) P.188

¹³² (Linder 2012a)

¹³³ (Linder 2012b)

¹³⁴

possibility that the interview objects could respond with an explanation of his use of makeup products if he did use any kind of makeup. There were no responses to this effect. This indicates that the Chinese man is at this time not experimenting with makeup in the same fashion as their Korean neighbours are.

If an increasing amount of men begin to use grooming products, it could lead to an alteration of what masculine expression entails both in a global and Chinese perspective. Although Chinese men are not yet leading the grooming market there is a rapid increase in sales of male grooming. This is indicative of a growing importance of physical beauty amongst men.

Youthfulness also seem like it could be a potential new factor in the construction of masculinity in a Chinese context, as cosmetics are generally used to reduce the visibility of wrinkles, dark spots and accentuate features that could make you look young and fresh. However, when I asked the informants who they found to be the most masculine, they cited famous men such as Brad Pitt, Jiāng Wén (姜文), Arnold Schwarzenegger, Steve Jobs and Sūn Hóngléi (孙红雷) whom are all above 40 years old (for a complete list of replies see section 6.2). This suggests that amongst the informants, being young was not the main proponent of masculine expression. GQ uses mostly what appear to be younger models for their fashion shoots, and seems to promote youthfulness as a contributing masculine factor. There seems to be a difference in how GQ and the informants view masculinity concerning this particular point. This could illustrate that the media is not entirely responsible for the construction of an ideal, or dominant form of masculinity. Further research on age-representation in Chinese male magazines needs to be completed to provide a conclusive answer of how the media influences the perception of masculinity and age.

4.3 The Spa

A spa facility can include many different services, but is often associated with beauty treatments such as facials, waxing, manicures and pedicures. It is also likely to provide treatments such as massages and body scrubs and usually provides a relaxing space with calming music. During interviewing I asked the informants about their view on the use of spas. From my own observations, I rarely encountered Chinese men at the spa facilities I used during my stay in Shanghai. Although I have not been able to find formal research done on male use of spas, based on a journalist's interviews with employees at spas, *China Daily* indicated that there has been an increase in the use of spas amongst men, but that the women

still dominate the use of these facilities.¹³⁵ I was interested in the men's perceptions concerning the use of what could be described as a stereotypically feminine space. The general consensus was that it was an acceptable activity for others to participate in and enjoy; however, the informant himself did not participate in such activities. In this section I will mainly be discussing my informants views concerning the use of spas and other related places of beautification. As I did not find any articles discussing or presenting spas in GQ, I will briefly reflect upon this; however, I will not focus on GQ's lack of spa-related information in the photo series analysed for this thesis.

The questions posed to the informants as far as the use of spa was concerned were: "do you attend spas" and depending on the answer I would follow up by asking related questions as to why or why not they used spas. During my time in the field I spent time going to spas, hairdressers, and nail salons to observe the patrons. I would talk with the employees at these places and at the same time observe the frequency of male patrons who spent time at the salons and beauty facilities. At the hair salons, there were many men – sometimes even more than women. At the nail salons, I only ever once saw a man get a pedicure. He came by himself and chatted with the woman providing the pedicure whilst watching a soap opera and reading a magazine. At the spas (mainly "Dragon Fly" - a chain of spas found throughout many of the larger cities in China, and even at one point in time in Oslo!) I only met Western men – no Chinese male patrons. The employees at the spas were also mainly women, with the exception of some male massage therapists. This could indicate that working at a place related to beauty treatments could be viewed as a 'feminine' occupation not entirely suitable for a man. The limited amount of male patrons and employees at the beauty facilities is what gave me the incentive to ask the informants about their view concerning the spa use.

On the question of attending spas, some of the responses were as follows: Informant six, a 23-year old man, working at a hairdressing salon said that he does not go to the spa very often. He says that is more for Shanghai men (he was originally from Anhui, but currently lived and worked in Shanghai) and that men between the ages of 18-30 years use spas. Three friends I met at Plaza 66, a shopping mall, said they did not go to spas. They also made a facial expression indicating that they thought the whole thing was very strange. A 27-year old fashion designer said that he did not go to the spa, but his friends did facials. Informant nine,

¹³⁵ (Junqian 2011)

a wealthy self-employed Shanhaiinese man replied straight away without hesitation that he went to spas. Informants 11 and 14, two 27-year old men replied that they did not go to the spa without any further opinions concerning the question. One of the informants, a 32-year old man, working at a law firm said, laughingly, that he did not go to the spa but that some friends did. Following up his response, I asked him if they did facials, whereupon he laughed again and replied that it was only for massages, not for facials. Another informant, also working at a law firm, did not go to the spa, but he thought that it was alright for others to go. At the end of the question he clearly reiterated, “but I don’t go”. He followed up by saying that it was not acceptable to go to spa because of his wife, stating; “it would not be too ‘polite’ because maybe you would not wear so many clothes”. The final response came from a 29-year old marketing manager who replied the he went to the spa with friends sometimes.

As is obvious from the replies presented above, there were many opinions concerning the spa. Some people found it to be an absurd concept, whilst others were open about their use of the spa. The informants that leaned towards a more undecided response said that it was fine for others to use, but that they did not use the spa themselves. As I did not ask for the reasons why they did not use the spa but found it alright for others to attend, it is possible that there were economic reasoning underlying their choices rather than emotional or psychological factors. However, judging from the laughing informant 22 (the 32-year old man working for a law firm) accompanied his answer with, and the three friends who mimicked that they found the question quite absurd, it is possible to infer that they were uncomfortable or embarrassed with the question. That could mean that they associate the spa with something they do not want to be associated with. Due to the spa often being used for beauty treatments, and the fact that most of the employees I observed at the spa facilities were women, the notion of ‘the spa’ could be said to have a feminine connotation to it. As I was asking if it was considered alright for men to go to the spa, the feminine association may have been what they reacted to. As several of the informants said it was all right for friends, or others to go to the spa, but they themselves did not, it could indicate a slow acceptance of this type of activity. This relates to the view of cosmetic use, which also seems to be at a starting phase in terms of becoming an acceptable factor of masculinity. The reluctance towards the use of the spa also indicates an unwillingness to associate themselves with this particular activity, which suggests that there is a reluctance to see it as part of a masculine expression. This area would require further research to fully understand the motivations and reluctance of men to use the spa.

Kimberly R. McNeil and Edna J. Ragins' study of the American market for destination spas revealed that the spa market was largely dominated by women and 29% of the users were men. They reported an increase in interest from men, and many of the destination spas had begun to cater for the male clientele. The study also revealed that many American men were uncomfortable with spas. Some men were uncomfortable with the idea of being massaged by another man, and others were uncomfortable with the idea of having to take off all their clothes and then getting a massage.¹³⁶ This was the case for one of the informants who thought it would be impolite in relation to his wife to undress at a spa. The attitudes seem to be similar in America and China, suggesting that spa treatments have yet to gain wide acceptance as a masculine activity globally, and as such cannot be said to be a hegemonic form of masculinity. There could also be other reasons for the men to feel uncomfortable in a spa setting. The spa industry has had, and to some degree still has certain negative sexual connotations. Many people may relate going to a massage parlour as something very different than a getting a beauty treatment. There is the infamous description of certain massages having a "happy ending", which essentially means that the massage therapist engages in activities of a sexual nature instead of providing muscular relief through deep tissue massages. The sexual connotations could be why some men choose to stay away from the spa industry, as they may be afraid of participating in something considered improper.

In a years worth of GQ "Fashion Well" photo series, the spa is not once featured. Sporting events, clubbing, restaurant visits and a range of other activities are featured. The lack of attending a spa could insinuate that the spa is yet to be accepted into a masculine realm. As GQ is recognized globally as a "metrosexual" magazine, this is significant. As a metrosexual magazine does not even promote men's use of spa, it could suggest that this type of activity is not considered to be a factor of masculine disposition. That being said, the "Fashion Well" series rather limits the scope of what can be presented as it is highly fashion focused, and it may not be the most appropriate editorial to promote the use of the spa. If a clear picture of GQ's view of the spa were to be considered, it would be beneficial to use an entire years worth of magazines and base the analysis on this. It would provide a better range of articles to analyse the magazines considerations of the spa. To evaluate the media's promotion of the use of the spa, further research is needed.

¹³⁶ (McNeil and Ragins 2005) P. 32-33

The use of the spa is an interesting topic that requires further research. Research on masculine spaces (space where men feel comfortable, and at the 'prime' of their masculinity) in general is an area of research that should be further studied and analysed. It will provide a broader understanding of masculine behaviour. In chapter three Messner's three factors of gender as a social construct was discussed. The structural context refers to how people behave in different situations. By studying masculinity and men in relation to social spaces it could lead to a better understanding of how aspects in specific situations could alter the expression of masculinity. Men may behave and express their masculinity in different social settings and spaces (a man in a sports arena may behave differently than at his mother-in-law's house), as such a study of masculine spaces would provide a deeper understanding into how men express their masculinity. There were many opinions concerning the use of the spa. Upon analysis after the fieldwork was completed, I discovered I should have pursued these opinions further during the interview process. Research regarding male attitudes (positive or negative) concerning the spa and its uses could provide insight into divisions of gender by illuminating what is perceived as feminine and masculine. The illumination of gender differences could provide a parameter to better understand factors related to a Chinese form of hegemonic masculinity.

4.4 The Metrosexual – A Symptom of the Middle Class?

As grooming products are relatively pricy, it is likely that it is consumers who are middle to upper income individuals that mainly use these types of products. *Euromonitor* reports that they expect the male grooming market to grow in low-tier cities over the forecast period due to market education and distribution expansion. As of now, the middle to upper income consumers are dominating the market.¹³⁷

Geng Song and Tracy K. Lee argue "...masculinities in contemporary Chinese society must be examined in the context of social stratification and class formation".¹³⁸ The middle class in China is, according to Chen Xiaohua, described officially as a group that has a stable income, has the ability to buy their own housing and car, and are able to spend future income on

¹³⁷ (Euromonitor 2012)

¹³⁸ (Song and Lee 2010) P. 160

travelling, education and other types of consumption.¹³⁹ Zhou Li describes the middle class group by writing that in economic terms, the middle class has a high and stable income, is an avant-garde consumer, their occupations are wide-ranged, their life-styles are advanced, they have a strong entrepreneurial spirit and sense of competition, they are focused on efficiency and they demonstrate a functioning life and work.¹⁴⁰ McKinsey describes the middle class in China as anyone earning 25,001-100,000RMB annually.¹⁴¹ Following Zhou's definition of middle class as an avant-garde consumer with an advanced lifestyle, this section will discuss to what extent, and how male grooming can be said to be an expression of middle class masculinity.

During my fieldwork, I observed and talked to taxi drivers and vendors as well as middle to upper income groups. Based on my own observations and conversations with the taxi drivers and vendors who were not part of my informant panel, there was little indication that they used grooming products. The taxi driver and vendors did not appear to have hair-styling products in their hair, their hands were often rough from manual labour (especially the outside vendors), and sometimes they exuded a pungent smell that did not coincide with the use of perfumes or eau de cologne. The informants I interviewed all stated that their income was more than 6000 Yuan per month. It is unlikely that a taxi driver or vendor would be able to make this kind of salary. The drivers and vendors I talked with lamented the long work-hours and low pay their profession provided. Grooming products and spas are relatively expensive, and as such, not everyone has the ability to participate in this kind of consumer activity. Male grooming could be seen as something mostly available to men with the financial means to spend on items not necessary for subsistence. Because of the restricted availability due to economic factors, grooming could be seen as an expression of middle class masculinity.

