

**What Does “Fashion” Look Like:  
A Study of Fashion Picture Stereotypes in Washington Community  
Magazines**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Fashion issues have always been a hot topic in many public media, and fashion workers are a group of people who have been quite accustomed to cameras and spotlights. With all the attention that has been given to this area, is there still another perspective from which we can look at fashion issues? As a fashion fan who spends hours reading fashion magazines and subscribes to online media every month, I am curious about how the media define “fashion” and how they convey the definition to the public. In terms of the fashion magazines, as a photojournalism student, I pay a lot of attention to their pictorial representations of fashion issues, such as what pictures they use for specific topics, what photographic styles do they apply in their magazines, and what do the models they believe to be beautiful look like. Since most of the fashion media market is to young females, how do the magazines represent women in the fashion area, and how do they give subtle education to their young female readers about beauty?

I think these questions are worth researching because they may reveal the relationship between the modern media and the fashion industry, which is an industry relying so much on visual presentation. The word “fashion” is not as simple as perfect Barbie doll faces, or weird clothes that are too eye-catching to wear any place other than the shining stages of New York fashion week. People’s understanding of fashion

comes from the information media give them, and this is a complex process in which the media have great control. This project is expected to explore the role that traditional media play in people's cognitive process of fashion, from a visual perspective.

My curiosity about these questions led to this project. The project has two parts: professional skills component and analysis component.

For professional component, I worked for the local magazine DC Life in Washington, DC, during the summer of 2012. During the thirteen weeks of working as a staff photographer / online photo editor, I took pictures of several fashion events that happened in Washington, Maryland and Virginia area. Also, I shot street fashion, which focused on how people dress themselves in different scenes. After the thirteen weeks, what I gained did not only include interesting pictures and practical experience of fashion photography, but "real" ideas about fashion. In my mind, fashion means expression of attitude: men wear tees and shorts to BBQ festivals, while their female partners may wear polka dot dresses and pink high heels; on July 4<sup>th</sup> people wear the combination of stars and stripes to express their patriotism; in the Capitol Pride Fest (an annual festival for homosexual and transgender people), people wear rainbow colors to show their support for equal love. These are all because of different attitudes that people hold towards things, other people, and life. And fashion is a powerful way to express; there is close relationship between what you wear and what you want to tell the world.

For the analysis component, I collected and studied three local magazines in DC:

Washingtonian Magazine, Washington Life Magazine and DC Life Magazine. I selected 2011 issues of these magazines as a study sample, and studied the photos they used in fashion contents. They have many things in common, including composition, lighting, models' appearance, expression and body language. The visual elements used in the pictures try to create pleasant, perfect female figures; and by doing this, they tell the viewers "dress like me and be as beautiful as me." Personal characters (such as face and body shape, characteristics and personalities) are often ignored.

This project is the first step of my future career as a professional photographer. I plan to become a magazine photographer in the U.S after graduation, and I hope after a few years I will get enriched professional knowledge that will enable me to go further in magazine photography. Eventually I want to become a photo editor or art director for a fashion or lifestyle magazine. For this reason I chose to photograph a documentary on the fashion industry, which is often a magazine topic, and why I studied photo selection, which is usually the job of photo editor. By doing this project, I expect to gain a better understanding of magazine photography and the work done by magazine photographers and photo editors, which I believe will be greatly helpful in my future career.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Chronological Description of the Project**

Weekly Report 1: May 14 – May 20

The first week's activities in DC include several seminars and two shooting project for DC Life magazine.

Though mainly focusing on political and economical issues, which are not directly related to my own project, the seminars are still very helpful to me. I get general ideas about the city Washington and how its media function. We have several guest speakers who all give good instruction on how to be a good journalist and how to find stories in DC. It is both interesting and inspiring to know about how other journalists do their jobs.

I meet my bosses this week, Eugene Smith, the publisher of DC Life magazine, and Gigi Smith, chief editor. They tell me they are building an online gallery of Washington neighborhood images, which will allow audiences to see pictures of their own communities' landmarks, places of interest, events and activities. Taking and editing pictures for this gallery will be my main work in the following three months.

Based on this plan, I find weekends will be my busiest days, as many events happen on Saturdays and Sundays. Mondays and Tuesdays will usually be time for toning, editing and uploading photos. Wednesday to Friday may be time for free

feature hunting or collecting landmark pictures in different wards. This week I have completed two online slide shows, the 2012 Asia Heritage Fest and the AKA 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fashion show. The URL are:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-asia-heritage-festival/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/aka-20th-anniversary-fashion-show/slides/0/index.html>

The fashion show shooting is also a good beginning of my own project. The show is organized by Ivy Community and has five designers and several models participating. It is my first time shooting T-stage and I do feel I need to improve my flash photography skill. Besides stage pictures, I also get some photos of the models behind the stage. When the models adjust their shoulder straps, tighten their shoes or simply look into the mirror, I feel they are real people rather than beautiful figures in front of cameras.

Weekly Report 2: May 22 – 28

This is a really productive week of mine. I shot several Memorial Day events during the week and made slideshows, including National Memorial Day Parade, Navy Memorial, Women's Army Service Memorial, Rolling Thunders Motorcycle Rally, and Capitol Concert. The URLs are below:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/memorial-national-parade-in-washington-dc/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/ceremonies-of-the-memorial-day/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/the-rolling-thunder-motorcycle-demonstration-for-memorial-day/slides/0/index.html>

I also visited Rockville, Maryland to photograph their memorial fest during the weekend. The slideshows are below:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/rockville-town-square-friday-night-concert/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/rockville-hometown-holidays-fest/slides/0/index.html>

There is also one fashion show I got this week; it was also held in Rockville, in the form of a network of fashion workers, including models, designers, and freelance photographers. The slideshow:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/rockville-rooftop-fashion-show/slides/0/index.html>

While I also put some pictures in my blog that were not used for the magazine but for my own project. I caught several shots of the models being photographed by other photographers, and I think it is an interesting angle of shooting fashion workers.

When shooting the fashion show, I met a professional photographer who used to work in New York but now moved to Richmond. He told me that in his opinion, it is

persistence that makes a good photographer; he said his secret was to always be the first to get to the place, and just shoot and shoot and shoot. I think this is the best thing I learn this week.

However, I find myself faced with the problem of equipment limitation: now I work with a Nikon D90 body, a 18-105 lens and a 50/f1.4 lens. When shooting outside they are fine; but when shooting indoor, dim-light environment, I kind of feel confused. The biggest aperture is 5.6 when focal length is 105; so when I need to use the farther end of the lens, it is not easy to get shallow depth of field because the aperture cannot be bigger. If I decrease focal length, then the messy background, lights and audiences will be in the frame. The pictures of the Rockville fashion show were mostly shot with the 50/1.4 lens, and you can still see the background.

I also have questions about lighting: direct light makes hard shadows, but sometimes the backgrounds are complex and the walls and ceilings are too faraway (or there are other lights on the ceiling, which frequently happens in fashion shows), how can I reflect the light under this circumstance?

I also do some street shots this week, but I am not very satisfied because for many times I find myself reflecting so slow that I miss the best moment. Such as I notice a lady who dresses very pretty, but when I decide "I should take her photo" and hold up the camera trying to catch her, she already passes the crossing, enters a building or just turns away. I also put some pictures on my blog and you may see many of them are only backs without faces; and these are all because of my slow reaction. I think the best method is to keep trying and shoot more.

There are also some moments that I just wait there for a right person to come. For example, the “Summer Colors” shop window, I waited for a while for someone who had colorful dresses to pass by, and I got the lady dressed in bright blue. But sometimes this strategy just would not work; for example I noticed a basketball player advertisement, and I waited for almost 30 minutes for someone who wear red sport shorts to pass by the huge advertisement, but that was in vain.

### Weekly Report 3: May 28 – June 3

This week I received no assignment from my boss – actually from the first day of my work, what I have been doing is mostly self-led feature hunting; editors of DC Life magazine do not contact me often. Good thing of feature hunting on my own is freedom; but sometimes it may not be what has been expected. I rely on several local media websites’ calendar as information sources; but sometimes the event is just not like the website description, and when I go to the place I simply find nothing to shoot. For example, I went to a “World Environment Day Expo” this week, expecting many interesting scenes because of its big name. But when I got there I found there were only tables and brochures, in a high school playground. Similar situations happened a few times since I came to DC, but I know that is not unusual.

However, many events I find online are interesting enough. The slideshows I do this week:

Fairground Family Day: a family fest including children games, live music, mascots, face painting, food and beer

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/half-street-fairground-family-day/slides/0/index.html>

Taste of Georgetown: a street fest in which people can taste food samples from local restaurants, as well as entertainment of all kinds

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/taste-of-georgetown/slides/0/index.html>

Both of the events had crowds of people, and I found it not easy to take pictures where there were so many people that their elbows might hit on my camera. The subject was so close to other people that the background could not be blurred off. One solution may be doing close-up from a proper angle; but that results in the lack of variety of angles in the slideshow.

