

Challenges and Efforts of Modern Chinese Urban Women in Romantic Relationships in *Happy Home Magazine* (1936-1949)

(*Cabaran dan Usaha Wanita Bandar Cina Moden dalam Hubungan Romantik dalam Majalah Happy Home (1936-1949)*)

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the challenges, efforts, and effects of urban women's romantic relationships through an analysis of the modern *Happy Home* magazine in China. *Happy Home* magazine documented the love and marriage lives of urban women in China in the 1930s and 1940s. In feudal China, parents' arranged marriages led to obstacles to women's romantic relationships. In modern times, the Western idea of free love and marriage was introduced to China, and women rushed into the flood of free love. However, in the process of falling in love, women still face a series of challenges, such as the single criterion for choosing a spouse, the narrow socialization range, and the restriction on the age of choosing a spouse. In order for women to effectively practice free love, *Happy Home* magazine guides women to use a variety of ways to courageously fall in love freely and strive for their own happiness. For example, improving the criteria for choosing a spouse, expanding women's socialization, upgrading their own qualities, actively seeking a partner and improving their ability to resist falling out of love, and so on. This not only enhances women's ability to fall in love, but also raises women's awareness of their autonomy, and is conducive to the promotion of equality between men and women and the improvement of women's social status.

Keywords: Chinese Urban Women, Romantic Relationships, *Happy Home Magazine*, Challenges, Efforts

Abstrak

Matlamat makalah ini adalah untuk meneroka cabaran, usaha dan kesan hubungan romantik wanita bandar melalui analisis majalah *Happy Home* moden di China. Majalah *Happy Home* mendokumentasikan kehidupan cinta dan perkahwinan wanita bandar di China pada tahun 1930-an dan 1940-an. Pada waktu China masih dalam keadaan feudal, perkahwinan yang diatur ibu bapa membawa kepada halangan kepada hubungan romantik wanita. Pada zaman moden, idea Barat tentang cinta dan perkahwinan bebas diperkenalkan ke China dan wanita hanyut dalam kebebasan bercinta. Walau bagaimanapun, dalam proses percintaan, wanita masih menghadapi beberapa siri cabaran, seperti kriteria tunggal untuk memilih pasangan, ruang sosialisasi yang sempit dan sekatan umur bagi memilih pasangan. Bagi membolehkan wanita mengamalkan cinta secara bebas tanpa paksaan dengan berkesan, majalah *Happy Home* membimbing wanita menggunakan pelbagai cara untuk berani jatuh cinta secara bebas dan berusaha untuk kebahagiaan mereka sendiri. Sebagai contoh, meningkatkan kriteria bagi memilih pasangan, mengembangkan sosialisasi wanita, meningkatkan kualiti mereka sendiri, mencari pasangan secara aktif dan meningkatkan keupayaan mereka untuk menahan putus cinta dan sebagainya. Ini bukan sahaja meningkatkan keupayaan wanita

untuk jatuh cinta, tetapi juga meningkatkan kesadaran wanita tentang autonomi mereka, dan kondusif untuk menggalakkan kesaksamaan antara lelaki dan wanita dan peningkatan status sosial wanita.

Kata kunci: *Wanita Bandar China, hubungan romantik, Happy Home Magazine, cabaran, usaha*

INTRODUCTION

At present, academics have conducted relatively in-depth research on the relationship problems of women in modern China, but there are very few relevant academic results that use *Happy Home* magazine as a primary historical source to study the relationship problems of urban women. *Happy Home* magazine was founded by Xu Baiyi in Shanghai, China, and was published from January 1936 to March 1949, a period of more than 13 years, with a total of 16 volumes and 94 issues. It mainly published articles on family life, family concepts, women's issues, child rearing, interior decoration, economics, food, education, hygiene, etc., as well as many beautifully printed commercial advertisements. The purpose of the magazine was to improve family life and promote national revival (Zhu Boquan 1943). It also emphasized the education and guidance of women's life. *Happy Home* magazine recorded the changes in women's lives in modern Chinese society. During the transition period of society, the old and new ideas of tradition and modernity acted on women at the same time, and a new view of marriage and love was gradually formed amidst the continuous interweaving of contradiction and integration. The magazine shows the challenges faced and efforts made by modern women in the process of love, and is rich in historical materials, which is of great value to the research on the issue of women's love in modern China.