In the "Fashion Well" photo-series there is not too much focus on grooming products; however, the models are well groomed in terms of having precisely styled hair, and having 'perfect' blemish-free skin. The "Fashion Well" series exudes an air of affluence in terms of the clothing and the lifestyle they promote. There are several different themes within the photo series, but there seems to be a recurring theme that could be expressing the notion that

¹³⁹ (Xiaohua 2005) P. 1

¹⁴⁰ (Li 2008)

¹⁴¹ (Farrell 2006) P. 63-64

‘it does not matter where you are, as long as you look expensive’. Underneath are two photos illustrating this. In one of the photos the model is eating what looks like lunch whilst wearing a bow-tie, expensive sunglasses and a large, expensive looking watch. He is also sporting a perfectly styled hairdo, a slightly visible ‘three-day beard’ and blemish free, pale skin. In China whitening products are popular amongst women. If male magazines show men with pale, blemish free skin like the photo in GQ, it could influence the construction of the physical expression of masculinity to some degree. That could lead to whitening products for men becoming more popular and the image of a pale white-skinned man increasingly the normal standard of beauty. In the next photo three male models are standing in a ‘queue’ (which is the theme for the photo editorial). They are dressed up in expensive brand-name products, wearing suits and nice leather shoes. Their skin glows slightly, is relatively white and is blemish free. Their hair is in a trendy 1950’s inspired hairstyle – short hair on the side with a slick do on the top of the head. This kind of hairstyle would need grooming products to keep in place (gel, wax etc.). Although these two photo editorials do not explicitly promote grooming products, they could contribute to the construction of a masculine ideal encompassing a physical expression consisting of blemish-free skin and perfectly styled hair. That could lead to an increasing use of grooming products as more men may accept this as a masculine expression they aspire towards.



An air of affluence amongst the male models¹⁴²

¹⁴² (Yao Zi 2012); (Li Qi 2012a)

4.5 Conclusion

Male grooming seems to be gaining a foothold in Chinese society. Based on the interviews with my informants, it becomes evident that some Chinese men are becoming increasingly accepting and open towards the incorporation of grooming products into their daily life. As they openly admit to using cosmetic products it could be an indication that they are progressively willing to accept grooming as a part of their masculine identity. However, some men are still adamantly opposed to the use of cosmetics, categorizing it as “feminine”. The informants were usually restrictive in their use of grooming products, pointing largely to the use of lotions and creams for their face and to a very limited degree to the use of grooming for the rest of the body (such as creams, and scrubs or perfume). There also seemed to be a utilitarian attitude amongst some of the informants and a need to legitimate the use of grooming products amongst Chinese male consumers. The reluctance towards discussing the use of grooming products by some of the informants and the lack of articles concerning the topic indicates that this type of behaviour is still in an early phase and not yet part of a dominant expression of Chinese masculinity. The same logic can be used for the spa. Some men accepted this as a legitimate use; other men were adamantly opposed towards the notion. Some men were not enthusiastic about using the spa, but at the same accepted that other men participated in this kind of activity but that they themselves did not participate in this kind of activity.

As far as grooming products for men go, GQ provides very little information for their readers in the “Fashion Well” photo series. In chapter three I argued that the media has a profound influence on the social construction of masculinity. By using that as a foundation, it is possible to argue that GQ’s “Fashion Well” series to a very limited extent explicitly promotes the use of grooming products as a part of the masculine identity. The lack of focus on male grooming products could indicate that a maturity of the grooming market is needed before a ‘well-groomed’ masculinity is completely accepted as a masculine expression. Considering the fact that the “Fashion Well” photo series provides few explicit suggestions promoting the use of grooming products it could also indicate that grooming is an area of the market that is in a starting phase. It could also indicate that GQ may be choosing to focus on fashion rather than grooming at this point in time and that they may be broaching the subject of grooming with some caution. An Jinfang writes that although male grooming is gaining some acceptance and is not scoffed at like it used to, there are some “old” ideas and it can render

some embarrassment in the public eye.¹⁴³ This could be one reason why GQ is treading carefully as far as cosmetics are concerned.

As hegemonic masculinity needs wide societal acceptance, the use of male grooming products does not seem to be a clear expression of hegemonic masculinity per today. Many of the informants were uncomfortable with questions concerning this topic, and GQ does not place a great emphasis on this type of editorials. However, the rapidly increasing appearance of the male grooming industry in China is a significant indication of the “reconstruction” of masculinity. It could indicate that the current form of hegemonic masculinity is veering increasingly towards a metrosexual manifestation and that the use of male grooming may be becoming less marginalized that it has been previously.

If Chinese masculinity becomes progressively metrosexual it could indicate that global influence on masculinity is effective in influencing masculinity cross culturally, as the concept of ‘the metrosexual’ originated in Europe. As metrosexuality is considered to be a more feminine form of masculinity, an anxiety concerning the perceived lack of masculinity amongst Chinese men, discussed in the introduction, could reappear or be strengthened unless it becomes a hegemonic form of masculinity, accepted by the majority of society. Further research concerning men’s use of grooming and beauty-related products is required. It could provide insight into Chinese manifestations of masculinity and evaluate to what degree grooming is becoming incorporated into a hegemonic form of masculinity.

¹⁴³ (Jinfang 2011) P. 11

5 Fashioning Masculinity

“In 1956 debates on the subject resulted in a new awareness that even if the economic realities were outmoded, in fact dress continued to have an ideological function. It not only said something about the society from which it originated, but it also contributed to the form which that society takes. The discussion of that time touched on three points which have been the subject of periodic debate up to the present day - the social meaning of dress, the association of levels of political consciousness and mode, of dress, and the question of individual versus social choice.”¹⁴⁴

- Elisabeth Croll

In today's China, Geng Song and Tracy K. Lee write that hegemonic masculinity is defined primarily in terms of virility, power and wealth and at the same time male images in pop culture have become increasingly plural.¹⁴⁵ Li Zhang also suggests this when she writes, “For men, self-worth is tied to a form of masculinity manifested in one's ability to make money, possess desirable material goods, or gain political power.”¹⁴⁶ In the contemporary quest for the masculine self she goes on to explain that the traditional qualities of *wen* and *wu* and a passion for the revolution have been overtaken by material accumulation and consumerism.¹⁴⁷ Characteristics such as having good taste and being upper class (elite), is becoming increasingly important. Magazines often uses words such as “good taste” (*pǐnwèi/gédìào*; 品位/格调) and “elite” (*jīngyīng*; 精英) in their marketing strategy.¹⁴⁸ Li Zhang argues that in the market-driven society China has become, those who do not have basic material ownership, and especially men who are expected to be primary breadwinners, are increasingly considered undesirable and devalued. She writes, “masculinity is a highly unstable social construct fraught with anxiety over a perceived lack, whether material and/or sexual.”¹⁴⁹

The main arguments in this chapter are founded on Song and Lee, and Zhang's arguments connecting masculinity to material wealth. I will argue that there is a clear link between material wealth and masculinity in contemporary urban China, and that this further illustrates the ‘metrosexualization’ of Chinese masculinity, discussed in the previous chapter.

This chapter will analyse to what extent consumption and material goods are related to how masculinity is expressed in China. To begin with I will provide a brief description of the

¹⁴⁴ (Croll 1976)

¹⁴⁵ (Song and Lee 2010) P.160

¹⁴⁶ (Zhang 2010) P. 166

¹⁴⁷ (Zhang 2010) P. 166

¹⁴⁸ (Song and Lee 2010)P. 163

¹⁴⁹ (Zhang 2010) P.183

development of consumerism in China to illustrate the importance consumption has in contemporary Chinese Society. Following that I will discuss the relation consumption could have to the identity of a group and an individual. It will illustrate the importance consumption has as an expression of identity. In the following two sections, I will analyse how the informants living in Shanghai use brand name products, and how GQ represents brands in the photo series “Fashion Well”. I will also discuss the significance of the suit in terms of masculine expression in a Chinese context. Finally, this chapter will evaluate the possibility of expanding upon Louie’s wen/wu dichotomy and adding a third concept, namely “钱” (*qián*; money) masculinity.

5.1 China: A Consumer Society

As China has experienced formidable economic growth during the past 30 years, it has grown into a major consumer society. An indication that consumption is gaining an important place in Chinese society is seen by the increase in consumption of luxury goods which has expanded drastically in the past few years. China is ranked as one of the top consumer markets of luxury goods.¹⁵⁰ Real estate has also become more than just a financial investment, and for men it can be argued that it has, to a certain extent, become a prerequisite to marry.¹⁵¹ Several of the informants stated homeownership as a masculine character feature, as will be discussed further later on in this chapter. This is a drastic change from the almost consumer free society of the Mao Zedong-era, pre-1978.

After Deng Xiaoping came to power, and began promoting economic development, there have been three waves of mass consumption. The first wave of mass consumption (1979-82) was initiated by peasants. Their incomes had doubled after the rural reforms, giving them increased purchasing power. The second wave started in 1985 after the launch of the urban reform programs. The urban population was the main force of this wave, and they were demanding large numbers of appliances and other consumer goods. The third wave occurred during the period 1992-1996 when the Chinese began investing in the stock markets and real-estate market. The period introduced a more complex form of consumption whereby the consumers wanted more and better consumer goods.¹⁵² The three waves show the path China has taken to becoming a “consumer society”. This is still an on going process and since 2005

¹⁵⁰ (Lu 2011)

¹⁵¹ (Rowlatt 2011)

¹⁵² (Yan 2009b, 2009a) P. 210-213

when the 11th Five-Year Plan was implemented, the Chinese government has placed greater emphasis on developing a consumer demand-driven economy.¹⁵³ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also released a report in 2010, urging China to consume more.¹⁵⁴ This indicates that since the 1990's consumption has gained an increasingly important place in Chinese society.

5.2 Consuming Masculinity

Although it is commonplace that the rapid development in consumerism is directly connected with the performance of the economy, the consumption of high-end market goods may reflect both the economic development and the central role consumption increasingly has in Chinese society. It could also reflect the perceived belief by consumers that owning the 'right' material goods may provide you with certain benefits of "immaterial" nature, also referred to as psychological benefits.¹⁵⁵ Radah Chadah and Paul Husband write that in China, concerning consumer products "it is all about blatancy – you win respect and admiration for achieving success."¹⁵⁶ In the consumer culture we live in today, Helga Dittmar argues that material possessions have become a powerful tool for the construction of one's own identity. To have the "right" possession has become essential to many because of the psychological benefits they hope they may bring with them. A person moving closer to an ideal identity or creating a desired social image are two examples of such psychological benefits.¹⁵⁷ Dittmar, furthermore argues that material goods have become ways of acquiring, expressing and attempting to enhance identity and that they symbolise social status and express unique aspects of the individual.¹⁵⁸ The concept of material possessions being part of one's identity can be described as the "*extended self*". This means that we identify with our possessions in such a way that we perceive them as being a part of ourselves and may feel great loss if the objects are stolen or broken.¹⁵⁹

The anthropologist Liu Xin describes the rise of a new man in China when writing, "This new man, as a reincarnation of an old spirit, keeps his eyes wide open, both at work and at home, checking and examining how everyone around him – his neighbours, colleagues,

¹⁵³ (U.S. Relations With China 2012)

¹⁵⁴ (Ting 2010)

¹⁵⁵ (Dittmar 2011) P. 756

¹⁵⁶ (Chadha and Husband 2010) P. 25

¹⁵⁷ (Dittmar 2011) P. 756

¹⁵⁸ (Dittmar 2011) P.756

¹⁵⁹ (Ekström 2010) P. 278

friends – manage their lives. Life has become a management of material things, comparable to and measurable in terms of other people’s possessions.”¹⁶⁰ Chadah and Husband write that in China the fashion movement has been led by men and that the mens market is larger than the womens market.¹⁶¹ The observation the men conduct amongst themselves concerning material goods as explained by Liu Xin and the fact that Chinese men have led the fashion movement, could be seen as a manifestation of the construction of masculinity through consumption. This illustrates the relevance of analysing consumption in relation to the construction of a masculine identity.