My street fashion project does not run very well this week, for several days I walk in the street and I do not find any fashionable person that catch my eyes. Also, for the first time I met someone who noticed I took her picture, and insisted I delete it from my camera, saying it was against her will to have her picture taken without permission. It scared me a bit; but I remember in the documentary of Bill Cunningham, a young black lady warned Cunningham not to take her picture, otherwise she would smash the camera on his head, Cunningham's reflection was just a smile and walk away. I guess a street photographer frequently meets this kind of

situation, and there is nothing to be unhappy about. I will go to Georgetown again during the weekend, to see what I may discover. A few pictures are on my blog.

I also saw two excellent photography exhibitions this week, which I do think help a lot in my own photography. One is “I Spy” in National Gallery of Art, which includes street photographs of Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Harry Callahan, and several other photographers. They took pictures in metros, through bus windows, or from a street corner where a camera was hidden. I really admire their pictures in which natural behaviors of people were successfully caught; and I learn a few ways of composition, which can be used in streets. Another exhibition is “Picture Now” in the Portrait Gallery, which includes individual pictures from Asian people who wear different clothes, have different expressions and looks on their faces, but all standing in the same studio with same white background and simple lighting. All the pictures show various personality, characters, culture and education backgrounds, suggestions of the subjects’ career and life, simply by the different appearances of the Asian subjects. It surprises me by showing me how much dresses and shirts can tell about a person, even he / she simply stands there, in front of a pure white background, without much poses or gestures, the way he / she dresses can tell what kind of person he / she may be, what job or career he / she may have, and how much he / she love and care his / her own life. Sometimes I do feel a person’s attitude towards his own appearance reflects his attitudes towards his own life.

## Weekly Report 4: June 4 – 10

This week I went on with events that were held in a crowded, messy environment.

Girl Scouts 100 Year Anniversary “Rock the Mall” Concert:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/girl-scouts-celebrate-100-anniversary/slides/0/index.html>

Capitol Pride Parade (festival of gay, lesbian and transgender people in DC):

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/113/slides/0/index.html>

Both of the events had many people in a relatively small area; so I regard them good training of photographer’s eyes: the ability of finding interesting subjects out of big crowds, and departing the subject from messy background. The easiest way may be getting closer (or using longer focal length) and using big aperture to blur out the background. But for some of the selected pictures, I did not use very big aperture, in order to intentionally keep some background to tell viewer where the subject was and what the whole event looked like. Without the crowds of people in the background but only containing a big face of the subject, the picture may become nothing more than a portrait taken at home.

People attending the parade dressed themselves up with really weird clothes; I hope those pictures can be part of my street fashion pictures, though they do not show everyday fashion that common people apply in their own preferences of daily clothing, but they show a special group of people presenting their own definition of “fashion” in a certain scene, such as the man in super short skirt and high heels, or the girl

wearing rainbow-colored socks. This tells me fashion does not only mean clothes and shoes, it can represent people's attitudes towards issues they concern. When shooting the Capitol Pride Fest, I talked with a man who told me wearing rainbow-colors means you support homosexual love, even if you are straight, you can show your respect and understanding to those people by wearing a colorful skirt or a bunch of colorful beads around your neck. I also took picture of another man with pink dress, pink high heels, pink wig, and holding a pink umbrella; he said he dressed that way because he hoped people could understand it is freedom that a man loves a man, just as it is freedom that one chooses one's preferred clothes.

This week I also did the "neighborhood project" slideshow, which is a collection of pictures of local landmarks in a certain area. It is the project that my editors expect me to work for during the summer.

The URL:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/neighborhood-project-1/slides/0>

From now on I am responsible for editing all the slideshows I do for the website. In the past several weeks I only selected pictures from all outtakes, did the toning, cropping and watermarking, and uploading them to the website. I thought the editors might select some from the pictures I uploaded, and decided how the slideshow finally looked in the homepage. But I have found that the editors do not do many changes to things I upload, which means except for toning and cropping, I should also do the rest parts of editing, remove the repetitive images, put them in proper order,

ensure that they contain different angles, overalls and details. In other words, I am actually responsible for the whole process of publishing a picture story, from looking for story ideas, shooting pictures, to the whole set of editing steps. For this reason I am glad I chose this media for my work project: it is small and not very influential, but it allows me to do as much as I can do. I have to find ideas and complete stories without someone telling me what to do step by step; if I make mistakes, I need to fix them all by myself; and if I do not know how to do something, I need to find solutions on my own, instead of simply telling my boss “sorry I got problems and I could not get it done”. That is not easy, but I do believe it will benefit me in the future.

Weekly Report 5: June 11 – 17

This week I went on with the Capitol Pride Fest, reported a small event called “Paws in the Park” in which people brought their pets to play together. At the end of the week I began to work on the big annual event Fancy Food Show and will spend three days in the show.

Slideshows of the former two events:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/capitol-pride-street-fest/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/paws-in-the-park/slides/0/index.html>

I am still working on the food show picture editing.

As I begin working on the slideshow editing myself (before this week I thought my editor was responsible for further editing, but I found things I uploaded would become the final version without much changes), I put more effort on selecting images from hundreds of outtakes, and putting the selected in proper order. My editors always prefer the slideshow to be at least ten or fifteen pictures, but sometimes I feel this amount is a little bit too much for a small story. Such as the Paws in the Park report, the event was held by a hotel; and there were simply twenty or thirty people taking their dogs to play with each other outside the gate of the hotel. The slideshow contains 11 images; but if it was for the Missouriian newspaper, I believe one overall picture of the whole scene (people with their dogs at the hotel door) and one detail (probably a portrait of a dog playing with its owner) will be enough to tell the story.

My supervisor told me on July 1<sup>st</sup> there will be a studio photo shooting; they will have models bringing handbags from a local brand, and the pictures will be used for the brand advertisement as well as (possibly) for magazine covers. I was taken to have a look at the studio and it was just like the one in Lee Hills, but much bigger. What my editors want is high-key portraits with proper lighting on both the models and the handbags. Luckily I had Rita's lighting class last semester and I hope I remember all that she taught me. I have spent some time doing some reading on studio lighting, and I do hope to get some suggestions from my professors about how to do high-key studio portraits.

## Weekly Report 6: June 18 - 24

I spent the former half of the week photographing and editing the 2012 Fancy Food Show, which was an annual international food exhibition. As my editors required, I focused simply on close-up food pictures so that they could use them for the magazine. So I guess the pictures I took for the show seriously lack diversity, with similar angle and similar lighting (a single flash from upper left, as I could only hold the flash with my left hand). However I hope my editors like them. I emailed 70 photos to Gigi; and on the website I uploaded some resized pictures to complete the slideshow series.

The food gallery's URL:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-1/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-2/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-3/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-4/slides/0/index.html>

I also did two features this week. On Sunday I photographed a downtown BBQ Battle, in which people got BBQ samples and enjoyed live performances. It was like a street festival and people wandered here and there. Again I had the feeling that in

photojournalism, one cannot always expect a perfect shooting environment – more likely, the scene can be crowded, messy, even smoky (the BBQ tents were surrounded by heavy smoke...). No matter what the environment looks like, you will have to get some pictures that can be at least acceptable in the editor's eyes.

The BBQ Battle slideshow:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-bbq-battle/slides/0/index.html>

And on Saturday I went to shoot a cultural event in Georgetown, called Thai Village. It was a celebration of the 50 anniversary of Washington and Bangkok becoming sister cities; so the event was designed to present exotic performances and cuisines from Thailand. When photographing a Thai dance, I found the dancers were not very close to each other, and that caused the picture's composition to be a little too loose with the distance between each dancer. I hope to know if there are some methods to solve the problem – as I cannot go ask the dancers to stop and get closer to each other, I can only deal with the scene with my own hands. I know long lens can “compress” distance, but what if I want to get all the dancers in the frame, and I may not be able to stand too far away from them (otherwise there will be other people standing between me and the dancers)?

## Weekly Report 7: June 25 – July 1

This week I went to Georgetown to do the neighborhood project, as well as adding more street shots to my own street fashion discovery. Every time I go to Georgetown, the places reminds me of my hometown, where some old-fashioned buildings are restored, while young people wear most “in” style, use the latest high-tech electronics and walk between the old streets. When shooting the landmarks in this area, I tried to catch and express this feeling of the combination of old and new.

On the day I went to Georgetown, there was also an event called “Thai Village” which is an annual cultural celebration of Washington and Bangkok becoming sister city. This year is the 60th anniversary; the Thailand embassy organizes the event and brings Thai foods, dances, music, and boxing performance to Georgetown people.

