

Analysis of the Readership of the column of "Mailbox" in "Women's Life"

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Abstract-- The column of "Mailbox" in "Women's Life" was an important forum for communicating ideas and guiding public opinion. Analysis of the Readership of the column of "Mailbox" in "Women's Life" by region, gender and occupation, which was also an important entry point for understanding why "Women's Life" had become so popular with readers, why it had made such an impact on public opinion and advocacy, and what role readers of the letters played in the dissemination of the publication.

Keywords-- the column of "mailbox"; region; gender; occupation

"Women's Life" was one of the most influential women's publications in China during the war of China's Resistance against Japanese Aggression, with a circulation of more than 20,000 copies [1], and was an important literature in the history of the modern Chinese women's movement. "Women's Life" was founded in Shanghai on July 1, 1935, and moved to Wuhan in November 1937 after the fall of Shanghai at the outbreak of the Song-Shanghai War in 1937, and then to Chongqing in August 1938, where it was published until January 16, 1941, when it ceased publication in volume 9, issue 6, for a total of 9 volumes and 90 issues. The column of "Mailbox" was an important space in "Women's Life" for readers to speak freely and for the editors to disseminate their ideas. By analyzing its readership, the content and characteristics of the letters received, it could be found that readers were not always passive recipients, but also played an active role in the process of interaction with the editors. In this process, readers were both the recipient of the publication's ideas and also played the role of a disseminator of information. At the same time, the overall grasp of the readership of the column of "Mailbox" in "Women's Life" was also an important aspect of our understanding of the

dissemination of the publication and its impact on society.

I. ANALYSIS OF THE COLUMN OF "MAILBOX" IN "WOMEN'S LIFE"

The column of "Mailbox" was a two-way communication platform between the readers and editors in "Women's Life". Readers wrote to this platform with their suggestions for the publication, or to seek answers to their worries, or to express their opinions on current affairs. The editors had also taken input from readers' letters, patiently answered relevant questions, and provided positive guidance to readers. It was a long-lasting and profoundly influential column, except for the war reasons caused by the overall relocation and shortage of printing materials and other reasons caused by the column of "mailbox" the short-term stop, it could be said, the column of "mailbox" also through the "Women's Life" publication almost all the time.

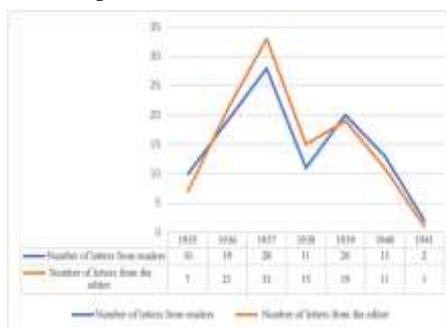
The name of the column of "Mailbox" had gone through a process of change. In the early days of "Women's Life", the name of the column used to publish readers' letters was the column of "Readers' Corner", and the first letter from the readers of "Women's Life" was published in the column of "Readers' Corner" in the second issue of Volume 1 of "Women's Life". and by Vol. 1, No. 6, the column of "Reader's Corner" had published 10 letters from readers and 7 letters from the editor in response. Starting from Volume 2, the content of the columns of "Women's Life" had also undergone some innovation, with the original column of "Reader's Corner" being used to publish readers' essays and the column of "Mailbox" being created to publish readers' letters and the editors' replies. According to the relevant statistics, from Volume 2, Issue 1 to last issue, Volume 9, Issue 6, the column of "Mailbox" published 93 letters from readers and 101 letters from the editor in response. To facilitate the analysis, the 10 letters from readers

and 7 letters from the editor published in the column of "Reader's Corner" of Volume 1 were analyzed together with the column of "Mailbox". Therefore, the data analyzed in this paper include 103 letters from readers and 108 letters from the editor in response, for a total of 211 letters.

A. *Analysis of changes in the trend in the column of "Mailbox"*

Table I reflected the trend of the number of letters from readers published in the column of "Mailbox" in "Women's Life" from its inception on July 1, 1935 to its discontinuation in January 1941, as well as the editor's replies.

TABLE I Trend of the number of letters from readers and the editor's replies in the column of "Mailbox" (1935-1941)