Karin M. Ekström suggests how one perceives oneself can be based on the concept of *self-schemata*. Self-schemata can be viewed as the components of generalised knowledge that structures the person’s *self*. The components represent a person’s generalised self-understanding. When constructing one’s self-schemata, other people’s reactions to you serve as an important source of information and she suggested that our conceptions of *self* are not only based on properties specific to us. Ekström furthermore explains that our self-image is also largely composed of the groups or communities we identify with. It is therefor said that the concept of *self* constitutes of two parts: an individual part, and a collective part. If one identifies with a group, the qualities of that group will be inherent in your self-schemata.¹⁶² Group identity can also be regarded as *social identity* whereby the constituents of the social groups have certain similarities they can identify with.¹⁶³ When Liu Xin writes that men observe what other people are doing or buying, it relates to the understanding of their self-schemata. They may be looking for social groups that have qualities they identify with or wish to identify themselves with. Visual markers such as clothes, accessories and cars could all be seen as indicators of the identity of a social group.

The growth in private consumption and the willingness to spend money in China illustrates the growing importance of owning the “right” possessions. It also illustrates the lengths to which Chinese consumers are willing to spend to reach their identity goals. The construction of the ideal identity or social image could simply be related to owning certain material possessions. It could also be goal-reaching through material possession (e.g. gaining the social status, or masculinity strived for through owning the “right” material goods). If, what

¹⁶⁰ (Zhang 2010)

¹⁶¹ (Chadha and Husband 2010) P. 25

¹⁶² (Ekström 2010) P. 278

¹⁶³ (Ning 2001) P. 7

Song and Lee write (having good taste, being upper-class and possessing wealth are inclusive components of modern Chinese masculinity) holds true, the analysis of the construction of the masculinity should, at least in part, go through consumption-based identity construction. This is especially the case when considering the seemingly close connection material possessions have with identity.

5.3 Branded Masculinity

In *Theory of the Leisure Class*¹⁶⁴, Thorsten Veblen introduces the concept of conspicuous consumption. Rather than spending money on items that are essential for survival, the consumer chooses to spend money on items that identify their pecuniary strength. The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu argues that consumer preference is determined by socially conditioned behaviour. Objects chosen by consumers are a reflection of a symbolic hierarchy that is “determined and maintained by the socially dominant in order to enforce their distance or distinction from other classes of society”.¹⁶⁵ As we have seen in previously in the chapter, identity and consumption seem to be closely intertwined. This section will discuss the definition of “brand” and how the informants used brands in their daily lives.

During the interviews the subject of brands (名牌, míngpái ; 牌子, pǎizi) would frequently enter conversation as I asked where the informants would purchase their clothing and accessories. In GQ the articles are heavily “brand-focused”, dressing the models in mainly Western high-end luxury brands. The definition of brand is not clear-cut, and before continuing the discussion of men and brands it is important to provide a definition of what “brand” entails. The Oxford dictionary defines it as:¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.

¹⁶⁵ (Allen 1994)

¹⁶⁶ (Dictionaries)

noun

1 a type of product manufactured by a particular company under a particular name:

a new brand of soap powder

• a brand name:

the firm will market computer software under its own brand

it takes a long time to build a brand

• a particular identity or image regarded as an asset:

you can still invent your own career, be your own brand

• a particular type or kind of something:

they entertained millions with their inimitable brand of comedy

2 an identifying mark burned on livestock or (especially in former times) criminals or slaves with a branding iron:

the brand on a sheep identifies it as mine

• *archaic* a branding iron.

• a habit or quality that causes someone public shame or disgrace:

the brand of Paula's dipsomania

3 a piece of burning or smouldering wood:

he took two burning brands from the fire

4 *literary* a sword.

Xiandai Hanyu Cidian states that the Chinese definition for 牌子 (*páizi*; brand) is “公司企业为自己的产品起的专用的名称” (*Gōngsī qǐ yè wèi zìjǐ de chǎnpǐn qǐ de zhuānyòng de míngchèn*; a company's name for their own product).¹⁶⁷ 名牌 (*míngpái*; famous brand) is defined as “出名的牌子” (*chūmíng de páizi*; well-known, famous brand).¹⁶⁸ I will disregard Oxford's last two definitions and base the definition of brand for this thesis on a combination of Oxford Dictionary's first definition and the Chinese dictionary's definition. As such the definition for brand for this thesis is understood as a type of product manufactured by a particular company under a particular name. In Chinese *míngpái* indicates that a brand is well known and as such people recognize the brand. I will follow a similar differentiation when referring to a brand, but rather than using the term “famous” I will distinguish between high-end/luxury brands and high-street brands. High-end/luxury brands will be defined as well-known, top-grade quality brands. High-street brands will be defined as relatively cheaper brands, more readily available to the general public and not only the affluent.

Despite not discussing the meaning of ‘brand’ with the informants, when I asked them what brands they preferred, almost all of the informants would reply straight away without asking me what I meant by ‘brand’. This led me to believe that they had a clear idea about what ‘brand’ was, and that in most cases it involved high-end Western luxury names. This belief

¹⁶⁷ (牌子 (Brand) 1996)

¹⁶⁸ (名牌 (Famous Brand) 1996)

was further cemented after completing the analysis of the interviews. I found that most of the informants would mention Western brands and very few would mention Japanese, Chinese or Korean brands. A fashion photographer for a website said concerning brands, “25 岁到 30 岁之间的男人比较喜欢走韩版路线。30 岁以上的男人比较喜欢欧美风格。” (*25 suì dào 30 suì zhījiān de nánrén bǐjiào xǐhuān zǒu hánbǎn lùxiàn. 30 suì yǐ shàng de nánrén bǐjiào xǐhuān ōuměi fēnggé*; Men between the ages 25-30 years old rather like the Korean style clothes. Men over 30 years old rather like American and European style). This statement initiates a pondering as to whether there could be an age-divide in brand preference. If this is the case it could imply that brands may be perceived to express different significance to consumers of different ages. In China this is especially significant, as generations pre and post 1979 have had two very different sets of factors influencing their construction of masculinity. The pre-1979 group has had the strict Communist ideological influence and the near eradication of gender barriers leading to an androgynous form of gender under the leadership of Mao Zedong. The other post-1979 group has had the capitalist “getting rich is glorious”, and the consumerist “borrow money to realise your dreams” influence of Deng Xiaoping and the leaders following in his footsteps. As I was mainly interviewing men under the age of 32, I am not able to conclude on this and further research is needed to test this hypothesis.

I would ask the informants where they usually went shopping, and what kind of clothes they were wearing, and most of them would be able to answer without hesitation. The majority of the informants mentioned a brand-name product at some point during the interview. Most of them mentioned brands in relation to what shops they usually frequented, or what they were wearing at the time of the interview. Some of the informants had very clear preferences in where they did their shopping. One of the informants, a 30-year-old self-employed man stated, “我只在两个地方购物—Zegna 和 Armani” (*Wǒ zhǐ zài liǎnggè dìfāng gòuwù — Zegna hé Armani*; I only shop at two places: Zegna and Armani). One of the lawyers interviewed stated, “For work, I buy my suits from Ermengildo Zegna, but for casual use I go to Zara and Gap”. As discussed in the previous chapter, the metrosexual is described by Simpson as a fashion conscious man who lives close to all the best shops. The brand consciousness amongst the men interviewed is significant as it could suggest that urban Chinese masculinity is in the process of being ‘metrosexualised’. It could also indicate that brands are used to conspicuously express wealth and power.

5.4 Branded Masculine Tribes

Today's modern society is described by Ekström as "a society absorbed by the quest for identity".¹⁶⁹ She proposes that identity is an indispensable part of everyday life and that brand name products can express who we want to be and where we want to belong. The process of choosing and consuming brand name products can be seen as part of an individuals' *identity building process*. Ekström argues that consumption is, in many respects, today's process of defining oneself.¹⁷⁰ Through one's consumption decisions one may also be able to identify with other consumers who make the same purchasing decisions, creating what can be described as "*identity-building tribes*" – groups of consumers who have, in part, the same self-schemata.

The notion of "identity-building tribes" is relevant to consider when discussing China and brand name products. In the shopping spaces I used for observation, there were certain brands that were more visible than others. The brand that was the most visible was Bally, a Swiss producer of mainly leather luxury goods, with an iconic stripy strap connected to its bags and purses. Several of the informants also possessed wallets, bags or shoes in this same brand. As discussed in chapter three, social constructivists would say that the experience of gender would change if contributing factors changed. In these shopping areas, certain branded goods, such as Bally, were more visible than other brands. Likewise, when I left these areas, men wearing this particular brand became much less frequent. This relates to Messner's proposed "structural context" which is connected to social constructionism. The behaviour of men could change according to what situation they are in. When the factor of the high-end shopping space was removed, the branded expression seemed to be less noticeable. If men frequent one area more often than another area, they could likely become influenced by factors such as what brand name good is the most noticeable amongst other people they either strive to be like, or wish to identify themselves with. In an attempt to belong to the desirable *identity-building-tribe* they want to belong to, they might purchase a product that resonates with that group.

To a certain extent it can be said that magazines participate in creating such *identity-building-tribes*. Most magazines market towards a specific group and create what could be describe as a "magazine identity" – an identity made up of the editorials, photos, and advertising chosen

¹⁶⁹ (Ekström 2010)P. 538

¹⁷⁰ (Ekström 2010) P. 537-538

for the particular magazine to which the readers might aspire towards or identify themselves with. In 2007, Chang Xiaowu divided men's magazines on the Chinese market into four different categories: 绅士型杂志 (*Shēnshìxíng zázhì*; Gentlemen's magazines); 啤酒文化杂志 (*Píjiǔ wénhuà zázhì*; Drinking culture magazines); 另类男性杂志 (*Lìnglèi nánxìng zázhì*; Alternative male magazines); 难以归类的杂志 (*Nányǐ guīlèi de zázhì*; Magazines that are difficult to categorize).

GQ can be categorized as a "gentlemen's magazine" as Chang explains that these types of magazines focus on high income readers, and the articles in these magazines focus on, "吃, 住, 行, 娱, 购, 游" (*chī, zhù, xíng, yú, gòu, yóu*; eating, living, cars, recreation, shopping, travel).¹⁷¹ GQ covers most of these topics in each issue; however, the focus lies slightly more on the fashion side, and especially on high-end fashion. The type of men reading this magazine could be part of an identity-building-tribe based on the six criteria mentioned above. GQ proposes their opinions of what a man should do and what he should look like or express through written and photographic editorials. The readers will note the type of masculinity proposed as the ideal by GQ, and depending on their perception concerning masculinity they may or may not identify with this magazine. By noticing what other men eat, drive, shop or where they travel (as Liu Xin proposes Chinese men do in everyday life) in the media, the reader can participate in what he perceives to be the identity-building-tribe he identifies the most with.

Observation seems to be an important factor in defining one's own masculine identity. By viewing what other men do, it can act as markers guiding you towards the kind of masculinity you aspire towards. If a man you view as successful has a Mercedes, you may want to mimic his success and a simple way to do this (if you have the financial means) is to buy the same car. The man with the new Mercedes thereby enters the same identity tribe as the first Mercedes owner. The same goes for magazines. If a man views one kind of magazine identity as aspirational, he may mimic the kind of expression proposed by the magazine by purchasing certain material goods, or changing his hairstyle to resemble suggestions made by the magazine. Essentially, the man is then "doing gender" through purchasing of material goods or changing his physical appearance in accordance with what the magazine proposes. This also relates to the different kinds of masculinities suggested by Connell. The man

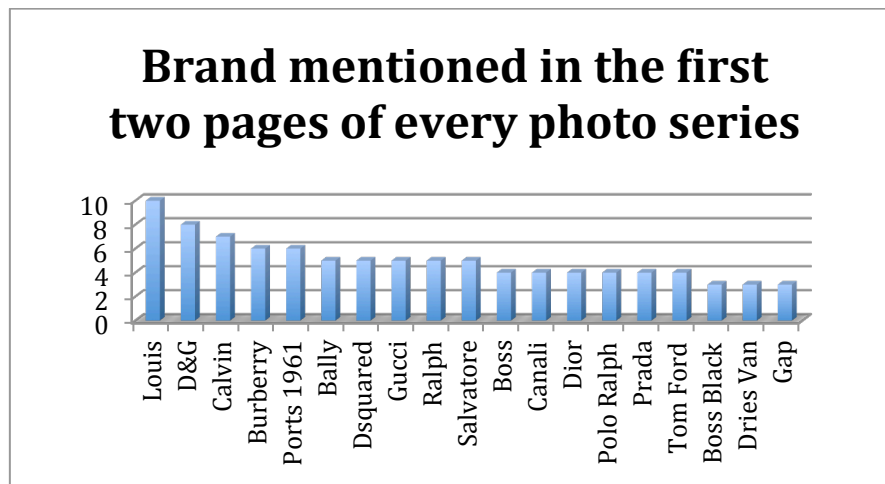
¹⁷¹ (Xiaowu 2007) P. 58

mimicking the behaviour of the masculinity he aspires towards could be described as a complicit masculinity, and the kind of masculinity mimicked could be described as a dominant form of masculinity. If enough men find one type of material good (e.g. The Bally bag or the suit) to be viewed as a factor of hegemonic masculinity, a hegemonic form of masculinity could therefore affect purchasing decisions.