Thai Village in Georgetown:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/thai-village-in-georgetown/slides/0/index.html>

Neighborhood Project Georgetown:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/neighborhood-project-2/slides/0/index.html>

On Friday I went to shoot a women clothes shop called The Limited, which celebrated its reopening in Pentagon City, the biggest fashion center in DC area. The Limited’s manager only allowed me to shoot about 1/4 of the whole shop, but it was still a fresh experience for me as I had never photographed a clothes shop before.

The Limited Reopens:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/the-limited-reopens-at-pentagon-city-mall/slides/0/index.html>

On Saturday I went to a charity-raised fashion show; the organizer was G.L.A.M., a local non-governmental non-profitable organization who works to help Washington children to complete their dreams. I learnt from website that G.L.A.M was going to organize a fashion event in which they would sell clothes and accessories to raise money for the children they helped, and a fashion show would be take place. So I contacted the team's leader, Meaghan Moynihan, who gladly permitted me to photograph the preparation of the fashion show. Thanks to her help, I got some pictures of the models doing make-up and hair. None of the participants were professional models; but they treated the show really seriously and all did their best on the stage. I am still waiting for their permission to put the fashion show picture slideshow on the DC Life website; but they agree that I put some photos on my blog for my professors to see.

Sunday of this week is the biggest day of mine since I came to DC! I spent 7 hours in Union 206 Studio with a team of DC Life magazine, including art director, light person, make-up and hair stylist, and models. I was the only photographer, so I did all the shooting (I shot about 1,200 pictures on that single day). The light person, Lauri, taught me how to set up lights for a high-key portrait, and I helped her moving and adjusting the lights, taking test shots and deciding which light shall be stronger / dimmer. I really learnt a lot from this practical experience. Actually it helped me

realize that sometimes I think I know well about the concepts and theories: main light, fill light, comparison between the two, how to reduce shadows, how to use a light meter, etc.; but in fact I will still be confused when I try my hands at practical situation.

Except lighting techniques, another important thing I learnt that day was to coordinate with the models. When the model kept changing different poses and facial expressions, as photographer, I needed to control the pace and tell them “go on” “keep moving” “come one step forward / backward” or “please slow down a bit” (the lights were set to be slaved, so if I clicked the shutter too fast, the flashes would not follow and just stopped flashing). And because all the models were amateur, sometimes they were nervous and did not know how to do in front of the camera, our art director told me “you have to encourage them, praise them, let them know how well they are doing”. At first I did not dare to talk much, because we had some more experienced people to instruct the models. But after an hour or two, I found I still needed to tell the models “chin up” “head down a little” or “relax your shoulder and turn it to me”, because I was in the position and nobody knew better than me how the picture looked in the viewer. So the photographer is not a clicking machine; he / she cannot be silent and just keeps clicking the camera. Communication is always needed between photographer and models, and other team members.

Pictures we took in the studio included electronic covers for the DC Life magazine, and advertisement pictures of some brands (handbags, Tees, and a hair salon). Basically they were high-key portraits of the models, and white space and

texts will be added through Photoshop later. My boss did not give me an exact number of how many pictures they want; he just told me to photoshop every image that I think is good shot. I think I will probably spend most of the next week doing post-production...

#### Weekly Report 8: July 2 – 8

This week I photographed July 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day Parade in Washington DC: <http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-independence-day-parade-in-downtown-washington/slides/0>

It has been the third time for me to photograph parades in downtown Washington. For the first time, I only concentrated on the whole scene, used wide angle lens to shoot a lot of overall images. But after a few times, I learnt that only overall images could be boring and lack of diversity and change of pace. So I began to shoot some details of the parade (or if my lens was not capable of shooting detail, I would use the biggest focal length and crop the image afterward), such as portrait of one person in the line, or children among the audience waving flags. In order to create sense of layers and depth, I also try to include both the parade and the audience in one frame – by standing higher or farther away. It proves that the pictures are more interesting than a mere presentation of the parade without environment.

And I also went to an annual cultural event Smithsonian Folklife Fest:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-smithsonian-folklife-fest/slides/0>

It is organized by Smithsonian Museums in Washington area each year, providing people with small games and experiments that they can try their hands on, such as weaving, fire-cupping, making handicrafts and finding fossils. Many universities, including Mizzou, took part in the fest and built tents in the court to do exhibitions or presentations.

My editors still do not talk to me very often. Sometimes I get feedback from them such as “not bad” or “we would like to see more pictures”; but usually they do not give me detailed opinions or suggestions. And I sometimes feel almost nobody will look at the pictures I put on the magazine’s website, as the links are usually put in the sidebar, not the main block. The website is not updated very frequently, and there is never a reader’s comments. I know this is certainly not a reason for me to be lazy and stop working hard; however, to be honest, this situation kind of makes me feel that nobody pays attention to what I am doing in DC. Every photographer hopes that he has viewers, and so do I.

Weekly Report 9: July 9 – 15

This week I have done several relatively “small” stories, including:

An army band’s free concert at World War II Memorial:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/an-evening-at-world-war-ii-memorial-with-257th-army-band/slides/0>

An artists' market where local artists sell their work pieces:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/bethesda-artist-market/slides/0>

The Museum of Air and Space celebrates the “Mars Day” with many educational activities:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/museum-of-air-and-space-celebrates-mars-day-on-july-13/slides/0>

And I got the organizer's permission to publish the G.L.A.M local fashion event's slideshow:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/glam-fashion-event/slides/0>

The lesson I learn from doing “small” stories is that it is usually harder to achieve variety of contents and perspectives if the story itself is simple, however, as a photographer it is still my responsibility to discover different angles and details and create diversity. The army band concert, for example, was a two-hour event in which people just sat there listening to music (at least this was what I thought it to be when I arrived there). After taking pictures of the band members playing music and the audience listening to them, I thought there was nothing else and I could leave. But I persuaded myself to stay there and try discovering something interesting. It proved to be a correct choice because interesting things did happen; I photographed the band doing line dances and inviting audiences to dance with them; I also got the scene that

the band invited an old veteran, Simon Thomas, who survived Vietnam War, to be the conductor and lead them to play the last song. Also I photographed people lying by the pool, putting their feet in the water, enjoying the music and cool evening breeze – in my country it is unimaginable that one can be so relaxed in such a patriotic scenario! I believe I could not have noticed this if I thought the shooting was done within thirty minutes.

So next time I get assignments I will always tell myself to come earlier and stay longer – so that I will have time to find more things to shoot.

Weekly Report 10: July 16 - 22

It has been raining for most of this week's time; and I did the story of George Mason University Asian Fest in a heavy rain:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/asian-fest-in-george-mason-university/slides/0/index.html>

It was not a very pleasant experience; I had to protect my camera under the umbrella when trying to get pictures, but it still got wet. However, as a photographer I cannot refuse to go out to work when it rains. So I guess I should get used to it.

Other stories I did this week include Ethiopian Cultural Fest in Maryland:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-ethiopian-fest-in-dc/slides/0>

And Expression Benefit Live Concert:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/4th-annual-expression-benefit-live-concert/slides/0>

Both of the events were full of people, especially the Ethiopian Fest – I could not imagine how I could get close to the stage if I had not come early enough. However, when I left a while to photograph the coffee making process, which was in a tent just near the main stage, after that it was just impossible for me to make my way back to the stage. Now I understand why many media will add “physical ability” to their requirements when they have position for a photographer.

My editor told me she liked the Ethiopian story and thought I could use more pictures of the performance in the slideshow. So I added a few similar images. The fest included a fashion show; some of the fashion show pictures are on my blog.

It worth mentioning that I have learnt a lot about Photoshop and post-production since I begin to work as both photographer and photo editor. When I first came to DC, I even did not know how to use a mask. With the help of a few books and a lot of practices, now I think I know much more than I did. For this week’s stories, there were several pictures that I was not satisfied with; the subjects and the backgrounds looked equally sharp, sometimes because I used a too small aperture, sometimes because the subjects and the backgrounds were too close to each other, or maybe because of the focal length. So I spent quite some time refocusing those pictures (I hope it is ethical for photojournalism, isn’t it?) Usually I use a blur filter, but the effect is kind of artificial that one can tell at first glance that it is the result of

Photoshop. Is there a method of more natural, more “real” refocusing? Maybe using a gradient tool? I will give it a try next time.

Weekly Report 11: July 23 - 29

My editor told me there would be an article in next issue about “5 Places Most Worth Visiting in Washington”; and they need pictures of these 5 places, including National Zoo, Tomb of Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery, National Mall (from Lincoln Memorial to World War II Memorial, Washington Monument all the way long to the Capitol), National Archives, and Museum of American History. It happened to be a lot of rain recently; so I took a sunny day to try to finish them all in one day. Thank goodness I walked from Arlington to Capitol Hill (as if I took buses, I would have to get off every two or three blocks)! Again I understand why physical strength is a significant element for a successful photographer. The pictures of these places were sent to the editors instead of slideshow online.