In early modern China, advanced intellectuals, armed with theories of natural human rights and evolution, began to scrutinize China's old marriage system. With the advocacy of the May Fourth New Culture Movement¹, the traditional marriage system was violently impacted by Western ideas of freedom and equality, and they began to actively explore new ways of falling in love and marriage that were suitable for the development of society. The essence of the so-called love affair is that young men and women take long-term love as a prerequisite, and gradually get to know and understand each other, and then realize that they have the same personality and interests. They then realize that they have the same personality and interests and reach a consensus that they can work together to form their own family and contribute to society in the future (Wei Chuan 1924). During the period of alternating old and new cultures, women have undergone great changes in their love and marital relationships, from being passive and at the mercy of others to actively pursuing their own happiness. The object of this article is urban women, which refers to intellectual women who have received school education or even higher education in modern China, represented by Shanghai. Because in the old Chinese society, it was believed that "a woman's lack of knowledge is a virtue", women's education was not emphasized, and their education level was relatively low. With the development of urban society and economy and the advancement of education level, some women have been given the opportunity to receive education, they can read and write, and daily newspapers and magazines have become an important way for urban intellectual women to spend their leisure time. In addition, urban women have a high level of cognitive awareness, are easily influenced by new ideas and are quick to update their concepts; they are concerned about national affairs and have become pioneers of social transformation.

Urban women in the alternation of the old and new eras have encountered challenges in their search for a romantic partner. Because in the old feudal society of China, the premise of marriage between a woman and a man was not based on free love and deepening of emotions, but rather on the criterion of parental arranged marriages, women did not have the autonomy to choose their partners, and if, unfortunately, after the marriage, the man and the woman did not have a substantial and good romantic relationship, it would inevitably result in the mood of the two parties to be depressed, and marital relations would be boring, and would even come to the point of having to get divorced. This may even lead to divorce (Zhao Li 1917). With the gradual introduction of the Western

concept of free and equal marriage and love into China, urban women have begun to boldly practice free love. However, due to the fact that the influence of feudalism is difficult to be eradicated and the influence of new thinking is yet to be expanded, women are still facing a series of challenges in the process of seeking love, such as the single criterion for choosing a spouse, the small scope of socialization, and the restriction on the age of choosing a spouse, and so on. These challenges not only affect women's own development, but also hinder social progress to a certain extent.

Influenced by the Western trend of free love, urban women in the 1930s also gradually got rid of the traditional view of marriage and actively sought for a love partner, which became the direction of women's efforts to pursue happiness at that time. Li Da emphasized the importance of love: "The greatest happiness in a family lies in the sincere love between husband and wife. Love is the only moral that a couple can abide by. There must be love before a couple can become a couple, and there must be permanent love between them before they can become a permanent couple" (Li Da 1980). Women regard freedom of love as the driving force and pillar of their endeavors. Freedom of love was once regarded as an important means of solving the problem of women's emancipation at that time. Women's consciousness of independence gradually awakened, and they had their own ideas and opinions on the issue of marriage and love. They believed that the new way of marriage was more valuable than the old way of marriage, and they tried to break away from the shackles of feudal and authoritarian marriage and advocated the freedom of marriage based on the emotion of love. The society has eulogized love "free love! is a kind of naive and innocent feelings of men and women who love each other with the most truth, goodness and beauty" (Mei Sheng 1929). Developing diversified criteria for choosing a spouse, expanding the scope of socialization, marriageable women taking the initiative in searching for love, and upgrading their own qualities were all efforts for women to actively search for a partner.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze in depth the relationship issues of urban women in modern China by examining the contents of the *Happy Home* magazine. Urban women rebel against the old-fashioned arranged marriage system and actively promote the new-fashioned free and equal way of love. This reflects the awakening of women, who are not willing to be dominated by their elders and have the right to choose their own happiness. In the process of falling in love, women seek to expand the scope of their social life, and they demand the same social rights as men, thus realizing that men and women are not superior or inferior, but rather that men and women are free to fall in love based on equality between the sexes. Under the influence of the idea of free love and marriage, women have transformed themselves from the dominated into the mainstay of social reform, and while demanding freedom in love and marriage, they have begun to have a sense of autonomy in pursuing and realizing their individual independence, and through the emancipation of the idea of love and marriage they have been able to achieve the goal of genuine female self-liberation.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a qualitative research methodology, aiming to collect, organize and analyze a wealth of historical materials archives and documents to explore in depth the challenges faced by women in the process of falling in love, the efforts made by women to fall in love freely and the effects they have had in modern Chinese society. The primary source used for the article is a magazine document, *Happy Home* magazine, from the archives in Shanghai, China. The magazine's preservation and the scarcity of current scholarship on *Happy Home* magazine make it highly valuable for research. By analyzing the text and images in the magazine, the truest record of the event is restored. In addition, to analyze the research more deeply, this article also focuses on other newspapers and magazines published in Shanghai during the same period, such as the Women's Magazine, as well as primary source materials in the Shanghai Archives on the archives of Shanghai's press management during the Republic of China period, which are used to assist this research. The primary materials were treaty documents, official letters, memoirs, newspapers and magazines, and other sources. In addition, the study used secondary sources to support the primary source data, focusing on sources such as books, journals, theses, magazines, articles, etc., for a variety of purposes such as comparison, reinforcement, support, or interpretation in the research. These sources were important to further enhance the discussion of the research.