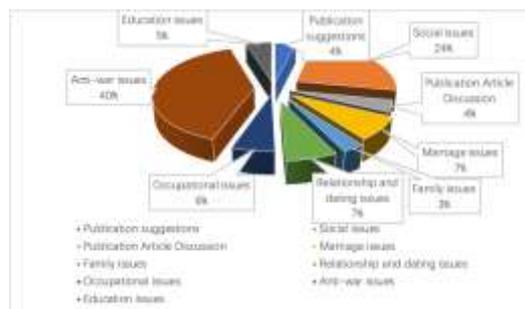
According to the relevant data in Table I, it could be clearly seen that the column of "mailbox" from the creation to the forced suspension of the changes in the direction of the development of this column was with the changes in the development of the current situation and development. From the launch of the magazine in Shanghai to the outbreak of the Sino-Shanghai War, the number of letters from readers grew gradually, and the number of letters from the editors also changed in tandem with it. The number of letters from readers reached a peak in 1937, and after the outbreak of the Song-Shanghai War on August 13, 1937, with the development of the war situation, "Women's Life" was transferred from Shanghai to Wuhan, and after the Song-Shanghai War to August 1938, the number of letters from readers showed a downward trend. In December 1938, "Women's Life" was moved from Wuhan to Chongqing. During this period, the number of letters from readers showed a small increase and reached a small peak in 1939, but after 1939, the number of letters from readers showed a decreasing trend, and this decreasing trend continued until 1941, when the magazine ceased publication, and the column of

"mailbox" also announced the end.

B. *Statistical analysis of the issue of letters in the column of "Mailbox"*

Table II was a statistical analysis of the text and content of 103 letters from readers in the column of "Mailbox", reflecting the distribution of concerns in the letters from readers of "Women's Life" from its inception to its discontinuation.

TABLE II: Statistical analysis of the issue of letters in the column of "Mailbox"



By looking at the statistical chart of the column of "mailbox", we could find that the anti-war issues were the most frequently discussed and feedback issues in the readers' letters, accounting for 40% of all letters. Followed by social issues, accounting for 24%, marriage. Followed by love, family, career and education issues, accounting for a similar proportion, 5%-7%. The lowest percentage was for suggestions on publications and discussion of articles in publications, accounting for only 4%. Moreover, the concerns expressed in readers' letters had evolved with the changing times. Since the publication had more or less imperfections in its early years, most of the suggestions for the publication and discussions of its articles appeared only in the first few issues of "Women's Life", and the number was very small. And in the early days of the publication, the focus was on the emancipation of women and the issues related to women in society, so the issues around love, marriage, family, education and career were concentrated in the early part of the publication. However, with the outbreak of the war as an important point, there was an important shift in the concerns expressed in readers' letters, as the publication's content and columns were adjusted to include many topics closely related to the war and to actively mobilize women, there has been an important shift in the concerns expressed in readers' letters. The

letters on social issues and the war effort came after the outbreak of the war. It was also worth mentioning that the letters didn't completely ignore the rights and interests of women in social issues, but intersperse some voices of women's emancipation under the general trend of resistance and salvation.

II. ANALYSIS OF READERSHIP OF THE COLUMN OF "MAILBOX" IN "WOMEN'S LIFE"

A good newspaper reading couldn't be separated from the editorial printing and publishing, author groups, readership and other multi-party groups in all aspects of the joint efforts. "Women's Life" had a circulation of more than 20,000 copies, so why it was so popular with readers? Due to the lack of information, we were unable to examine in detail which readers subscribed to "Women's Life" in those years. However, analysis of the group of senders of letters published in the column of "Mailbox" of the publication is also an important perspective to study the readership. We could also get a general overview of the reasons for this, including the regional distribution of readers, the gender share and the analysis of identity statistics.

A. Regional distribution of readers

Although the editors of "Women's Life" had repeatedly reminded readers that you should note your name and address at the end of the article for correspondence in the "Women's Life Submission Brief"^[2], the letters from readers published in the column still lacked information. However, we could also find some clues from the content of readers' letters, the advertisement pages and the contents of the column of "Editor's Room", so that we could roughly analyze the distribution of "Women's Life" readers in general. Through reading the 103 letters from readers, we found that there were very few letters from readers who had indicated their addresses in their letters, and the places of correspondence revealed were mostly large and medium-sized cities in China, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Changsha, Suzhou, Fuzhou, Hangzhou and Changshu. And overseas readers included those from Singapore and Australia. In addition, "Women's Life" routinely published a number of advertisements at the end of each issue. The content of the advertisement consisted of two general parts: firstly, it indicated the detailed publication information of "Women's Life", including the time of publication, publisher, agency publishing company, submission brief, pricing table and advertising

schedule; secondly, it advertised the books distributed by the relevant agency publishing company and advertises for them. From the publication details of "Women's Life", as indicated on the end pages, we could deduce the general coverage area of the readers from the distribution area of the publication. The agency for "Women's Life" from Volume1, Issue1 to Volume1, Issue6 is Shanghai Magazine Company, whose general distribution is located in Shanghai, with sub-distribution offices in Nanjing, Guangzhou, Kunming and Kaifeng. From Volume 2, Issue1, it was changed to Shanghai Life Bookstore as an agent for distribution. The head office of Life Bookstore after the outbreak of the war was moved to Wuhan, and branches were set up in Chongqing, Hong Kong, Guilin, Kunming, Xingzhou, Xi'an, Lanzhou, Guiyang, Chengdu, Changsha, Hengyang, Meixian, Nanping, Liuzhou, Yulin, Chikan, etc. And the pricing table on the advertisement page also indicated that the reservation price of "Women's Life" in China and Japan, Hong Kong and Macau was different from that in foreign countries, and its sale range covered various places at home and abroad, which was sufficient to see the wide range of its distribution. It could be inferred from this that "Women's Life" covered most of the provinces in China and overseas, and its readership was mainly located in large and medium-sized cities, while there was still a large gap in the rural areas.