Another event I shot was a gala dinner of Children Uniting Nations, an organization helping students getting funds to complete education. My editor wanted to get portraits of celebrities who attended the dinner, but I did not know anybody who might be famous enough. Luckily I met another two photographers who pointed the celebrities to me, including TV series actress and singers. Thanks to their help I finished this event; but something else made me reconsider photographers’ code of

conduct in public: when all of us were trying to get pictures of the celebrities on the stage, I intentionally kept three or four feet distance from the stage because I thought if I got too close, it would be difficult for other photographers to shoot the subject without containing me in the frame. But other two photographers just stepped forward and got as close as they could. The result was that I could not get a good composition without them in it. One of the photographers even used her elbow to push me aside when she thought I was in her composition. I really want to know is it that I should be more aggressive, or is it that the other two acted a little bit rude? The dinner was a high-brow event in which everybody wore casual business and behaved nicely; can photographers be the only ones who are not polite? Or as a photographer my only duty is to get good pictures, even I may affect others' doing their job? I am not complaining about these people; they were kind people and they were nice to me when they helped me by telling me who I should take pictures of. I am just confused.

The URL:

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/celebrities-on-the-conference-of-children-uniting-nations/slides/0>

I spent most of the rest of this week doing post-production of the studio shooting on July 1. It has been almost a month; the editors still do not tell me when they want the pictures and which ones they specially want me to edit. I asked twice and the answer was they were communicating with clients. But if I do not begin selecting and editing the 1,800 pictures, I will not be able to finish them before I leave. So I simply pick up my favorites and photoshop them; approximately I edit 1/6 or 1/7 of all the

photos. I post some of them on my blog, including advertisement photos for a hair salon, a t-shirt company and a handbag brand.

Actually I have never spent so much time on Photoshop ever in my life. It is very good practice for me. Here is roughly what I do to each selected picture, and questions I have:

- Basic adjusting, including Brightness and Contrast, Level (sometimes Curve), and Saturation (if I lighten the picture, I will usually increase the saturation a bit because the original color was “washed” out by the brightening process).
- Changing gray background to white or grayish white: before I started photographing, I was told that it would be high-key portraits and products pictures. But when sitting in front of computer and looking at the photos, I realized that the background was not lighted enough, so the subject was correctly exposure, while the background was all gray. Actually there was only a key light above my right shoulder, and a filling light beside the model; no background light was used at all. Therefore it becomes a really big workload for me to change the background color. My method is first selecting the subject, then selecting inverse, then adjusting brightness and level. The problem of this method is that the hair is really difficult to select; mostly I use quick selection plus quick mask, and use Refine Edge tool to decontaminate color from around the hair; but the outline is not very sharp and there is still background colors between hair curls, especially when I try to select black hair against gray background. I also tried directly using color replacement instead

of doing selection; but color replacement command will destroy the shadow and make it a nasty color block. Is there a better way to do this?

- Skin toning, eyes and eyelash sharpening, and teeth brightening. For the dark-skin models, the picture effect is fine; but I apply a Gaussian Blur filter (radius 1 to 2) on the faces of the light-skin models to make their skin look smoother. One thing I do not know how to deal with is that because the light was placed too closed to the models, almost everyone has a bright spot on the forehead — you can see it in the pictures. I tried several ways to remove this big spot: Spot Healing Brush will remove the skin texture when the spot is healed; clone stamp tool looks unnatural and has obvious boundaries between the healed spot and the original skin area; for Patch tool, because the bright spot is big, on the model's forehead there is no area that is clean and big enough to copy from. Is there another method I can use to heal the bright spot? It does look bad on the models' faces!

- Cleaning the background paper. I do wish I noticed this before I started shooting! There were a lot of stains, spots, scratches, even shoe prints on the paper; and I have to remove them one by one in the editing process... yes I am taught a good lesson: take a hard look at the background before beginning shooting a project, every time!

When I shot these pictures, the light person and the art director told me “we have done so much studio works and we are experienced enough to know how to handle it; you can simply click and click and click.” So even if I felt something was wrong, I

did not say to them and I thought it was me who was wrong. But the result is much more work for me in post-production. So now I know – next time no matter who work with me, I should tell them my thoughts!

#### Weekly Report 12: July 30 – August 5

This week I went on and finally finished the picture editing work. Among 1,840 photos we took in the studio, I did post-production on 280 of them. It is obvious that the pictures I edited this week were generally better than those I did last week; including more sharp and accurate selection of the model's hair (I learnt a method from Youtube that uses channel to select hair; but this method does not work well in selecting blond hair from gray background), more natural skin tone, and stronger contrast. Some pictures are posted here:





I also collected all my pictures during the summer and did a rough edit on the fashion project. I plan it in two parts: Part 1: Fashion happening in streets; and Part 2: Fashion happening on stage

#### Part 1: Fashion Happening In Streets:

This part includes street shots I took in Washington DC. It focuses on how people dress themselves in different scenes and events in daily life.



I met this polka-dots lady in National Mall around World War II Memorial. It was a day before Independence Day; an outside concert of an army band was going on. She sat there listening to music. And I like her pint polka-dot dress, which matched well with the big straw hat. She looked like that she was from a lovely small country town in old Virginia or Tennessee.



I met this lady out of the gate of Union Station, where I went almost every day. The traffic was noisy outside because it was morning rush hour; but only a few meters away, she stood there and looked so quiet – as quiet as the color of her dress. Dark blue is a low-key color; it seems to create a small, closed “space” to separate her from the world outside.



Union Station is such an interesting place that I often see different interesting people there. On that day I happened to see these ladies with their photographer. They told me

they were going to a wedding. In my culture the bridesmaid usually wear pure white as the bride; but I find jewelry blue is a better match!



I met this lady in Bethesda, MD. She was being photographed by another photographer, for a fashion shop which was going to open in Bethesda Lane. It was really hot that day and her shiny black pants looked so fashionable under the sunlight, though I guess it might not be very comfortable to wear. Also, I always cannot resist the beauty of a woman wearing all black with her lips bloody red.



I met this lady in a street fest just three blocks away from Capitol Hill. The Capitol Pride Fest is due to support homosexual and transgender people in Washington. On that day people wear (or do not wear) anything, and the rainbow colors take control of the whole view, because rainbow colors is a symbol of homosexual group.

## Part 2: Fashion Happening On Stage

This part includes pictures of models (mostly amateur models) and fashion shows in DC area. Not only the models' beauty on stage, I also photographed how they prepare before performance.



The Model Coco has been waiting there for almost twenty minutes, wearing super high heel and looking impatient. The light is not ready yet; so she still needs to stand there for the light person to take test pictures and re-adjust the flash.



Before being photographed, a model is usually “polished” by many people, including art director, makeup stylist, hair stylist, and their assistants.



Meagan Mornighan is familiar with the weird feeling that somebody is photographing you when you are painting your lips. She is the organizer of G.L.A.M (“give labels a meaning”), which supports local

children by holding benefit sales. Two hours later Meagan and her friends will become models and go on stage to show their clothes — which are also for sale. The stylists and photographer are also Meagan’s friends who help her do the fashion event every year.



Christine talks with the photographer, Phillips, who she just met a few minutes ago. She said, “we usually treat photographers as friends because, in some sense, we rely on each other.”



The fashion show in Rockville Rooftop, Rockville, MD. It is a connection party for fashion workers, including photographers, models, designers, stylists. People send out namecard in order to know new friends — even potential employees. It is said sometimes it is possible that you find a job in such kind of parties.



Fashion show on the stage of Ethiopian Fest in Silverspring, Maryland. It is an annual event for all Ethiopian people in DC area; the model’s clothes is typical Ethiopian-style: white color with embroidery edges.



The Ivy Community Charities holds its 20th annual event and fashion show and luncheon in Greenbelt, MD, in support of local students who need financial help to go on with education.

### Weekly Report 13: August 6 – August 12

This is the final week of my work in Washington. It seems that not much things for me to do; my editors simply disappear. So I have time to go over the pictures I shoot through the summer, and try to teach myself something.

Approximately I shoot 10,000 pictures in these 13 weeks in DC; 1,800 of them are studio shots and others are all stories. Generally I feel I have to improve my lighting technique because my pictures frequently get over-exposed when I use flash. The flash seems to be too harsh and too bright. Rita told us in Advanced Photojournalism course that flash is only a complimentary light source; it can never override the main light source. I really need to remember this and reduce the amount of flash light when shooting. David also gave me the suggestion of adding a soft tent on the head of the flash; that proves to work very well.

Also I am not very satisfied with my composition – when I focus on a subject I often lose layers. Try use wide lens and include more things in the frame!