In addition, this article examines the topic from a gender perspective, in the context of gender interaction and conflict. In fact, in all areas of society, the interaction and conflict between the two camps divided by gender has never ceased, but only manifested in different ways. The male-dominated social elites led women into the modern era and thus gained socialized identities, but never really left behind the mentality of binding and guarding women; women started modernization in a passive posture, but soon developed self-awareness and self-exploration that were not framed by the imagination of the reformers. In China, in feudal society, women had a low social status and were dependent on men. In modern times, with the enlightenment of social thinking, the social role of women has gradually changed during women's efforts, with women's social status rising, having more voice, and confronting gender inequities with a more autonomous stance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

By analyzing historical materials, this article examines the relationship issues of urban women in modern China. In the old-fashioned Chinese society, love was ignored, and women did not have the right to choose their partners. After the May 4th New Culture Movement, the trend of love prevailed, but women still faced many challenges in the process of love. In order to change this passive situation, *Happy Home* magazine guides women to improve their relationship ability from various aspects, including behavior and psychology, in an attempt to reverse the disadvantageous situation of women in love. By analyzing the challenges and efforts of modern Chinese women in love, it is concluded that in the process of social change, women's ability to fall in love has increased, self-awareness has awakened, social status has improved, and free love has changed the trajectory of women's development. This has had a positive effect on women's emancipation and has contributed to social progress and gender equality.

Challenges of Modern Chinese Urban Women in Romantic Relationships

In feudal China, men and women must obey their parents in marriage, and men and women do not have the right to decide on their own love affairs and marriages, which are arranged by their parents and are called "parental orders". Love and marriage are considered to be two unrelated matters, The choice of spouse is not directly related to love, and the choice of spouse is not solely or primarily the business of the parties to a marriage but is the duty and power of parents and family (Zheng Quanhong 2015). The prerequisite for a woman to marry a man was not based on free love. At the same time, women were deeply bound by feudal ethics such as "male superiority and female inferiority", and at the same time had no financial resources and could only rely on their father's or husband's family, so their family status was low. Women are not allowed to fall in love freely, nor do they have the right to choose their own partners. After marriage, their duties were to reproduce heirs, take care of their husbands, and engage in family affairs. This has seriously affected modern urban women's pursuit of free love and independence, which is a great challenge for women.

In *Happy Home* magazine, Ms. Lushan, who is about to get married, has unknown fears about her marriage. Since her marriage was decided by her parents, she wonders if her fiancé was also forced to accept the marriage because of her parents' order? Does her fiancé have feelings for her? Will their marriage last? The woman fell into endless sorrow (Editor 1941). But she could not decide on her own marriage and had to marry at the order of her parents. For women living in the older environment, marriage is the destination of women, so no matter what the husband is like, "marrying the chicken follows the chicken", and they are not capable of analyzing it, and if they are not satisfied with their life after marriage, then they can only say that it is the fate of heaven (Editor 1937). Accordingly, it is clear that a marriage that is only at the disposal of the parents and is not based on love is unable to predict the happiness or unhappiness of the life after marriage and can only be left to the will of heaven, and the woman's life is most likely to be unhappy.