5.5 Material Man: Brand Expression

To analyse in what settings and situations brand name products in GQ “Fashion Well” were used, the first two pages of every photo series were selected as a sample. The sample also provided a possibility to analyse which brands were mentioned the most and to what extent local or foreign brands were featured.

Sixty-six brands were featured within the two first pages of each photo-shoot, and of these only Western brands were featured. There were mainly high-end luxury brands, except for Gap, which was featured three times. The only high-street mentions were H&M, Gap, Massimo Dutti, Converse and Zara. Three of these mentions (Massimo Dutti, Zara and H&M) were in the only article that showed three male models out drinking at a bar, and depicting drunken behaviour (issue 03/2012). The other mentions were in “正太大叔” (*Zhèngtài dàshū*; Summer is in Town) where a child is depicted wearing Zara clothing (04/2012); “牛仔褲巡禮” (*Niúzáikù xúnlǐ*; Best Denim 2012) where the theme is jeans and one of the models is wearing barely visible Converse shoes (08/2012); and the last mention is in the photo series “潮流排起队” (*Cháoliú páiqǐduì*; The Queue) where the model features a white shirt by H&M, barely visible under his other Burberry Prorsum and Dolce and Gabbana clothing (09/2012). It seems like high-street brands were used in the photo editorials that were in a less formal setting, and that high-end brands were used for what appeared to be in settings classified as more formal or professional.



The presence of high-street brands in the photos where the models are depicted in settings where the models are featured as drunk or semi-undressed could indicate that high-street brands are suitable in situations that are regarded as laddish. ‘Laddism’, is a model of masculinity that emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, and it deviates from the description of the metrosexual. Its characteristics can be emphasized by youthfulness, hedonistic consumption, bachelorhood, the objectification of women and sexual conquest. Ricciardelli et. al. describes this kind of masculinity as, “consumerist masculinity that renounces self-responsibility and indulges in stereotypically masculine interests, such as sports, cars and video games, as well as more risky health behaviours, such as binge-drinking, drugs, and promiscuous sexual practices.”¹⁷²

In three of the four photo series where the men are wearing high street brands, the men are depicted playing cards, arm-wrestling, what appears to be them ‘checking out’ women (see second photo in section 5.6) and going to a sports game – all typical of “laddish” behaviour. In the last of the four photo series, the model is depicted playing with a child, a teddy bear, flowers and a camera (see photos below). As laddish and childish behaviour is not frequently depicted in the photo series of GQ, it is significant that the high-street brands are found in the photo editorial that depict the models as either laddish, or playing with a child and with a teddy bear. It could indicate that according to GQ, high-street brands are best suited the younger man, or the man that could be characterized as less serious and more laddish. This resonates with the view of the informant who said, “For work, I buy my suits from Ermengildo Zegna, but for casual use I go to Zara and Gap”.

¹⁷² (Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010)



Models going to a sports game; Model depicted playing with a child, a teddy bear, flowers and a camera.¹⁷³

The prevalence of high-end luxury brands in GQ could suggest that to exude affluence is considered important for a man; however, it seems to be done in a discrete fashion with avoidance of explicitly written brand logos on clothing. The models are, for example, never dressed in Louis Vuitton’s iconic “LV” bags although this is the most frequently occurring brand in the sample. This indicates that although middle-class urban men seem to be brand conscious, GQ suggests through the photo series that it is not as essential to explicitly state that they are purchasing these products. Cindy Zhao and Kai Worrell state that in terms of identity construction in China, “We see the embrace of brand symbolism connecting fashion to intelligence, subtlety to sophistication, colourful to energetic, and technical to well educated. The new Chinese middle class has an appetite to demonstrate these ideals through the expression of their purchases.”¹⁷⁴ They tie subtlety to sophistication, which resonates well with GQ’s styling as there is an air of sophistication throughout the photo series: models clad in elegant tuxedos, Champagne that is just barely visible, and an intricate sense of the fashion choices made. I noted the same experience amongst my informants – most of them were wearing brands that did not have big logos. They were quite discrete in their choices of brands; however, when asked, they would point out all the brands they were wearing at that time, not visible at a first glance.

¹⁷³ (Haoyan 2012)

¹⁷⁴ (Cindy Zhao 2010)

5.6 Suit Up

Alison Lurie claimed that clothing is a visual language, consisting of its own distinctive grammar, syntax and vocabulary.¹⁷⁵ Although this claim may be somewhat exaggerated, Fred Davis explains that “while the signifiers comprised by a style, an appearance, or a certain fashion trend can in a material sense be thought of as the same for everyone what is *signified* (connoted, understood, evoked, alluded to, or expressed) is, initially at least, strikingly different for different publics, audiences, and social groupings...”¹⁷⁶ Clothing may not be its own language, but it is certainly expressive. Croll discusses the meaning of dress in traditional and Mao-era China stating, “Clothes were seen to have always had a social meaning. In traditional Chinese society the style and quality of dress, perhaps more than any other social attribute, had been an important symbol of social status. It was not as in some rigidly divided societies where only certain castes and families were allowed by law to wear certain kinds of clothes, but strong social conventions had grown up which, based on differentials in purchasing power, had caused clothes conspicuously to rank social class position.”¹⁷⁷ As mentioned earlier, Song and Lee argue that masculinity must be examined in the context of social stratification and class formation.¹⁷⁸ Croll argues that clothing has always had a social significance in Chinese society and has been an indication of social status. Hence it is relevant to explore dress as an expression of masculinity in contemporary China, especially as consumption is becoming so prevalent in Chinese society.

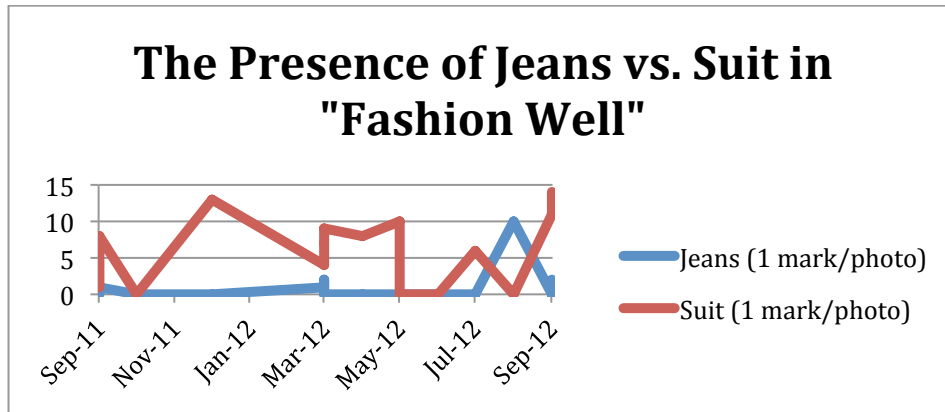
This section will analyse how the suit could be used as an expression by men to describe their professional and social standing, and as such, how they signal that they are suitable as future husbands. The analysis will consider to what extent certain types of clothing express social status and to what extent that influences expressions of masculinity.

¹⁷⁵ (Solomon 1985) P. 15

¹⁷⁶ (Solomon 1985) P. 18

¹⁷⁷ (Croll 1976)

¹⁷⁸ (Song and Lee 2010)



In the “Fashion Well” photo series, GQ dresses its models in suits very frequently. As illustrated by the graph above, the suit occurs at a much greater frequency than jeans in the photo series “Fashion Well”. Only in August does the frequency of jeans in the photo series surpass that of the suit, but that is because that month’s fashion article focuses on jeans. There is a widespread presentation of the suit in the photo editorials. They range from a zebra-print suit to a colonial inspired three-piece suit to the more standardized suit of today (see photo below). The tuxedo is also very present in the GQ issues.



Three different types of suits¹⁷⁹

The photo editorials are staged at a vast array of places – some in exclusive places, and others with backgrounds that look like they are in front of a plane white screen. The models are

¹⁷⁹ (Blair Getz Mezibov 2012); (Li Qi 2012a); (Haoyan 2012)

depicted wearing suits in many different scenarios and it seems like GQ is formulating a premise that it doesn't matter where you are, as long as you are well dressed, and that the suit can provide such an image.

According to Derek Hird, the suit is a “sartorial emblem of white-collar identity on China” and that the “suit is a marker not only of respectability, but of honesty, integrity, reliability and cleanliness.”¹⁸⁰ The informants I interviewed at their place of work all wore suits. When I asked one of the informants how often he went shopping he replied, “I don't really shop a lot. Because I am 32, I don't want to buy many jeans; many casual dress. I guess I tailor a lot of suits. I think usually I, every year I go to the tailor like five times. Usually a suit, including the jacket and the pants cost about \$800 USD... When I was in my twenties I like jeans and t-shirts and sneakers – that was my purpose, but after turning 30, you know a shirt, a jacket and pants is quite match my situation and age.”¹⁸¹ Although he does not explicitly say so, it is possible to interpret the informant's view of the suit as an expression of seriousness and professionalism and also as a marker of maturity.

John Berger writes, “the suit, as we know it today, developed in Europe as a professional ruling class costume in the last third of the 19th century. Almost anonymous as a uniform, it was the first ruling class costume to idealise purely *sedentary* power. The power of the administrator and conference table. Essentially the suit was made for the gestures of talking and calculating abstractly.”¹⁸² Croll explains that in traditional China, the literati or gentry sported a long fingernail as a marker of abstention from manual labour. It also indicated their social status.¹⁸³ She furthermore writes, “In a number of practices the Communist Party have striven to minimise social differences and this egalitarian approach was perhaps given its most noted application in the elimination of insignia in the ranks of the People's Liberation Army 1965. Variations in uniforms just as much as in civilian clothes symbolized positions in a hierarchy.”¹⁸⁴ Yanjie Bian argues that in today's China class hierarchy seems to be an evolving concept with more room for social mobilisation.¹⁸⁵ Class hierarchy could be indicated through clothing and other material possessions, just like variations in uniforms,

¹⁸⁰ (Hird 2009) P. 65

¹⁸¹ The interview was done in English, and the informant had some linguistic challenges that I have kept so as not to lose any meaning.

¹⁸² (Berger 1991) P. 430

¹⁸³ (Croll 1976)

¹⁸⁴ (Croll 1976)

¹⁸⁵ (Bian 2002) P. 94

and the long fingernail has done previously. As the informant insinuated and Hird argues for, the suit marks professionalism. This is also evident by observing the Party Congress where all the male Party members are clad in the white-collar uniform: a dark suit, white shirt and a tie.

The birth control policy has led to a disproportion between men and women in China. Increasing numbers of men are having difficulties finding a wife, and women and their families are reportedly becoming increasingly demanding in their prerequisites for accepting a proposal.¹⁸⁶ As will be discussed later on in this chapter, several of the responses from the informants indicate that material wealth such as homeownership is an important factor in the construction of masculinity, and masculine expression. The suit could function as an indicator of your professional position as a white-collar worker, suggesting that you are capable of providing for your family and thereby increasing your chances of finding a spouse.