## **Chapter 3**

### **Self Evaluation**

My internship at DC Life magazine taught me to be an independent, self-motivated photographer, which I believe was the most important and valuable lesson I learned in the thirteen weeks. During my journalism studies, I also had assignments and shot stories as I did at work, but most of the time I simply did what people told me. I was accustomed to relying on professors' suggestions and always needed someone to instruct me. However, during my work in Washington, rarely did anyone tell me what to do, what stories to shoot, or who to talk to. This forced me to do the story hunting myself, check the web calendar, choose stories I was interested in, plan the route (sometimes two or three places in one day), talk with unfamiliar people, get pictures and edit them on my own.

At first it was difficult to move out of my comfort zone, but eventually I found it enjoyable because every story became a new adventure for me. This also helped me improve my ability to generate story ideas independently. Because nobody gave me assignments, I needed to keep an eye on the local news calendar and find my own ideas. It was great fun; the only bad thing was when two interesting events happened at same time and I had to pick one to shoot, which was always a hard choice.

However, there were disadvantages to working alone. I did not often receive feedback from my supervisors; nobody told me how I did and what I should improve. My professors gave me their opinions, which helped me a lot, but my editors seldom

talked with me about my work. This was especially negative in the editing process. It was all on my own judgment as to what pictures I selected, what post-production I did, and in what order I put them. I did not have much editing experience when I began working for DC Life, so in the first several slideshows, there were too many overalls and repetitive shots but not enough details. This was improved in the later slideshows, but in order to be a good editor, I need to learn more.

Another advantage of the independent internship was that I learned to always get pictures, even in bad weather, crowded or dark places, with unfamiliar people, or other negative conditions, which used to be my excuse for not taking pictures. If it was a class assignment, I might choose an easier story. However, if it was my work and if I went out and brought nothing back, there was not an “easier” choice for me. Once I chose to do a story, I knew that I must shoot something. I had to solve all problems I encountered.

In terms of photography techniques and skills, I got practice with artificial light. Because I shot several fashion shows and other indoor events, I had many chances to use flash as a complimentary light source. Yet, I still had the habit of applying too much light in my pictures. When I reviewed my outtakes, I found many pictures looked unnatural and weird because of the harsh white flash. That was especially harmful in portraits because the light completely damaged the subjects’ skin tone and made it almost impossible to correct in post-production. Through the failures I realized that flash was never an almighty solution. Finally, I need to learn more about how to make better use of ambient light.

I also practiced more in the variety of compositions and angles. I did over thirty stories this summer. Some of them were in big, open, outdoor places, and some of them were in small rooms. That required different shooting angles. I tried to get diversity when shooting a story, but sometimes I felt I was still not creative enough. For example, when I shot parades, most of my pictures looked too similar (overalls of the whole scene). To some degree it was because I was not allowed to move around or get too close; but I could still get different shots even if I stayed in the same position, such as audiences' portraits, close-ups and details.

During the summer I also met many people who were kind and helped me a lot. That is one of the reasons I love photojournalism. When you do stories you can always meet new friends. In Washington I met a photographer named Ron Karnes. When I asked his secret to becoming a good photographer, he told me it was simply, "be the first to get there and be the last to leave" because it allowed a photographer to shoot as much as he could and to see something nobody else could see at the scene. Keeping this in mind, I stayed at the scene even when I thought my job was done and nothing more was going to happen. Sometimes it was done, but sometimes I found it was worthy to stay and wait for something unexpected. This was a valuable lesson to me, and I believe in my future career I will always keep the habit of "first to come and last to go".

After the three months of working I came back on campus and started doing my analysis component. It was about studying three Washington DC magazines, gathering information about the fashion pictures, doing analysis and finding typical

stereotypes of local community magazines' fashion photography. The process was longer than I thought. I ran across some unexpected problems and even changed my original research question. Originally I wanted to study the magazines' visual definition of female beauty, but as I went deeper into the project I realized that "beauty" was an abstract concept and was impossible to measure with a set of standards. So I re-phrased the topic as "stereotypes" because there were some common rules and methods that were used in all these three magazines' fashion pictures, and unlike the changeable definition of "beauty", these rules and methods could be presented by certain data and texts.

However, the biggest problem was the three magazines did not share a common style in fashion pictures. There was obvious diversity in the pictures, and it was difficult to find similarities at first. I spent a few days spreading all the magazines on the floor of my room and trying to count the numbers of each characteristics of the pictures: how many models were white and how many black, were they smiling or being cool, did they wear dresses or pants, what kind of lens, lighting and background were applied most in these pictures? It was fun and brought me results. I discovered some stereotypes of fashion pictures, such as white, blond, curly-haired, slim model, emotionless facial expressions, balance lighting and low contrast.

The process of writing down all my findings was even more difficult due to my poor English. I made many grammar mistakes and spent hours correcting them. Thanks to my patient committee chair, Jackie Bell, I completed the whole project and made it readable.

## **Evaluation Letter From Supervisor**

To Wesley G. Pippert - Missouri School of Journalism:

This letter is my personal recommendation for Qi An. I have been Qi's immediate supervisor, and I have always found her to be an excellent and efficient intern; her determination and drive to meet deadlines is commendable. She has set the bar very high for our next class of interns, by consistently exceeding our expectations.

Angie is a pleasure to work with, and her skills allowed her to improve the look and usability of our images used for both online and printed media. Her observation to detail is tremendous and shows through when she is free to focus her creativity. Qi was able to create dozens of slideshows featuring hundreds of images. She exudes the skill set and maturity of a photographer well beyond her years. Angie has shown initiative in her abilities to be punctual, appropriate, and intuitive while using her camera to develop visual stories for our readers to follow. She has made valuable contributions many times throughout her internship here at DC Life Magazine.

Though I am saddened to see Angie leave us, I must highly recommend her as a valuable resource. Qi An has proven to be a person of integrity and determination, and has done an outstanding job managing logistics, deadlines and creative assignments. Ms. Qi An is a great asset to any organization.

An example of Ms. Qi's dedication was seen when she lead our Summer 2012 fashion shoot in a 104 degree studio after the regional power outage killed our AC unit. Angie shot 2000 images after walking nearly a mile in the 100 degree heat with her camera bag. She is a trooper!

Sincerely,

Eugene O. Smith, Jr.

Editor - DC Life Magazine

## **Chapter 4**

### **Abundant Physical Evidence of Work**

#### **1. Detailed Discussion of Work**

I participated in the Washington DC program of Missouri School of Journalism, and worked at DC Life magazine as a staff photographer and online photo editor. It began on May 12<sup>th</sup> and ended on August 11<sup>st</sup>, during which period I worked a minimum of 30 hours per week. My supervisors were publisher of DC Life magazine, Eugene Smith, and executive editor, Gigi Smith. Both of them were in charge of arranging my assignments and supervising my behavior at work.

The magazine's website had a part called "The Urban Spy", in which photographers provided pictures of cultural, art, fashion activities and events that happened in the DC area and made slideshows for viewers to browse. Some pictures were also selected and used in the published version. Most of my work was to shoot pictures for this section. Usually my editors did not tell me exactly what I should take photos of, so I spent much time feature hunting on my own. As DC Life describes itself as a "community cultural magazine," most of the events I shot were local events of art, music, entertainment, fashion and lifestyle. Several times I also did the other assignments given by the editors, including celebrities attending a non-profit organization's gala dinner, a fashion shop reopening in Pentagon Business Area, and

shooting Washington City landmarks for a specific article that told visitor about places most worth visiting. Below I discuss every story I did during the internship, and attach a few pictures from each slideshow.

## 1. 2012 Asian Heritage Fest

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### 2012 Asia Heritage Festival

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The 2012 Asia Heritage Fest is held on May 19, Saturday, in Constitution Ave, Washington DC. People celebrate Asian cultures and traditions by various activities, including middle eastern style dances, Korean music, and Chinese Kong-fu performance.



 An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-asia-heritage-festival/slides/0/index.html>



It was my first story in Washington DC. Interestingly, I did not expect it, but when I came out of National Gallery of Art, I noticed that in the middle of the block there

were several performances going on. I did feel I was so lucky that I had brought my camera with me. This was the first thing the Washington Internship taught me: be prepared at any time because you never know when something amazing may happen.

The story was about the 2012 Asian Heritage Festival, a festival for Asian people in DC. It was the second year for this event. Bands, dance clubs, and a Chinese Kung-Fu team gave live performances. There was also a BBQ-and-Beer ground.

I spent quite some time focusing on the dancing performance when I shot this story, so that I could try some techniques such as slow shutter speed, changing focal lens during exposure, and moving the camera with the subject's movement. My purpose was adding motion to the picture, while making the background clean. It proved that slow shutter speed worked best in shooting movement, except that it caused over-exposure. I shall have the neutral density filter with me in the future so that in such daylight I can use slow shutter speed without the need to decrease aperture.