After the May Fourth New Culture Movement, with the gradual penetration of the Western ideas of gender equality, free love and marriage, it has profoundly influenced the modern women's view of marriage and love. More and more people believe that the idea that love should prevail in

marriage and that men and women should be in love with each other. More and more women are fighting against arranged marriages (Chinese Women's Association 1981). Love has become a hot topic in society, and women are actively engaged in love, finding happiness through love, and even hoping to realize the value of their lives through free love. However, constrained by the social conditions at that time, women were still unable to completely free themselves from the constraints of feudalism, and the influence of new thinking had not yet been fully formed, making it impossible for women to choose a spouse. These seriously affected women's development and were challenges for women.

Firstly, the singularity of the criteria for choosing a spouse. In feudal China, the criteria for choosing a spouse were relatively homogeneous. Regarding the choice of spouse, the mainstream society at that time paid the most attention to money and power status (Zheng Quanhong 2015). The children's marital success is judged by the amount of property, and the children of rich families should marry the children of rich families, regardless of character or talent, as long as your family's wealth is there, you can get a virtuous and beautiful woman from a rich family to be your wife, and whether both parties agree or not is not a matter of concern (Qian Yiwei 1934). In other words, the main criterion for parents to choose a spouse for their daughters is money and power status. Marriage to a family with power and wealth will benefit the father's entire family, not only in the form of a large dowry from the man, but also in the form of power that can help the political status of the entire family.

Happy Home magazine criticized such a homogenous criterion for choosing a spouse. Marrying a wealthy man, merely for their wealth or luxurious house, does not constitute a happy family, for there is no love there (Editor 1938). Parents, valuing the wealth and power of the prospective partner, marry off their daughters to wealthy individuals, seemingly providing a life of luxury. However, they fail to consider the emotions of their daughters, resulting in marriages lack of love, which ultimately lead to unhappiness. Parents make wealth the measure of their daughters' marriage but make no mention of the inner circumstances of the partner who is going to be with their daughters for the rest of their lives, and that being rich is the best, and that such parents are burying the woman's happiness. It's outrageous. In fact, it is certainly shameful for parents to ruin the life of their children for their own selfish interests (Yu Huidong 1936). Therefore, under the strong pressure of parental order, only money and power are singularly used as the criteria to measure a partner, while women are not allowed to freely choose their romantic partners. This poses a challenge for women.

Secondly, Women have a narrow social circle. With the continuous influence of new ideologies and the gradual acceptance of the concept of free love by society, urban women are actively engaging in the trend of romance. Youthful romance has become a common phenomenon, young men and women strolling arm in arm, hand in hand, intimately in the park, is no longer surprising (Chen Dongyuan 1924). In this era of ideological transition, women encounter new challenges in their quest for true love. Apart from some women who receive schooling and go out to work, who have the opportunity to come into contact with the opposite sex, the majority of women still have very limited opportunities to come into contact with unknown men. Parents in ordinary families are still bound by the traditional feudal morality that an unmarried woman does not leave the house, and they do not allow women to encounter unknown men.

The soil of love requires freedom, in environments where free interaction is restricted, it is difficult to yield fruitful outcomes (Wang Yinhuan 2006). As reported in the *Happy Home* magazine: many women, because their social lives are limited to same-sex sisterhood, are sufficiently isolated from men, resulting in adverse effects (Marjorie Van De Water 1938). This leads to them being unable to meet suitable men for a long time. Allowing such a situation to persist may lead to even worse consequences. Due to the lack of opportunities for men and women to meet, and simultaneously due to their physiological needs, young men enter stimulating environments, Unmarried women with negative attitudes or who have gone astray, from this, how to meet our spouses when we are young (Xu Baiyi 1940) becomes one of the challenges faced by women at that time.

Lastly, the disadvantage of women in finding a partner based on age. Limited social circles for women result in difficulties in finding a partner, and as they age, they find themselves in a disadvantaged position in the relationship situation. It is widely believed in society that men tend to fall in love with and marry younger women, while older women are often rejected by men. As mentioned in the *Happy Home* magazine: A 25 man often marries a woman around the age of 22. However, a 32 man will never marry a woman around 32 years old, at least he will choose a woman who is 28 years old (Marjorie Van De Water 1938). The age difference between men and women increases as time passes, which is highly unfavorable for women.

In a nationwide urban survey on family, marriage, and childbirth, data regarding the suitable marriage age in Shanghai is shown in the following table 3.1.