As Berger describes the suit as a “first ruling class costume” and Croll points out that the literati and gentry in traditional China had visible indicators that they did not participate in manual labour, it is possible to argue that the suit is the modern day distinction of a man abstaining from manual labour, and belonging to an educated class. The suit could also be an expression of modern day *wen* masculinity in China. Just as the long fingernail was amongst the gentry and literati in traditional China, a man wearing a suit will most likely not be partaking in manual labour, as that would be highly impractical. He would more probably be an office worker, which would in most cases entail some degree of higher education. This argument is further cemented by the fact that the Mao-era saw fashion as largely limited to the “Mao suit” – a pragmatic, drab, plain-coloured unisex suit, suitable for manual labourers. As intellectuals were punished and killed during the Cultural Revolution, the Mao suit could be said to represent the expulsion of *wen* masculinity from Chinese society during this period. For men who are successful entrepreneurs or university educated, or for those who wish to express that they are such a person they can wear a suit which could suggest their social standing.

¹⁸⁶ (Ross 2010); (Jiang and Sánchez-Barricarte 2012) P. 3

Connell proposes that that the hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world gender order is the masculinity associated with those who control its dominant institutions: the business executives who operate in global markets, and the political executive who interact with them.¹⁸⁷ Hird proposes that the suit is the main sartorial emblem of white-collar masculinity both in China and elsewhere.¹⁸⁸ The suit could therefore be said to be a symbol of what Connell suggests as the hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world gender order. The suit originated in Europe in the last third of the 19th century.¹⁸⁹ The word for “suit” in mandarin is 西装 (*xī zhuāng*), which literally means “Western dress”. The suit is therefore arguably a direct and very visible influence from the West which on Chinese masculinity. According to Louie the rise of the consumer society is causing male ideals to more closely connect with buying power.¹⁹⁰ This is destabilising the traditional dichotomy of wen/wu masculinity. Americans are said to have led the way toward a consumer society and having a strong tendency to define themselves and relationship through consumer goods.¹⁹¹ As such, buying power as a factor of constructing masculinity in China could be said to be an influence from the West.

5.7 Shop ‘Till You Drop

As material objects seem closely connected to identity, the actual act of purchasing the items that could create an identity is relevant to consider. During the fieldwork I would observe an abundance of people in the shopping malls and the shopping districts. Most of the men I observed were visiting the shopping areas with a female companion, and there were very few men I observed that were out shopping or visiting the shopping spaces by themselves. The shopping spaces I visited mainly provided sartorial items or accessories such as bags, watches and jewellery. This gave me the impression that Chinese men would perhaps rely on their female companion to guide them in a direction of choice as far as the acquiring of new wardrobe items were concerned.

Based on my observations I found it to become increasingly important to enquire about the informants’ views concerning shopping. During the interviews I therefore asked the

¹⁸⁷ (Connell 1998) P. 16

¹⁸⁸ (Hird 2009) P. 65

¹⁸⁹ (Berger 1991) P. 430

¹⁹⁰ (Louie 2002) P. 161

¹⁹¹ (Cross 2000) P. 4

informants about their shopping habits. Most of the men went shopping with friends, wives or girlfriends but some said they preferred to go shopping by themselves. There was a vast array of answers concerning how often they went shopping. The responses ranged from one young man from Shanghai stating that “Men do not like to go shopping. I go when I have to”, to another 30-year-old- self employed man stating, “I go shopping every week. It is important for a man to be fashionable”. Another man said that he went shopping once a month, but that it was not set in stone and that if he needed something he would go out and buy it”. For the most part, shopping amongst the informants seemed to be a monthly occurrence. I followed up the question asking the informant if he preferred to go shopping by himself or with anyone. Three of the informants said they preferred to go shopping with their friends or girlfriends and three others stated that they preferred going by themselves.

I would also ask the interview objects who chose their clothes – themselves, or someone else. Almost all the informants explained to me that they chose their own clothes. One young man, originally from Anhui responded with enthusiasm “Of course I choose my own clothes!” The other informants responded with an air of inevitability that they chose their own clothes. None of the informants said anything about having their clothes chosen by a partner. As I more frequently than not observe men accompanied by women, I was surprised to find the informants adamantly stating that they chose all their own clothes.

Although there was an equal distribution of who preferred to go shopping with friends and who preferred to go shopping by themselves, my observations from the mall indicated that many men would perhaps in actual fact not go shopping on their own. As the informants claimed that they would choose all their own clothes, this could indicate two things. Firstly it could indicate that shopping is seen as a social activity and not only as a utilitarian concept whereby shopping is undergone on a “need to” basis (as was the philosophy of one of the informants). Secondly, it could indicate that men desire to be, or at the very least want to be perceived as independent as far as their shopping needs are concerned. As mentioned earlier Chadha and Husband write that men have driven the fashion movement in China.¹⁹² As such it is plausible that men *are* independent shoppers, but that shopping simultaneously is seen as a social activity you can participate in with friends and companions.

¹⁹² (Chadha and Husband 2010)

5.8 “Wen”, “Wu” and “Qian” Masculinity?

As was discussed in chapter three, Connell argues that there are different kinds of masculinities, and that they can be divided into four different categories: dominant, complicit, subordinate and marginalized. Based on the interviews, observation and photo analysis of GQ, it seems clear that material wealth is big part of masculine expressions amongst young middle to upper class men in contemporary urban China. The informants were brand-conscious and GQ uses mainly high-end products in its “Fashion Well” photo series. When asked about the qualities that, in their view, described what characteristics they associated with a man there were of course different responses. There are some descriptions that were mentioned more than others. Describing words such as “能力” (nénglì; ability), “successful”, “有好工作” (yǒu hǎo gōngzuò; has a good job), “聪明” (cōngmíng; intelligent) were used frequently by the men I interviewed. The words all describe qualities inherent in a person who could achieve success or has achieved success in some form. One form of success could be viewed as earning enough money to cater to a comfortable life.

One of the informants, a lawyer, described thoroughly the characteristics he connected with what a man should be. He said, “A man should be talented, diligent, responsible, implement what you should do, determined, have good connections, prepare for careers.” All of the characteristics could be connected with a male image that reflects a good career, ergo a man who would have a good and stable income. Another young man, a hairdresser, said that a man should have a “proper” job and must have a home which should be nice but does not have to be big. A 32-year-old Shanghainese man explained that he thought a man should be strong physically and mentally, be the backbone of the family and “responsible for job”. There was a general consensus that the characteristics of masculinity related to fiscal wealth in some way. Some of the informants bluntly stated that a man must own a home, which concerns a relatively significant amount of money. Others addressed the issue by placing an emphasis on the importance of having a “good” job. A “good” job would not only provide a good and stable income but presumably also a sense of pride.

The focus on achieving success through a relative form of wealth could indicate that in contemporary urban China, and perhaps especially in Shanghai where the informants were residing, wealth and money is becoming a factor of a Chinese form of hegemonic masculinity. The brand focus, and brand consciousness found in GQ and amongst the

informants could suggest that conspicuous consumption is one way of expressing the “wealth aspect” of masculinity. As the competition to find a bride is becoming increasingly fierce, material indicators of wealth could be a way of showing your suitability as a potential husband. Kam Louie has proposed a scholar/martial (*wen/wu*; 文/武) dichotomous division of Chinese masculine characteristics. This seems to be relevant to a certain degree in China (as will be further discussed in the next chapter). However, to accommodate for developments in the construction of masculinity in contemporary China I propose a third categorization: “钱” (*qián*; money) masculinity. This would be masculinity in relation to purchasing power and the possession of material goods that indicate a certain financial status.

Song and Lee argue that the three main components of hegemonic masculinity in China are virility, power and wealth. Material products such as clothes and accessories could be relevant to power and wealth as we have seen that certain products can symbolise a person's social identity and wealth. Brands also factor in, as high-end brands to a certain extent signalises a person's prosperity. If you are financially capable of buying certain material goods, it indicates affluence. As Chinese men have been the drivers of the fashion movement in China, and the men's market is larger than the women's market it illustrates the relevance of material goods to masculinity.¹⁹³ In a country where it was reported that the 70 richest delegates in China's National People's Congress have a combined net worth of 565.8 billion Yuan, it could be said that wealth is indicative of power.¹⁹⁴ As women and their families are increasingly demanding more material goods to agree to a marriage, a man who does not possess such material wealth could be marginalized in terms of marriage. In this sense, wealth could arguable to a certain degree be connected to virility. For these reasons it seems relevant to expand on the basic dichotomous concept of masculinity, and add a fiscal or material aspect of Chinese masculinity, namely “钱” (*qián*; money) masculinity.

5.9 Conclusion

Masculinity is a construction that changes as surrounding factors are altered. In contemporary urban China material possessions and wealth are appear to be important factors concerning the construction of masculinity. Ekström argues consumption is, in many respects, today's process of defining oneself and Dittmar argues that material possessions have become a

¹⁹³ (Chadha and Husband 2010) P. 25

¹⁹⁴ (Frank 2012)

powerful tool for the construction of one owns identity.¹⁹⁵ The implication of material focus in relation to masculinity is that traditional concepts such as Kam Louie's dichotomy of wen and wu may become less prominent as it becomes increasingly replaced by expressions of material wealth.

The seemingly increasing importance of material wealth can lead to men experiencing a need to acquire material goods to be considered as eligible bachelors. The suit seems to have become emblematic of a man with material means. A man wearing a suit would probably have a "good" job, and a stable income. This material aspect is increasingly becoming prerequisites for marriage, and a man who does not possess the required wealth could be marginalized in the marriage market. Furthermore the informants seemed brand-conscious and willing to consume. GQ heavily profiles brand name goods in their Fashion Well photo series. The informants expressed that it is important to have a taste or opinion of fashion, and that it was important to be well dressed, as it appeared as professional. This could imply a 'metrosexualisation' of masculinity in China, and the increasing importance white-collar professionalism in Chinese society.

¹⁹⁵ (Ekström 2010) P. 278; (Dittmar 2011) P. 756

6 Body Talks

Furthermore, as an object to be manipulated and financially invested in, the body has become connected with identity. How a person presents their body—in terms of style, dress, shape, and size—contributes to their sense of self. In this sense, the body is an ever evolving self-reflexive project and an objectified reality where its current appearance is determined by the narrative of self under construction. Thus, transforming the body becomes about more than transforming how the body looks; it changes the way the body is lived.¹⁹⁶

- Ricciardelli et. al.

Rising sales figures amongst different products in China can, to some degree, indicate a change in attitude concerning certain aspects of society. As discussed in the previous section, the observed increase in luxury sales amongst men could be *one* indicator that masculinity is connected to purchasing power, and that it is expressed through consumer goods. Gu Caixia, a surgeon at the Shanghai Ren'ai hospital reported that 20 percent of plastic surgery patients at her hospital are men, and that there is a continuous increase. Three years ago the segment of male patients totalled a meagre 5 percent.¹⁹⁷ The trend that men are joining gyms is also rapidly becoming big business. *Xinhuanet* reported that there had been an increase in people getting gym memberships, and that men were responsible for an increased portion of the statistics.¹⁹⁸ Statistics related to body alterations through physical exercise may indicate a change in an ideal body image. It also suggests that men are increasingly expected to express a healthy figure.

Kimmel writes that women have traditionally been recognized as the gender most concerned with their appearance and that the pursuit and preoccupation with beauty can be related to the female sex-role stereotype. He suggests that this stereotyping could have led to a disregard of what role the physical body image plays for men.¹⁹⁹ As the ideal bodily expression of masculinity in China has proved to change through history (as explained in section 3.3), it is relevant to examine expressions of masculinity in contemporary China in terms of body image. Ricciardelli et.al. argue in their study of masculinity in media images that, “The increase in media images of men promoted how men could identify through their body (e.g.,

¹⁹⁶ (Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010) P. 66

¹⁹⁷ (Anonymous 2006)

¹⁹⁸ (Yiyao 2012)

¹⁹⁹ (Kimmel 1987) P. 37

by their fashion and appearance)—a major shift in the production of dominant masculinities in the West.”²⁰⁰ Research has shown that male media representations can lead to men’s dissatisfaction with their own body, which indicates that the media *does* have an impact on how men view their own bodies.²⁰¹ As men’s magazines have only entered the Chinese media market in the early 2000’s, it is important to examine how men’s bodies are being presented in the Chinese media as it could lead to a deeper understanding of the construction of masculinity in contemporary urban China.²⁰²

This chapter will discuss the body types the informants and GQ consider to be the most masculine. Although there are many different kinds of body types, the discussion in this chapter will base itself on three: endomorph, mesomorph and ectomorph. I will argue that the informants lean towards the general perception that a mesomorphic body type is the most masculine. They also view being healthy and exercising as an important masculine trait. Following the discussion of body types I will discuss how boxing could be a Western influence and how this is an expression of *wu* masculinity. Towards the end of the chapter I will briefly touch upon the Chinese man as sexualised. I argue that the sexual expression may not be as explicit as it can be in the West, and that GQ to a very limited, if any degree sexualise the male models in “Fashion Well”.