B. Gender Ratio of Readers

Shen Zijiu mentioned in the launch of "Women's Life": "It will be your confidant, giving you much wisdom to know yourself, to know others, to know society, to know the world, and to know all the ugliness. It will be your pioneer and give you many guides, so that you will know how to take off the heavy pressure, how to be a human being, how to be a social being, and how to walk hand in hand on the bright path."^[3] This was also the purpose of "Women's Life", which was to promote the theory of women's emancipation, to lead women to realize that they existed as independent "human beings", to liberate women from the chains of enslavement by feudal rituals, and to provide a powerful ideological weapon for the development of the women's emancipation movement. From the purpose, we found that "Women's Life" had a pre-determined audience of women, and although it was a publication for the general population of women, there was also a significant male

readership. In the "Editor's Room" of Volume 3, Issue1, the editors made a statistical analysis of the gender of the readers of "Women's Life": "The ratio of male to female is four to six." [4] This was the ratio of male to female readers of "Women's Life" in the early years of the publication, and there were no further statistics on the gender of readers of the publication since then. Through a careful analysis of the detailed contents of the 103 letters from the publication, and a statistical analysis of the gender ratio of the letter group throughout the period of the publication, it could be found that, except for a very small number of readers who had difficulty in identifying their gender, most of them had directly or indirectly revealed some relevant gender information in the contents of their letters. As shown in Table III, among the 103 letters from readers published in the column of "Mailbox" in "Women's Life", there were 70 letters from female readers, more than twice the number of male readers, and the gender ratio of male to female readers was roughly seven to three.

TABLE III. Gender distribution of readers in the column of "Mailbox"

Gender Classification	Male	Female	Not Available	Total
Number of Letters	27	70	6	103
Percentage	26%	68%	6%	100%

According to the statistics in the table, women made up the majority of the readers of the column of "Mailbox" in "Women's Life", which was in line with the expectations of the readers of "Women's Life".

C. Occupational Status of Readers

In the column of "Editor's Office" of Volume 3, Issue1 in "Women's Life", there were statistics on "the composition of our readers": "Forty- five percent are students, 15 percent are teachers, and 10 percent are housewives. The rest are employed (women workers, doctors, nurses, bankers, journalists, shopkeepers, military, police, printers, accountants). "[5] It could be seen that in the pre-"Women's Life" period, students were the main occupational identity of the "Women's Life" readership, but these data were incomplete. By analyzing the contents of 103 readers' letters, a rough count of the occupational status of the readers who wrote in was made, as

shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV. Occupational status of readers in the column of "Mailbox"

Group Identity	Number	Percentage
Students	23	22%
Teachers	9	9%
Housewives	11	11%
Uneducated and unemployed	9	9%
Working people	26	25%
Not Available	25	24%
Total	103	100%

We could find that students and working people were the main group of contributors to the column of "Mailbox", followed by teachers, housewives and unemployed people. Among the group of correspondents whose primary occupational status was a student, most were female students studying in secondary schools, with only a very small number of male students, and most were male students studying at university. Among the workers, women workers and front-line women's relief workers made up the majority; among those who had taken up teaching as a profession, most of them were kindergarten assistants or elementary school teachers after graduating from teacher training. The housewives and the unemployed were mostly women who married early before they graduated from junior high school due to family or economic reasons. It could be found that the readers of "Women's Life", even if they were female workers or unemployed, they also had a certain level of cultural knowledge, and the literacy level of male readers was generally higher than that of female readers.

Through a statistical analysis of the region, gender ratio and occupation of the "readership" in "Women's Life", we could find that women were the main group of readers of "Women's Life", and most of them were located in large and medium-sized cities where news was open and information flowed quickly, and there were also some overseas readers, while there were few letters from remote and isolated rural areas, and in terms of occupation, students and working people who had received a certain level of education are the main ones. At the same time,

by grasping the overall readership of the column of "Mailbox", we could find that the readership of "Women's Life" basically conformed to the editor's initial preconceptions and its value orientation as a progressive women's publication. Also, after mastering the distribution range and reading requirements of the readership, the editors precisely adjusted the content of specific sections of the publication to meet the reading expectations of the readership. In addition, the accessibility and exemplary nature of their occupation, which was dominated by students, workers and teachers, also generates a large number of indirect readers, including those who were illiterate and need to be informed by others. In the process of dissemination, it also expanded the influence of "Women's Life", and because of the wide regional distribution of readers, it also had a strong radiating influence, so that "Women's Life" became "one of the most influential women's publications in China's anti-Japanese rescue movement and even in modern history"^[6].

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