Table 1. Average age at first marriage for women in the Zhangjianong area of Shanghai

Year	Average Age
1920-1929	19.600
1940-1949	20.687
1950-1959	23.813

Source: Liu Ying & Xue Su Zhen, *Research on Chinese Marriage and Family*, p. 198.

According to the table 1, it can be observed that the average age at first marriage for women in Shanghai has been steadily increasing over time. In the 1940s, the average age at first marriage was 20.6 years old. However, even by the 1950s, the average age remained at 23.8 years old. It means that if women cannot marry by their around 30, they may be marginalized or even overlooked in the marriage market.

Women who are troubled by the issue of marriage age are not only ordinary women but also highly educated women. The timing of education and mate selection often conflicts. As reported in the *Happy Home* magazine: For a university female student, there is indeed a slight disadvantage in terms of her marriage because by the time she graduates, she is at least 22 years old. At this point, many people have already married, and the more people get married, the fewer opportunities there are for others to marry (Marjorie Van De Water 1938). Because the marriageable age for women is very short, usually from 18 to 22, and according to general customs, a wife's age should ideally not exceed that of her husband. Therefore, once a woman passes the age of 24 or 25, her prospects for marriage become more difficult. I have seen many college graduates who remain single. Material satisfaction cannot outweigh the inner sorrow they feel (Shao Junxuan 1948). In modern times, women gradually began to accept modern education, which delayed their marriage age, but this was not socially accepted. From this, in modern China, perhaps a woman's own abilities cannot represent everything. Although society advocates for educated women, women's marriage age is still constrained by social norms, posing a challenge for women.

From the point of view of the social environment, there are still practical difficulties for women in modern urban China to choose their spouses freely. Although society underwent the baptism of new ideas and people's thoughts gradually became liberated, the ideas of freedom in love and marriage were widely accepted. However, in the transitional society between old and new, women still could not escape the constraints of traditional society. Factors such as the singularity of mate selection criteria, the narrowness of women's social circles, and restrictions on marriage age. This resulted in women being unable to balance love, marriage, and self-realization, imposing greater pressure on their development. Furthermore, it hindered women's liberation and the modernization of society. Women still face enormous challenges and there is an urgent need to address them.

Efforts of Modern Chinese Urban Women in Romantic Relationships

First, establishing diverse mate selection criteria. Unlike in feudal Chinese society, young men and women at this time had the right to choose their spouses according to their own standards. Urban Women no longer only considered wealth and power as criteria for mate selection but should instead

evaluate potential partners from multiple perspectives. Therefore, when choosing a spouse, women should make careful decisions to find an ideal partner truly suited to themselves. The *Happy Home* magazine offered advice on mate selection for women: women age easily, so it is advisable to marry early. When looking for a partner, women should aim for men around 30 who have economic capabilities. Those young boys are only fit to be lovers, not husbands (Shao Junxuan 1948). Women should choose mature, stable men with some financial stability, rather than getting trapped only by their appearance or sweet words. Here the magazine also mentions that while women should use money as a criterion for choosing a spouse, it is not the only criterion

The *Happy Home* magazine outlined some basic requirements of women for their male partners at that time: do not. Do not focus on physical beauty to the exclusion of observing the virtues of character. physical appearance while neglecting to observe moral virtues, Fickleness as an obstacle to the union of the sexes, Devotion in love, devoid of deceitful intentions, Consistency in interests, temperament, and lifestyle habits, High levels of education and profound life skills, Strong physique (Lu Sha 1947). Money and power were no longer the sole criteria for mate selection, and the criteria for mate selection at this time were more diversified. However, Love is sweet, but there are also many pitfalls (Wang Yinhuan 2007). Women should not rely only on outward appearance when selecting a partner. Perhaps a man who appears well-dressed is actually a prodigal son, so it is important to value his inner noble character. The partner in love should be faithful and truthful, have a healthy body, and have received education and possess life skills. These are all basic conditions for a qualified male partner. However, women should also choose partners according to their own actual situation. Generally, women tend to marry a man of higher caliber, while men tend to marry a woman of lower level, so an educated woman who sets her standards and expectations too high may end up disappointed (Marjorie Van De Water 1938). Do not set standards too high, as this may result in losing more choices and wasting one's prime years in vain.