I begin by discussing how the male body is being presented in GQ’s “Fashion Well” photo series. The informants’ view of the male body will also be analysed based on their opinions and my observations of their “look”. In the following section I will consider to what extent the ideal of the male body and how it expresses masculinity, could be seen as socially constructed. I will argue that GQ presents different types of male bodies in the photo series, but that overweight male figures are underrepresented and that this corresponds with the informants’ views of what the ideal masculine body entails. This chapter will examine GQ’s portrayal of the male body and evaluate if the media’s portrayal leads to a “new” socially constructed ideal of the Chinese male figure, which leads Chinese men to form new expressions of masculinity related to the body.

²⁰⁰ (Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010) P. 66

²⁰¹ (Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010) P. 66

²⁰² (Latham, Thompson, and Klein 2006) P. 145

6.1 Media's Body Building

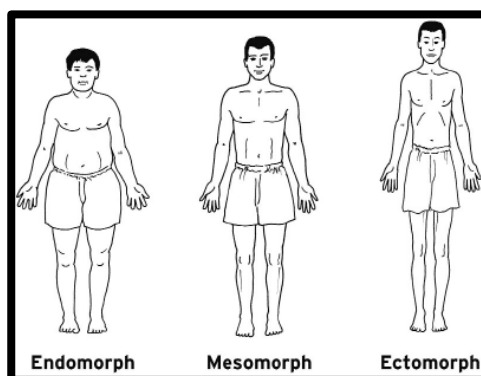
Social constructivists would say that the *experience* of gender changes as contributing factors shift. As argued in chapter three, media is one of the contributing factors to the social construction of gender. Due to the recent appearance of male magazines in China, it is relevant to consider the influence of the media on the social construction of masculinity in China. How gender is constructed will have an impact on expressions of masculinity. GQ is arguably a new factor in Chinese society as it is one of the newest male magazines on the Chinese market. It may contribute towards shifting the experience of masculinity by introducing new concepts that could be interpreted as expressions of masculinity by the reader, such as new ideals of body types, material objects, or even opinions. My research does not permit me to draw conclusions as to whether or not GQ is introducing new factors that shift the experience of masculinity and this area would require further research. What can be said is that it is a new magazine aimed at a male audience, and as discussed in chapter three, the media can arguably be seen as an important factor in socially constructing gender. This indicates that it contributes towards the experience of masculinity.

Chinese men are naturally skinnier than American men.²⁰³ One young man who was quite short and very slim said that he “was not such a man because [he] was so skinny and small”. Another informant, a 32-year-old financial advisor, also very slim said, “Some movie stars from Korea and Japan are very, very beautiful. They are not very masculine. They are pretty skinny, maybe like me, very skinny.” If Chinese men are naturally predisposed to being of a slighter build, then how is it that this particular man felt that he was not “such a man” because of his bodily proportions, or that the financial advisor did not consider the beautiful, very skinny movie stars masculine? The idea that men should be of a larger build must come from various cultural outlets. It is possible that the opinions of the two informants could indicate the influence the media, and other factors, have on the construction of masculinity. As we will see in section 6.2, the bodies of men are represented as both ectomorphic and mesomorphic in GQ. As such, GQ cannot be blamed for the association of mesomorphic body types with masculinity. Further research needs to be done to assess to what extent Chinese men associate a larger, mesomorphic bodily expression with masculinity, and where this association takes its inspiration.

²⁰³ (Alvanon 2008)

6.2 Body Types

Through the interviewing process it became evident that the mesomorphic male (the strong, broad-shouldered, hard bodied and defined muscles) was most commonly viewed as the ideal manly body shape amongst the informants (see photo below for a visual explanation).



Illustrations of three different body-types ²⁰⁴

As mentioned previously in the chapter, one informant even said that he “was not such a man because [he] was so skinny and small”. At the end of each interview I asked the informants who they considered to be the “most manly” (“最 'man' 的”; “*zui* ‘man’ *de*”). The responses were the names of seventeen different famous men – both Chinese and Western. Nine out of seventeen mentioned were Western men; eight of them were Chinese men; none of the men were obese and ten out of the seventeen were visibly muscular. I am visibly Norwegian (blond and blue eyes), and as such I thought the informants might be influenced by the fact that I was Western and for this reason reply the name of a Western man when I asked them who they thought were the most masculine. After interviewing the first informant I modified the question to, “Who do you think is the most manly? Chinese or foreign, whoever is fine to reply with” (“你觉得谁是最“man”的? 中国, 外国谁都可以。”; *Nǐ juéde shéi shì zuì “man” de? Zhōngguó, wàiguó shéi dōu kěyǐ.*) The names varied, but there was one common denominator for almost all the replies: the men all appeared to be in good shape (the only exception was Mao Zedong), and the majority could be categorized as mesomorphs, especially the Western men (see complete list below).

²⁰⁴ (Shepherd)

Who do you think is the most “manly” famous man?		
Name	Mentions	Notes
Christiano Ronaldo	1	Football
Arnold Schwarznegger	1	Actor/senator
Kaka	1	Football
Brad Pitt	1	Actor
Nicolas Cage	1	Actor
Mao Zedong	1	Chairman of China
Tom Cruise	2	Actor
Daniel Craig	1	Actor
Bruce Lee (李小龙)	1	Actor
Steve Jobs	1	Businessman
Kobe Bryant	1	Basketball
Jiang Wen (姜文)	1	Older; actor and director
Zhou Runfa (周润发)	1	Actor
Jackie Chan (成龙)	1	Actor
Wu Yanzu (吴彦祖)	1	Actor/Singer
Sun Honglei (孙红雷)	1	Older; actor TV/movies
Chen Daoming (陈道明)	1	Older; Actor

In 2008, *Alvanon* released a report based on extensive research measuring female and male bodies in China and the USA. The report revealed that the average body proportions between Chinese and American men were significantly different. It showed that the average height only differentiates by four centimetres, but that the average weight and other bodily features are significantly larger in American men compared with Chinese men.²⁰⁵

Body Feature	Average Chinese Male	Average American Male
Height	1.76 m	1.80 m
Chest	88.9 cm	104.1 cm
Waist	78.74 cm	94 cm
Lower Hip	91.44 cm	104.1 cm
Weight	65.8 kg	86.6 kg

²⁰⁵ (Alvanon 2008)

Based on the statistics above, the average Chinese male seems to more likely be ectomorph than his American counterpart. There appears to be a conflict between what a Chinese man is naturally, and what he seemingly aspires to be (mesomorphic body shape). Louie writes that amongst attributes related to *wu* masculinity, a powerful physique is one.²⁰⁶ The conflict between what a Chinese man typically is and what he seemingly aspires to be could indicate two things. Firstly it could suggest an increase in the importance of the physical aspects of *wu* masculinity – the appearance of a strong martial figure. Secondly it could indicate an American (or Western) influence on the ideal manly body shape in China as American men are more likely to encompass a mesomorphic bodily disposition.

The perception of the ideal body shape amongst Chinese men needs further research as there are important psychological implications for the Chinese man if the perceived ideal body shape veers away from his natural body shape. As Kimmel writes, discrepancy between the self and the ideal is problematic if men believe that the men that are closest to the ideal gain benefits not available to those further away.²⁰⁷ If the ideal body shape strays far away from what a Chinese man is naturally inclined to achieve, it could lead to psychological challenges for the individual. It could become problematic if a mesomorphic body shape becomes a feature of Chinese hegemonic masculinity. It could lead to the type of anxiety concerning the ‘quality’ of Chinese men explained by Geng Song at the beginning of this thesis.

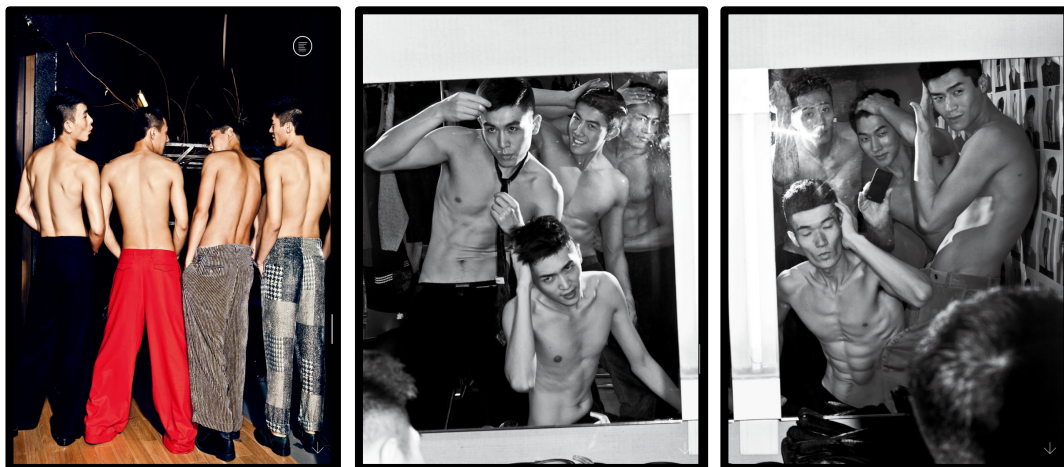
As it is more precise to determine a person’s body-size when they are undressed, I will focus on the photos in “Fashion well” where the models are completely, or partially undressed. These photos could also be said to be the photos that GQ, most explicitly, promote as the ideal male body. There are only three “Fashion Well” photo editorials in GQ where the models are depicted in a nude or semi-nude fashion.

In the photos (see compilation below) the models are depicted showing different bodily constitutions. In the first two photos, the models have a mesomorphic body shape. They appear having broad-shoulders and a strong hard body with defined muscles. In the next three photos, the models also show a muscular body, but the models are skinnier than in the previous photo series. They do not possess the broad shoulders recognized as a component of a mesomorphic body, and fall into an ectomorphic category. In the last two photos the models

²⁰⁶ (Louie 2002) P. 161

²⁰⁷ (Kimmel 1987) P. 39

seem to be even thinner than the previous three photos, and they would also fall outside the mesomorphic body size, and into the ectomorphic category. By depicting an ectomorphic bodily expression in the fashion series, it could lessen the anxiety that may be felt if a man feels like he is inferior to a mesomorphic man.



Nude and semi-nude male models in GQ “Fashion Well”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ (Jackie Tam 2012); (Zhang Yue 2011); (Li Qi 2012b)

The photos do not equivocate the responses of the informants entirely. The informants seemed to lean towards the idea that a masculine man was muscular, strong, fit and healthy. Although GQ portrays models that fit the description of being mesomorphic, they also depict models that are of a slighter build, encompassing the description of an ectomorphic body size. In this sense, the photos in GQ describe more than one type of male body, which may indicate their acceptance of multiple types of bodily expressions. The informants did not see overweight as a masculine trait. As will be discussed in the next section, GQ does not depict an abundance of overweight men, so this was one area where GQ and the informants seemed to find common ground.