## 2. AKA Fashion Show

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**AKA 20th Anniversary Fashion Show** 1 of 23 

The Ivy Community Charities holds its 20th annual fashion show and luncheon on May 20, Sunday, Greenbelt, Maryland. The designers participating in the show include: Metamorphosis Boutique, Debbie Labrey Designs, Studio d'Maxxi, The Wilbourne Sisters, and Cedi CM Couture Bridal. Celebrity Media Models: Micheline Bowman, Andrea Francis, Jeannie Jones, Sonya Lowery, Taylor Thomas. Photographs by Qi An



Qi An

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<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/aka-20th-anniversary-fashion-show/slides/0/index.html>



This was the first assignment given by my editor. I was told to photograph the Ivy League Benefit Dinner Party, when they gave awards to the best students they supported last year. The fashion show was part of the dinner and could also be part of my fashion project. Unfortunately, my first experience of shooting T stage was a total failure.

The stage was about 2 feet tall, and 3 feet far between the stage and the audiences' seats. I was told that I had to kneel down to take photos and could not move around, otherwise the audience could not see ("They have paid to watch the show!" said one of the staff). That seriously limited my shooting angles; most of my pictures had similar compositions and perspective. Also, the lighting was dim, uneven and had a yellowish green tone. My terrible flash technique did not help. This resulted in plenty of Photoshop work after I came back, but even Photoshop could not save bad lighting. The only good thing was I got some behind stage pictures, which I believe can be used for my project. I had a nice conversation with a model Sophie, who told me she had spent almost four hours getting ready before going on the stage.

### 3. The Rolling Thunders Motor Rally

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#### The Rolling Thunder Motorcycle Demonstration for Memorial Day 1 of 12

The Rolling Thunder motorists hold Memorial Day events to remember their people who were gone. Speeches, music and wreath-laying are presented on May 26, Saturday in front of Navy memorial. The motorcycles set out from Pentagon and go around town on May 27, Sunday. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/the-rolling-thunder-motorcycle-demonstration-for-memorial-day/slides/0/index.html>



The Rolling Thunders is a group of veterans who memorialize their lost army partners by holding a motorcycle rally on Memorial Day every year. The 2012 Rolling Thunders Motor Rally chose the Pentagon as their starting point. When I first arrived at the Pentagon, the armed soldiers and the “No Camera” signs really scared me. Luckily I met an old photographer, Ron Karnes, who told me not to be afraid and

simply take pictures. We worked together that day and became very good friends. To my surprise, that professional photographer used exactly the same camera and lens (Nikon D90 and 18-105) as mine. Ron explained that except for special situation, a D90 plus a zoom lens was enough.

It was one of the hottest days I experienced in DC. We waited for almost one hour for the scene of thousands of motorcycles to start simultaneously. But it proved to only exist in our imagination. They set off every 30 minutes, and each time only 7 or 8 motorcycles. So I took pictures of motorists' portraits while they were waiting. Again I wished I had my ND filter with me. The bright sunlight forced me to use small apertures and fast speeds, so it was not very possible to make blurred backgrounds and create a sense of motion. Ron taught me how to move the camera along the direction of the subject's movement, but it was still too hard for me. I hope for more opportunities to practice.

#### 4. Memorial Day Ceremonies

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Ceremonies of the Memorial Day 1 of 12  

Various ceremonies are held to honor the army service during the Memorial Day weekend.



QI An

On May 28, Monday, Memorial Day celebration is held at Navy Memorial, Washington DC, including U.S. Navy Band concert, presentation of the colors and solemn living. Photographs by QI An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/ceremonies-of-the-memorial-day/slides/0/index.html>



It must be the longest Memorial Day I have ever had. From the World War II Memorial, to the Navy Memorial, to Arlington National Cemetery, to the Women's Memorial, and finally to Capitol Hill, I photographed several memorial ceremonies and concerts in one day and got a terrible sunburn. But it was worth it. I saw the cultural difference between China and U.S. in terms of public's respect for soldiers and veterans. In my country, the media, guided by the government, seek for methods to draw public's attention to our army and their service; but in the U.S. people express their love and respect for the army out of their own willingness. The government does not need to drive the public and educate them about why they should love and respect the army.

By shooting several events in one day, I realized my weakness in composition. Many pictures were shot at eye level, similar in angles and focal distances. Maybe I should have told myself not to be so hasty to release the shutter. Just wait a second and take one more look at the scene, as maybe a better composition will be discovered.

## 5. Rockville Rooftop Fashion Connection Event

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#### Rockville Rooftop Fashion Show

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Business of Fashion Network and Fashion Show is held on May 25, Friday night at the Rooftop of Rockville Town Square, Rockville, Maryland. Models, designers, photographers and other fashion workers attend to meet each other and get connected. Photographs by Qi An.



<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/rockville-rooftop-fashion-show/slides/0/index.html>



The town of Rockville, Maryland held a connection event for fashion workers, including models, photographers, designers, fashion editors and other related people.

The event concluded with a small fashion show.

The space was very limited when I shot the fashion show. The red carpet was less than ten feet long with audiences' seats arranged tightly alongside. I worked with a Nikon D90 body, a 18-105 lens and a 50/f1.4 lens. When shooting outside they were fine; but when shooting in an indoor, dim-light environment, they caused trouble. The biggest aperture was 5.6 when my focal length was 105; so when I needed to use the farther end of the lens, it was not easy to get a shallow depth of field because the aperture could not be bigger. If I decreased the focal length, then the messy background and audience were in the frame.

The event began around 7 p.m., when the sky was still bright enough. But soon it became dark and I had to use flash. When checking in the camera's preview I believed the light was fine, but when I went back and looked at the pictures on my computer, I found the light was too harsh. The second experiment of shooting T stage was almost no better than the first one. Kind of frustrated.

## 6. Memorial Day Parade

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#### Memorial National Parade in Washington DC

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On May 28, Monday, beginning at 2 p.m., the Memorial Day National Parade of Marching Bands and Veterans units from all 50 states steps off at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 7th Streets, NW and proceeds along Constitution Avenue, past the White House, ending at 17th Street. Photographs by Qi An.



<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/memorial-national-parade-in-washington-dc/slides/0/index.html>



This was nothing much but a capitol parade on Memorial Day. At first I did not know what I could shoot except the overall scene of the parade. As I stayed longer I began to try different things such as closer shots, wider angle including the audiences, portraits of people wearing stars and stripes. However the 105 mm lens was still unable to catch closer details. I was not sure whether or not I could move around. I tried once or twice to follow the parade moving, but when a policeman stopped me, I decided I'd better do as he asked and stay where I was. I noticed several photographers and videographers walking alongside with the parade. I guessed they worked for big media. This was first time I wished I worked for Washington Post.

Shooting a parade kind of made me feel that big scenes were really difficult for me to handle. I used to believe that big events had more things to shoot, but when shooting the magnificent capitol parade, it was more likely that my pictures were repetitive and similar in composition and content. The photos had similar marching bands, cheerleaders, flowers and flags. So it became boring after seeing five or six of them. Do other photographer do differently in parade shooting? How do they create diversity in the highly repetitive scene? I will do some research to find out.

## 7. Rockville Friday Night Concert

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### Rockville Town Square Friday Night Concert

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Rockville Town Square holds free concert on Friday nights. Photographs by Qi An

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<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/rockville-town-square-friday-night-concert/slides/0/index.html>



Every summer, Rockville Town organizes Friday Night Concert in which community bands come to give performances, and local residents come to dance, chat, and play with family members and pets. The concert I shot kicked off the 2012 summer concert series. To be honest, there was nothing special: bands playing on the small stage, old couples dancing slowly, young couples sharing soda, kids rolling here and there in the

lawn. But I liked the event. It was full of old-fashioned romance.

However, it was not so enjoyable for a photographer. People were standing, sitting, and dancing in the town square, which was so small that even a 3.5 aperture could not separate the subject satisfactorily from other people behind him/her. Also it was so hard to get a good composition; I did not know how to draw attention to the subject when he/she was surrounded by so many people. Flash helped me a bit. But I was really not willing to change the mild, poetic natural light in the dusk. So at last, my solution was to increase my focal length and shoot more detail, like the first picture above, in which a long lens separated the girl's face from other kids playing around her.

## 8. Rockville Hometown Holiday

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#### Rockville Hometown Holidays Fest

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Rockville's annual street festival Rockville Hometown Holidays is held during the weekend of May 26 - 28, in celebration of Memorial Day 2012. The fest features many kinds of entertainment on seven stages, including live music and impromptu dances, children's rides, local fine arts, environmental expo, food and beer. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/rockville-hometown-holidays-fest/slides/0/index.html>



Rockville must be my favorite town in the summer of 2012. On my third visit to this lovely place, my task was to photograph the annual community festival, Rockville Hometown Holiday, the biggest day of the town's residents. There were several performances going on, but the most interesting things were not on the stage. I was more interested in people attending the fest: what they look like, what they wear, what they prefer to eat, what they do for fun, what games they play with their children, and how they smile or laugh. Rockville Hometown Holiday was a starting point from which I began to like shooting all kinds of festivals. A festival is a vault of interesting, hilarious, various shots. And the photographer is unusually welcomed. Ordinary people often do not like to be photographed by a stranger, and I have to give them descriptions and explanations and big smiles before I can begin working. But at festivals everybody smiles at my camera. It even causes another problem: all pictures become posed rather than natural. I have to tell those enthusiastic people to ignore me, forget my camera, do what you were doing just now.