Second, expanding social circles. In order to find a suitable partner at the right age, women need to broaden their opportunities for socializing with society and the opposite sex and keep an open mind while searching. *Happy Home* magazine mentioned: Places like universities, and even supplementary schools affiliated with universities, often have both male and female students. These places allow women to meet like-minded companions, some discussion groups, after many lectures, often continue discussions, providing a good opportunity for men and women to converse, tasteful bookstores or libraries can also bring men and women together (Xu Baiyi 1940). These places tend to attract more men, so frequenting them increases the chances of finding a romantic partner. Otherwise, remaining within one's small social circle will make it impossible to meet more high-quality men. Although men still strive to pursue a woman after encountering whom they like, they cannot pursue a woman they have not encountered (Xu Baiyi 1940). In other words, women should actively expand their social circles, interact with more men in different fields, and thereby increase the likelihood of meeting the most suitable partner. Once you encounter a suitable man, create opportunities to meet him frequently (Qin Le 1947). This will facilitate falling in love with him and possibly getting married.

Mao Zedong, in his younger years, understood love as arising between a man and a woman, through extended socialization. He said: "The so-called love is not only physical and carnal fulfillment, but also the fulfillment of spiritual and social noble desires"(CPC Central Committee 1990). Mao and his wife, Yang Kaihui, first met in a political salon. In search of the truth to save the country and the people, Mao, Cai Hesen and others often met at Mr. Yang Changji's home to discuss ways to save the country. Yang Kaihui, the daughter of Mr. Yang Changji, as an enthusiastic onlooker, was attracted by Mao Zedong's great ambition and profound insights. Through mutual contact, the two gradually developed feelings for each other. Mao Zedong and Yang Kaihui, who had never crossed paths before, met through public socializing. They admired each other, fell in love freely, and established a deep friendship and love based on their common ideals and aspirations.

Third, marriageable women actively seek a partner. Marriageable women should actively seek love to avoid missing the best marriage opportunities. I hope young ladies do not overlook their marriageable age, as the marriageable period for women is indeed very short (Shao Junxuan 1948).

The *Happy Home* magazine provides relevant advice. For their happiness, women should attach sufficient importance to love and actively prepare for marriage in the future. At the ages of 18-22, women should prepare and improve themselves psychologically and emotionally (Ya Ming 1938). Women should prioritize love, actively seek opportunities for love, and prepare themselves to find a suitable partner at the right age. To do so, they can adopt the following methods: First, decide on the ideal partner, list down the physical, spiritual, moral, social, and economic conditions you hope he possesses, and then broaden your horizons to find a man who meets your ideal criteria (Qin Le 1947). If some women are concerned that their academic pursuits may affect their marriage age, they can start paying attention to marriage during their university years. They don't need to limit their social circle to classmates only, they can pay attention to men a few years older, encourage them to continue their career pursuits, and get married after graduation (Marjorie Van De Water 1938). In this way, women can focus on their studies while simultaneously pursuing love and resolving lifelong matters at the right age. Although society generally agrees that women should be younger than men when marrying, which may not change easily in the short term, women should actively strive for their own happiness and aim to meet the most suitable partner at the best age for themselves.

Fourth, enhancement of women's self-quality. While paying attention to the conditions of men, women should also focus on enhancing their own qualities and dating skills. The magazine provides several suggestions in this regard. Women should pay attention to their appearance and figure, as attractive women are more likely to attract the opposite sex (Zhang Ying 1940). Having a good educational background and a quality job will enable you to match with more outstanding men. Additionally, the way of interacting with men is also crucial. Love must be sincere, and adopting an attitude of insincerity or treating the opposite sex as a plaything is very harmful (Lu Sha 1947). When dealing with men, women shouldn't be too enthusiastic or too coquettish, as this behavior may scare the other person away and make an unmarried daughter lose her true appeal (Zhi Qian 1945). Avoid sarcastically criticizing the opposite sex, give praise to them (Zhang Ying 1940). These suggestions reflect that society no longer simply expects urban women to be good wives and mothers, but rather, it sets higher standards for them.

Lin Huiyin is a famous modern architect and writer, known as the "First Talented Woman of the Republic of China". She studied at Peihua Girls' High School, and at the age of 19, she followed her father to study in England, and later became interested in architecture. She wrote more than 60 poems and 10 prose essays, which were published in many newspapers and magazines. When Liang Sicheng first met her, he was quite impressed. During their relationship, he fell in love with this thoughtful and brilliant woman of the new age, they fell in love freely, and in 1924 she and Liang Sicheng went to the United States to study architecture at the University of Pennsylvania together, and eventually married and fell in love with each other for the rest of their lives. "Many of the literary details of her life show a sense of independent upward mobility and liberal femininity" (Jin Mengyao 2024). Lin Huiyin, who had received a new-style education and possessed an extraordinary scholarly cultivation and vision of life, was rewarded with the unique charm of an intellectual woman with a perfect love and social of acclaim.