6.3 Express Your Health

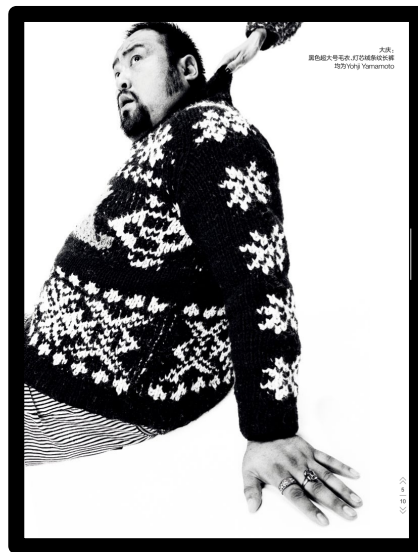
GQ's monthly "Fashion Well" photo editorial predominantly presents male models with two different body types: mesomorphic and ectomorphic. There is only one representation of an endomorphic body type (see photo below). The difference in representations of models suggest that GQ uses different body types to represent the male figure, but that unfit, overweight men are perhaps not considered the ideal in this particular media. The fact that the only overweight person found in the photo series was an older gentleman could imply that it is more acceptable for older men be of a larger bodily constitution, but that the younger male generation should be fit, healthy and mesomorphic or ectomorphic.

The informants I asked about obesity, or being overweight in relation to masculinity all agreed that a man should avoid gaining too much weight. At the time of my fieldwork *Global Times* reported that authorities were discussing the implementation of all-boys schools in Shanghai due to a perceived "masculinity crisis". What exactly this crisis involves, other than lower test scores for boys compared to girls, was not specified.²⁰⁹ I read the article towards the end of my fieldwork, and as such I was only able to ask three of the informants about the perceived masculinity crisis. One of the informants was quite adamant that obesity affected masculinity saying, "Concerning the masculinity crisis, I think that boys are too fat. There is too much homework and not enough physical exercise. The food is too Western and the Chinese internal system cannot handle this kind of food because they are not used to it." I asked him if it is correct to deduce from this opinion that he believed it is important for a man

²⁰⁹ (Agencies 2012)

or a boy to be in good physical shape, whereupon he responded “yes”. He directly relates the masculinity crisis to a physical attribute. Being “fat” and being ‘a man’ do not coincide with one another. The implication seems to be that men should express a healthy and strong appearance if they are to be perceived as masculine.

As briefly discussed above, in GQ the models in the photo series are mostly skinny or quite muscular. There is only one model in the photo series “针织回潮” (Drama Knit) who is somewhat overweight and he is also older than most of the other models (see photo below). In a study of perceived body image in Chinese and American students, Chen and Swalm reported, “With respect to an ideal body shape for men, the category containing the information about muscular strong and healthy looking was identified by both Chinese subjects and American subjects.”²¹⁰ As both American and Chinese identified with the ideal body shape being muscular and healthy, it furthermore indicates that a muscular body shape is the perceived masculine ideal, and a rejection of over- or under weight male bodies as a masculine form of physical expression.



The only photo of an overweight man in the GQ “Fashion Well” photo series.²¹¹

Almost all of the informants said they thought it was very important for a man to exercise, and most of them claimed to exercise regularly. They said they played various sports such as tennis, basketball, football, golf and boxing. Some of them seemed to be in good shape whilst

²¹⁰ (Weiyun Chen 1998) P. 401

²¹¹ (Xiang Sun 2011)

the body shapes of others did not reflect the time they claimed to be spending at the gym or other sports arenas. One informant, a 28-year-old man, said he went swimming one to two times per week. A 29 year old, native Shanghainese man said he played basketball once a week and did taiqi every day but that he did not consider going to the gym to be very manly. Another informant said he loved sports, basketball, swimming, badminton, tennis. Informant 25, another 29-year-old native Shanghainese man, also said he thought it was important to exercise. He went running inside and outside, played tennis and went to the gym three times per week. However, when asked them which famous man they considered to be the manliest, only three out of nineteen replies were the names of sports personas. Of the Chinese mentions there were no sports personas. This could indicate that although exercise and being healthy is seen as important, it is not the main aspirational goal amongst the men I interviewed.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, an increase in gym memberships has been registered, and the relatively large amount of money the men are willing to spend on gym memberships could also indicate that health and fitness has become an increasingly important aspect of the urban Chinese man's life.²¹² What the claims of informants living in Shanghai indicate is to the extent it is important to be, or at the very least, perceived to be healthy and sporty in this urban environment. The relatively few mentions of sports personas could suggest that although health and body is of importance to a man, there should be an intellectual or cultural side to him as well. Although the informants mostly agreed that it was important to be healthy and fit, they did not seem to view sports men as the most "manly". For the most part actors and singers were mentioned. Acting could be viewed as a more cerebral occupation as it is tied to culture. Sports can obviously be tied to a physical occupation. Drawing upon Louie's *wen/wu* dichotomy, it could suggest that expressions of masculinity aspired towards by middle to upper class men in urban contemporary China could be composed of a balance of *wen* and *wu*. The healthy, muscular figure (connected to the physicality of *wu* – martial masculinity) recognized by the informants as a factor of ideal masculinity combined with the cerebral masculinity (*wen* masculinity) tied to the cultural aspect of actors illustrates the balanced dichotomy.

When examining GQ, there seemed to be a limited amount of focus on the men exercising, and a much greater emphasis on fashion and consumer culture. As GQ is a "metrosexual"

²¹² (Yiyao 2012)

magazine, this is not a surprising find, especially as the analysis is based on a fashion photo series. However, what it does indicate is that although achieving a mesomorphic body seems to be desirable amongst the informants, it is not where GQ places its focus in terms of masculine activity. In the photo series, they emphasize creating a masculine identity through consumer products; however, by portraying the models mainly as slim and muscular, they seem to be creating an image of the ideal man having a healthy body combined with a keen sense of fashion. It is only in one of the “Fashion Well” series that the model is portrayed in a “sporty” fashion. He is wearing sweat clothes, posed as if boxing and playing with an inflatable exercise ball (see photo below). In another photo series, three models are going to a sports event. None of the models are actually depicted *actively* participating in sports. As such it could be interpreted that GQ’s focus is on men creating or expressing their masculine identity through material rather than bodily means.



Sports-focus in GQ “Fashion Well”²¹³

6.4 Western Influence – The Case of Boxing

In Donnalyn Pompper’s article, *"Masculinities, the Metrosexual, and Media Images: Across Dimensions of Age and Ethnicity"*, he interviews several Asian men, and elucidates a difference in expectation between Asian men and American men concerning the ideal body type. The Asian men express that “We don’t usually think about muscles. That’s only the American perspective. White and Black men all want to have big muscles, but for Asian men, skinny is normal”.²¹⁴ Furthermore, there is a concern amongst some Asian men that an

²¹³ (Wu Chuang 2012)

²¹⁴ (Pompper 2010) P. 689

American body image is having an effect on their culture.²¹⁵ It is relevant to consider the global influence on a dominant form of physical masculinity in Chinese society, especially as this thesis analyses GQ – an international magazine modified for the Chinese market.

Physicality does not only concern the *appearance* of the body, but also how the body is used. The majority of the informants said they participated in sports such as basketball and swimming; however, three of the informants brought up boxing as a sport they either participated in or had opinions concerning. In the late 1920's, boxing was introduced in China (or Western boxing as it is known to distinguish itself from the Chinese version of boxing, 中国拳; *zhōngguóquán*). It became a popular sport, but in 1959 Mao Zedong deemed it to be too dangerous and banned the sport. Today China has several Olympic-level boxing athletes and it is once again a legal sport.²¹⁶ The three informants all described it as a very masculine form of exercise. Boxing is an aggressive sport, which is banned in several countries due to its violent manifestation (e.g. Cuba, Norway and Sweden). China has a long history of martial arts, and as such it is significant that three informants brought up boxing as the most masculine sport and not *wǔshù* (武术) also known popularly as *gōngfū* (功夫) as it shows a global influence.

Two of the informants who said that they thought boxing was a very masculine sport worked for a European company with a Scandinavian boss who was very active in terms of exercise. Amongst other types of exercises, he was an active boxer. Informant 22, a 32-year-old lawyer from Shanghai said, "Boxing is a more masculine sport because it is more aggressive". His colleague said, "Boxing is too much for me and many Chinese men. It is too aggressive. Chinese men prefer sports with no physical contact." The third informant to express his view of boxing being "more manly" was a 29-year-old native Shanghai resident working for a Swedish company with several Swedish colleagues. He said, "When I do it [boxing] I get excited and tired. It makes you angry. It is not good mentally, but physically it is good". He also said that he found boxing at the gym, and that initially it was just a hobby, but now he wants to find a trainer and that at the moment he did not fight people, but maybe he would at a later point in time.

²¹⁵ (Pompper 2010) P.689

²¹⁶ ("Boxing")

Boxing could be seen as a somewhat Western influence on masculinity, as it is not native to China, and has at times been banned. Louie and Edwards argue that a Western manifestation of masculinity has a proclivity towards violence.²¹⁷ The aggressive elements combined with a hyper-muscular physical appearance that boxers are known for, suggests that this is a Western influence. As discussed in chapter three, *wu* masculinity is connected to Guan Yu – the epitome of the “warrior-fighter”. He represents the physical form of masculinity with a martial flavour. If boxing (or other types of martial sports) continues to be an increasingly popular sport for Chinese men it could indicate an increased acceptance of *wu*-related expressions of masculinity.

6.5 The Sexualised Chinese Man

Sportiness is one form of physical expression that is relevant to consider when exploring masculinity. Louie argues that Asian men are usually less sexualised than white and black men. The sexualisation of the male body is therefore another aspect of Chinese masculinity that should be considered in this exploration. It is important to note that sexuality is not reserved for heterosexuality. Louie makes this point when discussing Guan Yu. He explains that the previous failure to recognize sexuality inherent in *wu*-masculinity has been due to the hetero-erotic focus of readers.²¹⁸ This is an important point; however, for the discussion of sexuality in this chapter I will use a hetero-erotic perspective as the foundation for the analysis.

Throughout the interviews I asked the informants what they believed to constitute masculinity (你觉得男人味的定义是什么? *Nǐ juéde nánrén wèi de dìngyì shì shénme?*). I was expecting a few replies relating to sexuality or the ability to attract women. Only one of the informants made a reference to sexuality in terms of being able to attract the attentions of the opposite sex. He explained, “A man should be a gentleman and attractive to women.” This is far removed from the “laddish” behaviour discussed previously that centres around sexual promiscuity. Concerning what masculinity entailed, the answers related in large part to having a nice home, material possessions and having a good job. A 28-year-old man I encountered at a mall explained that a man should, “Said in a simple way [a man should] have a house, work, and the [possibility of] recreation.” (说比较简单的应该有家庭、工作、娱乐。 *Shuō bǐjiǎo de yìnggāi yǒu jiātíng, gōngzuò, yúlè.*) Another man, encountered at the same mall

²¹⁷ (Louie 1994) P. 138

²¹⁸ (Louie 2002) P. 23-24

said that men should have “money and ability” (钱、能力; *qián, nénglì*). A slightly overweight 31-year-old man was unsure of who was the most masculine man, but stated that men should have a house, a nice body and that nice clothes were important (男人应该拥有房子, 好身材, 有品位的衣服。 *Nán rén yìnggāi yǒngyǒu fángzi, hǎo shēncái, yǒu pǐnwèi de yīfú.*)

In chapter three, Guan Yu was introduced as the greatest man of military prowess – the very symbol of *wu* masculinity. According to Louie, the sexualisation of the *wu* hero has been very limited. He states that no scholars “point to the importance of the politics of sexuality in understanding the dynamics of the *wu* ‘hero’”. Traditionally, both Chinese and Western scholarships have casually dismissed the Chinese hero’s sexuality.”²¹⁹ He writes that in Western chivalric romances love is often seen as the main inspiration for tales of heroic deeds. In Chinese traditional tales of chivalry, love (and by implication, sex) does not play an important part. He furthermore states, “It is necessary to make explicit the sexual and political dimensions of *wu* masculinity because the Chinese warrior-fighter is often depicted as having no romantic feelings whatsoever. He is supposed to be motivated solely by worthy causes, and not by his own individual passions.”²²⁰ As the informants did not mention being attractive to women as an important factor of masculinity (except for one of the informants) it arguably mirrors the traditional paucity of sexual references in relation to masculinity as explained by Louie.