## 9. Taste of Georgetown

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### Taste of Georgetown

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The Taste of Georgetown gives people a chance to taste food samples from more than 30 local restaurants, as well as enjoying quality time with family, friends and even pets. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

The Taste of Georgetown gives people a chance to taste food samples from more than 30 local restaurants, as well as enjoying quality time with family, friends and even pets. Photographs by Qi An.

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/taste-of-georgetown/slides/0/index.html>



Again it was an event that had crowds of people, and I found it difficult to take pictures when there were so many people that elbows might hit my camera. The subject was so close to other people that the background could not be blurred out. One solution may be doing close-up from a proper angle, as I did for this sample-tasting food fest. I also did portraits of people who were busy eating, and successfully made myself invisible. Though my editor preferred the food shots, I thought the portraits were much more interesting to view.

## 10. Half Street Fairground Family Day

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### Half Street Fairground Family Day

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Family Day at Halfstreet Fairground, Washington DC. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

Family Day at Halfstreet Fairground, Washington DC. Photographs by Qi An.

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<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/half-street-fairground-family-day/slides/0/index.html>



The Fairground Family Day was pretty much like the Family Fest I had shot last summer in Columbia. People played games, enjoyed food and had fun with their children. Again, this was another of the events I shot that was crowded and disorganized. People walked, played, and talked in the fairground. It took patience to find a good composition because people were here and there. I was desperate for a clean background.

## 11. Girl Scouts 100 Anniversary

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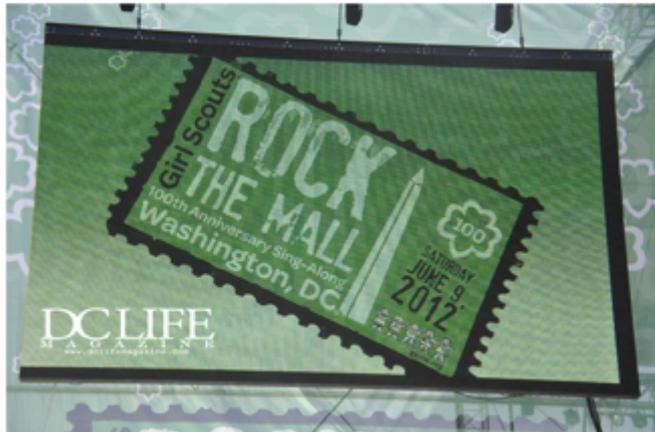
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#### Girl Scouts Celebrate 100 Anniversary

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The Girl Scouts celebrate their 100th anniversary in Washington DC on June 9, 2012. An estimated 200,000 Girl Scouts attend the event on the National Mall. The Girl Scouts was founded in 1912 when Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low assembled 18 girls from Savannah, Georgia for a local meeting. She believed that all girls should be given the opportunity to develop physically, mentally, and spiritually. Within a few years, Low's dream for a girl-centered organization was realized. Today, Girl Scouts of the USA has a membership of over 3.2 million girls and adults. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/girl-scouts-celebrate-100-anniversary/slides/0/index.html>



The “Rock The Mall” Girl Scout 100 Anniversary Celebration was held at the National Mall on an extremely hot day. I stayed there four hours and I almost fainted. Thanks to the kind lady who gave me some water, otherwise this story might be the first one that I had to give up in the middle. Now I knew a good photographer need to be good shape physically as well.

The photo of the Washington Monument and the crowds under it was shot on a small stage that was provided to journalists of registered media. The staff did not know anything about DC Life magazine but I managed to persuade him to allow me to go on the stage and take pictures. Sometimes rules were meant to be broken by photographers!

## 12. Neighborhood Project

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Chinatown, Gallery Place, Navy Memorial and Archive, Court and Capitol Hill.



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Georgetown and around



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<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/neighborhood-project-1/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/neighborhood-project-2/slides/0/index.html>



My editors wanted me to make galleries of landmarks of DC neighborhoods, basically the famous buildings, museums, restaurants and other places of interest. Personally I did not really see the sense of taking mugshots of known buildings in DC, but it was assignment and I would do it well. It took me a whole day to walk from China Town to Gallery Area and the museums along Constitution Avenue. I tried to discover some unique angles to shoot the buildings other than simply shooting from eye level. Sometimes lowering the camera worked better, but it might also cause distortion.

### 13. Capitol Pride Festival



<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/capitol-pride-street-fest/slides/0/index.html>



The annual Capitol Pride Fest was supportive of homosexual and transgender people in DC area. On this day people wore rainbow color clothes and went on streets to show their open attitude towards all kinds of human love. It was a good chance to shoot portraits because people had the desire to show their clothes and were happy to have their pictures taken on that day. I began to have the courage to get closer to people, as if I kept a distance, the subject would mix up with the colorful, noisy background. So I tried talking with unfamiliar people and asking for permission. They welcomed the camera so much that sometimes I had to tell them to be natural and not to pose.

## 14. Capitol Pride Parade

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#### 2012 Capitol Pride Parade

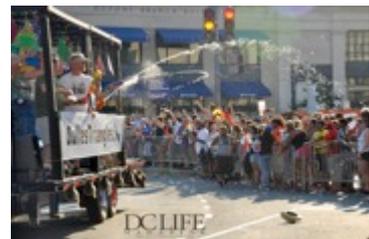
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DC area's gay, lesbian and transgender people celebrate their annual fest Capitol Pride on June 9, 2012. The parade takes place at Dupont Circle, Washington. Photographs by Qi An.



DC area's gay, lesbian and transgender people celebrate their annual fest Capitol Pride on June 9, 2012. The parade takes place at Dupont Circle, Washington. Photographs by Qi An.

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-capitol-pride-parade/slides/0/index.html>



The Capitol Pride Parade was less interesting than the fest because I did not have as much freedom when shooting. I was “stuck” in the excited crowds, unable to move even one step. The parade was walking in front of me but separated by a fence. So all I could do was shoot from the same angle and same height. I had not known that DC had so many people who supported homosexuality. There were several young ladies standing beside me, and the balloons and ribbons waving in their hands unexpectedly came into my composition many times. It was crazy, but not a very good work place for a photographer.



somebody hold him. None of these worked well enough. The dog seemed to be completely not bothered at all. He ran here and there and never stopped. What might be the best way to express my feelings when I saw this poor but very happy and energetic guy?

#### 16. International Food Show in Washington

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-1/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-2/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-3/slides/0/index.html>

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-fancy-food-show-part-4/slides/0/index.html>



My editor wanted some mugshots of the food on this International Fancy Food Show. So I went there for two days to go over all the participating companies. It

was indoor light so I had opportunity to practice the flash technique.

Before this week I thought my editor was responsible for further editing of the slideshows I made, but I found things I uploaded would become the final version without many changes. So from then on I started doing the editing on my own, including selecting images from hundreds of outtakes, deleting repetitive pictures, cropping, toning, watermarking, and putting the selected images in proper order. Actually, in this story of food, I found more fun in photo editing than simply shooting food mugshots from hundreds of farms and companies.

## 17. BBQ Battle in Washington

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2012 BBQ Battle 1 of 11  

The National Capital Barbecue Battle is an annual competition between top BBQ restaurants from the Washington, DC area and around the country. The 2012 BBQ Battle is held at Pennsylvania Street on June 23 and 24. People enjoy live performance and sports game as well as BBQ feast. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

The National Capital Barbecue Battle is an annual competition between top BBQ restaurants from the Washington, DC area and around the country. The 2012 BBQ Battle is held at Pennsylvania Street on June 23 and 24. People enjoy live performance and sports game as well as BBQ feast. Photographs by Qi An.

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-bbq-battle/slides/0/index.html>



I photographed a downtown BBQ Battle, in which people got BBQ samples and enjoyed live performances. It was like a street festival, and people wandered here and there looking for food. Again I had the feeling that in photojournalism one cannot always expect a perfect shooting environment – more likely, the scene may be crowded, messy, even smoky (the BBQ tents were surrounded by heavy smoke, and I did feel sorry for my lens). No matter what the environment looks like, you will have to get some pictures that can at least be acceptable in the editor’s eyes.