Last, the ability to resist loss of love. Women's psychological issues cannot be ignored (Yusof H.M., Enh A.M. & Mansor, S. 2024). Loss of love is painful, but it is also one of the most ordinary things. If one wishes to overcome the pain of it, it requires perseverance and self-control (Qiu Bo 1944). First, you must resolve to rid yourself of the notion that losing the man is shameful, second, you must have no expectations, do not dream that he will come back and reconcile, third, seek a profession or engage in learning something of the mind, watching plays and movies, reading books are all comforts to the emotions. With the prevalence of the ideology of free love in society, women undergo the pain of heartbreak while immersed in beautiful love affairs. After enduring all the pain, you will instead feel fortunate to have escaped the ordeal (Qiu Bo 1944). This is also a problem that traditional Chinese society never encountered. Women, through effort, overcome the pressure of heartbreak and strengthen their ability to face setbacks, which contributes to personal growth and development. It serves as valuable experience for future love and life.

Deng Yingchao once said: “under the stimulation of new ideas, young people gradually develop thoughts and demands for liberation from arranged marriages” (China Women’s Management Cadre College 1987). Through their efforts in seeking partners, urban women deeply experience the benefits of free love. Some of them have already got rid of the shackles of arranged marriages and walked into the door of love; some have begun to learn how to fall in love, enjoy the sweetness and happiness brought by love, and lay a solid emotional foundation for future married life; and some are in the final struggle against the pain of lost love. In the process of actively seeking a partner, women are also constantly enriching and improving themselves. They bravely break through social constraints, tirelessly striving for the freedom to love, and searching for their true happiness.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the issue of love and marriage in Chinese society underwent great changes. New-style, free forms of love and marriage had emerged, but the old style of arranged marriages had not completely disappeared, and the old and new concepts were in a process of contradiction and integration. There is still a huge gap between the freedom of love advocated by young people. Women cannot place their hopes for emancipation on men; they need to continue to strengthen themselves, to become the mainstay of their own emancipation, and to strive for gender equality and equality in political and economic rights, to improve their status in society. The choice of a spouse is the key to a happy marriage, and the process of women’s efforts to find a spouse is the process of pursuing human emancipation and breaking free of feudal bonds, which has had a positive effect on the reshaping of the concept of marriage in China, on inspiring young people to fight for the freedom of marriage, and even on promoting the modernization of Chinese society and the process of emancipation of women.

CONCLUSION

Women’s issues have long been of great concern to academics, not only in relation to women’s own development but also as a reflection of the degree of development of social civilization. It is of research value to examine the issue of urban women in modern China using a specific historical publication as an entry point. *Happy Home* magazine guided the growth and awakening of women in the 1930s and 1940s, and reflects the emancipation of women embedded in the issue of modern urban women’s marriage and love. Women in modern China faced the challenges of no right to choose a romantic partner, a single criterion for choosing a spouse, a narrow socialization range, and a restriction on the age at which a spouse could be chosen. To solve these problems, women made efforts to seek a romantic partner. Developing diversified criteria for choosing a mate, expanding the scope of socialization, encouraging women of the suitable age to take the initiative to seek love, improving their own qualities, taking the initiative to seek a relationship, strengthening their psychological qualities, improving their ability to resist falling out of love, and so on. Through a series of efforts to not only improve women’s ability to fall in love, but also deepen society’s recognition of free love. At the same time, it reveals the awakening and resistance of women, who dare to claim their own rights and rebel against social oppression and strive for independence of personality. Women are freed from the shackles of traditional feudalism and become the main subjects of ideological emancipation, demanding free love, equality between men and women, and improvement of their social status, realizing real women’s emancipation, which has had beneficial effects on the women’s society in modern China.

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¹ This is a compound word that has the idea of covering both the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement. Its time limit is from 1915 to 1923, and this term favors the dual political and cultural nature of the movement, suggesting that it is overlapping the New Culture Movement of the Cultural Revolution with the May Fourth Movement as a political event (Ouyang Zhesheng 2022).