GQ does not portray explicitly sexualised male models. There are very few photos of nude or semi-nude male models and the models are not depicted pursuing women. This could suggest that there is limited sexualisation of the male body in GQ. Kevin Latham writes that in Chinese versions of international women’s fashion magazines the degree of nudity and sexual content is less than in some European and American fashion magazines.²²¹ As stated previously, Louie writes that Chinese men are often depicted in both the West and in China as less “sexual” and more “intelligent” than both black and white men but that in recent years, texts from the West (such as advertising) have begun to sexualise the male body.²²² This could be one explanation for the limited nudity in GQ. The sexualisation of the Chinese male body may be in an early phase. By gradually including nudity in the fashion photo

²¹⁹ (Louie 2002) P. 23

²²⁰ (Louie 2002) P. 23

²²¹ (Latham, Thompson, and Klein 2006) P.145

²²² (Louie 2002) P. 5

series it could lead to an increased sexualisation of the Chinese male body, which in turn could lead to an increased sexual expression of masculinity in China in the future.

There is little interaction between the few female models and the male models in the photos. They are usually interacting with one another in what appears to be a playful, platonic rather than sexual manner. The male models are usually participating in, or imitating an activity such as photography, sports, playing with a child, eating or drinking. Romantic relationships between men and women are not featured in any of the photo series. Even in the *one* photo where four men and one woman are depicted completely nude they sit with their backs to one another, facing away from each other with barely any contact (see nude and semi-nude male models photo compilation in section 6.2). This pose is reminiscent of the description Louie provides of the warrior-fighter depicted as not having any romantic feelings whatsoever.

One of the photo series, “Body Guard”, illustrates the point Louie makes that the warrior-fighter is supposed to be motivated solely by worthy causes, and not by his own individual passions. The series depicts several tall, good-looking Asian men in suits and leather clothing, accessorized with guns and heavy boots. There is one glamorous woman wearing sheer, deep-cut clothing, dark sunglasses and a sparkly bathing suit. She oozes importance and sexual innuendos. The men, or “body guards” (or, *warrior-fighter*), do not pay her any attention, and look in a focused manner, away from her. There is no interaction between any of the guards and the woman. “Individual passion” from the men is not portrayed in the photo editorial, and the viewer is left with a sense of sexual disinterest from the men towards the sexualised woman. Their role is as “protectors” of a “worthy cause” – the woman.



The bodyguards²²³

²²³ (Hui Yuangui 2011)

6.6 Conclusion

Amongst the informants there seems to be a conflict between what the body of Chinese men is naturally, and what they aspire to be. They seemed to perceive the mesomorphic body figure as the most masculine, whilst Alvanon's research indicated that Chinese men are naturally ectomorphs. In the photo series, masculinity seems to be linked with consumer products, rather than sports and exercise. GQ seems to be creating an image of masculinity composed of a healthy body in combination with a keen sense of fashion. More men begin to pay for gym memberships and plastic surgeries become increasingly undergone by men. This indicates that within bodily expressions of masculinity, a connection to consumption and material possessions can also be found.

A global influence on bodily expressions of masculinity in China also seems possible to detect. The informants perceive the mesomorphic body size as the most masculine, and boxing as a choice of exercise could indicate the presence of global influence. It illustrates how global factors may have an effect on the construction of masculinity. Louie and Edwards describe Western men as inclined towards sexual promiscuity, portraying them as highly sexualised and that Chinese men have usually not been described in this manner.²²⁴ There was little indication of a sexualisation of Chinese men in GQ and amongst the informants. Rather there was a heavier focus on materialism related to masculinity. It suggests that influence from other cultures and parts of the world has not made a significant impact on the sexualised aspect of masculinity, and that explicit sexual expressions of masculinity are not as prominent as in Western cultures.

At the beginning of the chapter, Ricciardelli et.al explain that the body contributes to a person's sense of self. It is an evolving project – a self under construction.²²⁵ The body is an important part of one's identity. It is important to understand perceived ideals of bodily masculine expressions. How a person perceives an "ideal" masculinity can have significant psychological implications for the individual if he feels that he does not live up to his perceived ideal. The media's role in influencing the perceived ideals of masculinity in China needs further research, as it can elucidate realities and problems tied with a gap between reality and expectations concerning what masculinity does entail.

²²⁴ (Louie 1994) P.138

²²⁵ (Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010) P. 66

7 Conclusion

The construction of masculinity transforms as surrounding factors are altered. This becomes evident when researching masculinity in contemporary urban China. Social factors influence the construction of masculinity, and in China one of the major contributing factors to the construction of masculinity is arguably the appearance of a consumer society. China has gone from being a nearly consumption free society up until 1979, to becoming one of the largest consumer markets in the world.

Grooming has become increasingly frequent; although there still seems to be some notions left that it is feminine and not suitable for men. Metrosexual masculinity, with its focus on fashion, grooming and beauty is ostensibly becoming a more accepted expression of masculinity in China. GQ uses beautiful, well-groomed and styled men who are always updated on the latest fashion trends in their “Fashion Well” photo series. In the photo series the focus was on clothes and accessories, and grooming was not explicitly mentioned. However, the models had hair styled with precision, and flawless radiant skin indicating that beauty was seen as a masculine trait in the photo series. Amongst the informants there was a divide in opinions concerning grooming products. Some admitted openly to using grooming products, whilst others would laugh uncomfortably. The findings from the interviews and photo analysis concerning grooming could imply that an image of a beautiful, well groomed man is gaining a wider acceptance as a form of masculine expression. Although an expression of male beauty appears to be gaining wider acceptance amongst men, it seems like grooming is still in an early phase, and needs to gain even *wider* acceptance if it is to become an acceptable expression of a hegemonic form of masculinity in China.

Louie’s proposed dichotomy of *wen* and *wu* masculinity is still relevant in contemporary urban China; however, it seems suitable to add an additional third concept: 钱 (*qian*; money) masculinity. Material possessions in relation to identity appear to be closely inter-connected. Possessions can to a certain degree define who a person is, and the findings in this thesis indicate that this could be the case for masculinity in China. Material possessions and ability to consume can, not only indicate a man’s social standing, it could also indicate your potential as a marriage prospect. The informants residing in Shanghai were all brand-conscious, either being familiar with brands or owning high-end brand name products. Many

of the informants also agreed that it was important to have a sense of fashion. In GQ there was a big focus on high-end brands and they appeared to be advocating a fashion conscious expression of masculinity. Brands could be viewed as a mode to express your financial standing, and the suit could become a representation of white-collar masculinity and the ability to provide for a family. This furthermore illustrates the importance material goods and consumption have on masculinity in urban contemporary China. As the ability to consume and material possession do not directly relate to either scholarly or martial masculinity, I therefore conclude that it is appropriate to propose the third basic concept of Chinese masculinity, namely 钱 (*qian*; money) masculinity.

The analysis of body-related topics revealed that there could be a discrepancy between what was viewed as the most masculine type of body (mesomorphic) and the actual build of the Chinese male body (ectomorphic). Being over-weight did not seem to be viewed as an acceptable expression of masculinity in GQ or amongst the informants. Some of the informants did not view being very thin acceptable either, although this did not coincide completely with the findings related to the analysis of the male models depicted in “Fashion Well”. The photo series showed several photos of models whose bodies could be categorized as ectomorphic. This could indicate a difference in perception of the ideal male body between the informants and GQ.

Louie proposes that there had been an increased sexualisation of the Chinese male body, but that Chinese men were still being feminised.²²⁶ The analysis of the informants’ expressions of sexuality and GQ’s presentation of the Chinese male body indicates that the Chinese sexuality is not as explicit as in the West. Only one informant mentioned women in relation to masculinity, and GQ had very few photos of what could be interpreted as sexualised men. There was limited interaction amongst the male and female models, and when they were depicted as nude or semi-nude it did not seem to be in a sexually provocative fashion. This could suggest that sexuality in China is not as explicit as in the West. This is significant as it could be regarded as one of the major challenges when viewing Chinese masculinity from a Western perspective. To avoid a similar categorization of Chinese men as Sun Longji’s categorization of Chinese men as “not quite real men”²²⁷, the Western perspective needs to

²²⁶ (Louie 2002) P. 5

²²⁷ (Louie 1994) P.138

accept the seemingly implicit sexual expression of the Chinese man to be able to understand and accept Chinese masculinity as “manly”.²²⁸

Masculinity in China is a field of limited research. As such it requires increased focus and research. Recognizing a hegemonic form of masculinity in contemporary China is close to impossible as the field of research stands today considering the fact that there is not enough research completed. Discussing Chinese masculinity from a Western perspective could be useful in a comparative study. It becomes problematic when one attempts to define Chinese masculinity from a paradigm based on Western hegemonic criteria. Understanding Chinese masculinity within a Chinese theoretical framework is of crucial importance as analysing Chinese masculinity, or expressions of Chinese masculinity with a foundation on Western hegemonic masculinity could lead to distorted conclusions (such as the one proposed by Sun Lonji). There are deep-rooted historical and cultural elements, very different from a Western hegemonic form of masculinity, which influence the construction of masculinity in contemporary China.

The classification of masculine and feminine categories and characteristics in past and present China also needs further research. Metrosexual masculinity as a form of masculine expression in contemporary China and the relevance consumption has had and continues to have on the construction of masculinity are topics that are in need of further research. It would also be relevant to study what other factors, beside consumption, may have an impact on the social construction of masculinity in China. This thesis has focused on urban China. Research on masculinity in rural China would be beneficial as it would provide a broader spectrum from which to better understand the relevance of *wen*, *wu* and *qian* masculinity. This in turn could lead to a more complete understanding of the factors influencing the construction of a Chinese form of hegemonic masculinity. That could provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of what masculinity entails in China in general, not only in an urban setting.

²²⁸ (Louie 1994) P.138

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Appendix

April 2012: Interview Guide #1

Hi, excuse me. I am a student from the University of Oslo, Norway and I am researching masculinity in Shanghai. Do you have ten minutes to spare to answer a few questions?

不好意思，我是来自挪威奥斯陆大学的研究生，目前正在进行一项关于都市男性品位研究的调查。请问我可以用十分钟问你几个相关问题吗？

1. What do you consider to be manly/masculine?
你觉得男人味的定义是什么？
2. Do you consider yourself to be manly/masculine? Why?
你觉得你身上有哪些特别的男人味？
3. Who do you consider to be the "ultimate man"?
你觉得谁是最 man 的名人？
4. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
当你空闲的时候，你喜欢做些什么？
5. Is it important for a man to own/wear famous brands such as LV, Prada?
你觉得男人有必要穿戴奢侈品（例如 LV， Prada)吗？为什么？
6. Do you work out? Play sports?
你上健身房吗？如果不上，你平常有做其他体育活动吗？例如，打网球，打高尔夫球，等等。
7. What kind of jobs do you consider to be masculine?
你觉得什么样的工作很有男人味？
8. Do you read magazines intended for men?
你平常有阅读男性杂志的习惯吗？如果有，可以举例吗？
9. How important is fashion for you?
你觉得时尚对你来说是什么？你觉得时尚重要吗？
10. Is it important to be masculine?
你觉得男人味对你来说是很重要吗？
11. What are you wearing today?
你可以给我介绍一下你今天穿的是什么牌子？

Interview Guide #2

1. Are you from Shanghai?
你是上海人吗?
2. How old are you?
你多大?
3. Do you work or are you a student?
你在工作还是学生吗?
4. What is your income approximately?
你的工资大概多少?
5. Should men go to the gym?
男人应该上健身房吗?
6. Do you go to the spa?
你去做 spa 吗?
7. Do you choose the clothes you buy yourself?
你自己选你买的衣服吗?
8. Do you often buy male magazines?
你平常买男性杂志吗?
9. What kind of characteristics do you associate with a very manly man?
你觉得一位很 “man” 的人应该有怎样的性格?
10. Do you use cosmetics/grooming products?
你用化妆品吗? 如果有, 你用什么样化妆品?