## 18. Thai Village in Georgetown

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#### Thai Village in Georgetown

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In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the joining of Washington, DC and Bangkok, Thailand as sister cities, the 2nd Annual Thai Village cultural event is held by Thailand Ambassador Chaiyong Satjipanon in Georgetown, Washington, on June 23, 2012. The event features authentic Thai cuisine from more than 10 local restaurants, as well as live performances of Muay Thai (Thai boxing), music and dances. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/thai-village-in-georgetown/slides/0/index.html>



The Thai Village was a celebration of the 50 anniversary of Washington and Bangkok becoming sister cities. The event presented exotic performances and cuisines from Thailand. When photographing a Thai dance, I found the dancers were not very close to each other, and that caused the picture's composition to be too loose with the distance between each dancer. I hoped to know if there were some methods to solve the problem – as I could not go ask the dancers to stop and get closer to each other, I could only deal with the scene with my own hands. I knew a long lens can “compress” distance, but what if I wanted to get all the dancers in the frame, and I might not be able to stand too far away from them (otherwise there would be other people standing between me and the dancers)?

## 19. The Limited Reopening

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#### The Limited Reopens at Pentagon City Mall

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The Limited women clothes shop celebrates its reopening at Pentagon City Mall. The shop features a new brand Eloqui, specially for plus-sized curvy female. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

The Limited women clothes shop celebrates its reopening at Pentagon City Mall. The shop features a new brand Eloqui, specially for plus-sized curvy female. Photographs by Qi An.

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/the-limited-reopens-at-pentagon-city-mall/slides/0/index.html>



The Limited was a women's clothing retail shop. It reopened in Pentagon City Mall, and the DC Life magazine planned to get a story out of it. I was sent to photograph the new shop. However, the manager only allowed me to shoot about a quarter of the shop, focusing on the oversized women clothes they recently provided. So I practiced how to find different angles in the "limited" space, such as details of the clothes, a medium shot of the front desk, a wide angle of the whole shop and the banners hanging in the mall indicating the shop's reopening.

## 20. Independence Day Capitol Parade

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#### 2012 Independence Day Parade in downtown Washington

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2012 Independence Day Parade takes place in Constitution Avenue, Washington DC.



Qi An

2012 Independence Day Parade takes place in Constitution Avenue, Washington DC. Photographs by Qi An.

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-independence-day-parade-in-downtown-washington/slides/0/index.html>



This was another parade I shot in DC. Based on what I had learned from the other parade shooting experiences, I came to Constitution Avenue very early. Soon I found it did not make much sense because if I wanted to move around to find different shooting position, I had to give up the original position I already had. I guessed some people were really annoyed by me, as I moved here and there and probably stood in front of their eyes. It was not a very pleasant thing to stay under the midday sun for

four hours. Comfortingly, I got some interesting pictures, and this story later was put on the website's front page.

## 21. Smithsonian Museums Folklife Fest

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### 2012 Smithsonian Folklife Fest

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The Smithsonian Folklife Festival is an international exposition of living cultural heritage annually produced outdoors on the National Mall of the United States in Washington, D.C., by the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The Festival takes place for two weeks every summer overlapping the Fourth of July holiday. It is an educational presentation that features community-based cultural exemplars. Free to the public, like other Smithsonian museums, each Festival typically draws more than one million visitors. 2012 Festival's theme is "Campus and Community", "Citified" and "Creativity and Crisis". Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-smithsonian-folklife-fest/slides/0/index.html>



The Smithsonian Folklife Festival was an international exposition of living cultural heritage annually produced outdoors on the National Mall of the United States in Washington, D.C., by the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The Festival takes place for two weeks every summer overlapping the Fourth of July holiday. It is an educational presentation that features

community-based cultural exemplars. 2012 Festival's theme was "Campus and Community", "Citified" and "Creativity and Crisis". Though according to the official website, each Festival typically drew more than one million visitors, this was possibly the story with the least people I had ever shot in DC. It felt so wonderful to stand wherever I wanted and take pictures without many people in the background or between the subject and me. However, fewer people meant fewer fun things to shoot. I met a lady from the University of Missouri, which was also one of the eighteen participating universities. She said the hot weather stopped many people from coming.

## 22. 257<sup>th</sup> Army Band Concert

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An Evening at World War II Memorial with 257th Army Band 1 of 7  

The 257th Army Band gives a free concert at World War II Memorial on the evening of July 3. To celebrate Independence Day, the band plays many American classic songs. Photographs by Qi An.



DCLIFE

Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/an-evening-at-world-war-ii-memorial-with-257th-army-band/slides/0/index.html>



The army band concert was a two-hour event in which people just sat there listening to music (at least this was what I thought it to be when I arrived there). After taking pictures of the band members playing music and the audience listening to them, I thought there was nothing else and I could leave. But I persuaded myself to stay and try to discover something interesting. It proved to be a correct choice because interesting things did happen. I photographed the band doing line dances and inviting audiences to dance with them. I also got the scene when the band invited an old veteran, Simon Thomas, who survived Vietnam War, to be the conductor and lead them to play the last song. I photographed people lying by the pool, putting their feet in the water, enjoying the music and cool evening breeze – in my country it is unimaginable that one can be so relaxed in such a patriotic scenario. I believe I could not have noticed this if I thought the shooting was done within thirty minutes.

## 23. Bethesda Artist Market



To be honest, there was nothing much about this story. It was merely some local artists selling their artworks, and many of them refused to have their picture taken when they found I came from an unknown media.

## 24. G.L.A.M Fashion Show



<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/glam-fashion-event/slides/0/index.html>



The fashion show's organizer was G.L.A.M. (meaning "Give Labels A Meaning"), a local non-governmental, non-profitable organization that works to help Washington children complete their dreams. I learned from the website that G.L.A.M was going to sell clothes and accessories to raise money for the children they helped, and a fashion show would take place. So, I contacted the team's leader, Meaghan Moynihan, who gladly permitted me to photograph the preparation of the fashion show. Thanks to her help, I got some pictures of the models doing make-up and hair. None of the participants were professional models; but they treated the show seriously and all did their best on the stage.

Also I hoped to know how I could reduce the shadow. I used a soft box over the flash head, but it did not work. There was no space for me to step back, as the whole room was full of people. I tried reflecting the flash light from the ceiling, and it brought the weird color onto the model's face. The ambient light was a yellowish green and did not match the flash. After shooting, I spent a lot of time toning and correcting the colors.

## 25. Mars Day in Museum of Air and Space

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#### Museum of Air and Space Celebrates Mars Day on July 13

July 13, the "Mars Day", is celebrated in the Museum of Air and Space, Washington DC. Children experience 3D simulated Mars Tour, play hands-on educational games, interact with scientists and learn knowledge about the soil, atmosphere and environment of the planet. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/museum-of-air-and-space-celebrates-mars-day-on-july-13/slides/0/index.html>



This was one of my favorite stories in DC, although before I went there I hesitated for a while. The story seemed to be small and I did not find much information about it on the official website of the Museum of Air and Space. Fortunately I went and got pictures. To my surprise, there were many interesting scenes to shoot, including children drawing their imagined Mars creature, touching a Mars rock and taking part in the science quiz about planets and universe. Part of the museum was terribly dark, I used a really slow shutter speed for some of the pictures (as slow as 1/10), and I hoped there were not ruined by movement.

## 26. Asian Fest in George Mason University

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#### Asian Fest in George Mason University

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2012 Asian Food and Tennis Festival is held in the campus of George Mason University. The rainy weather during the weekend does not stop people from coming to enjoy Asian food, performances and products. Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/asian-fest-in-george-mason-university/slides/0/index.html>



The organizer claimed that the Asian fest would feature music performances, Kong-Fu fights, tennis tournament and more. Possibly because of the heavy rain, I did not see most of them. It was not a very pleasant experience; I had to protect my camera under the umbrella when trying to get pictures, but it still got wet and the leather part of the camera was completely ruined. However, as a photographer I could not always refuse to go out to work when it rained. So I guess I shall get used to it.

## 27. Ethiopian Fest in Silver Spring, Maryland

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2012 Ethiopian Fest in DC

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Q An

2012 DC Ethiopian Festival is held in Silver Spring, Maryland.

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<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/2012-ethiopian-fest-in-dc/slides/0/index.html>



Again it was a super crowded place, and there were always some people standing in front me. That was the reason why in most of the stage pictures I had to cut the performers at their waists or legs: otherwise there would be several audiences' heads at the bottom of the composition. The picture of the lady making coffee was the result of over 100 experiments. I used a flash to balance the sunlight but the flash went either too strong or too weak or the wrong angle. I tried so many times that I found

myself smelling like the Ethiopian charcoal that lady used to bake her coffee beans.

The result was just as mild lighting as I expected.

## 28. The Bridge Expression Benefit Concert

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#### 4th Annual Expression Benefit Live Concert

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4th annual Expression Live Benefit Concert is held on July 22, Sunday, in Silver Spring, MD. Expression Live is sponsored by The Bridge (a church in downtown Silver Spring) and Hearts and Homes for Youth (a non-profit organization serving at-risk youth). Photographs by Qi An.



Qi An

<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/4th-annual-expression-benefit-live-concert/slides/0/index.html>

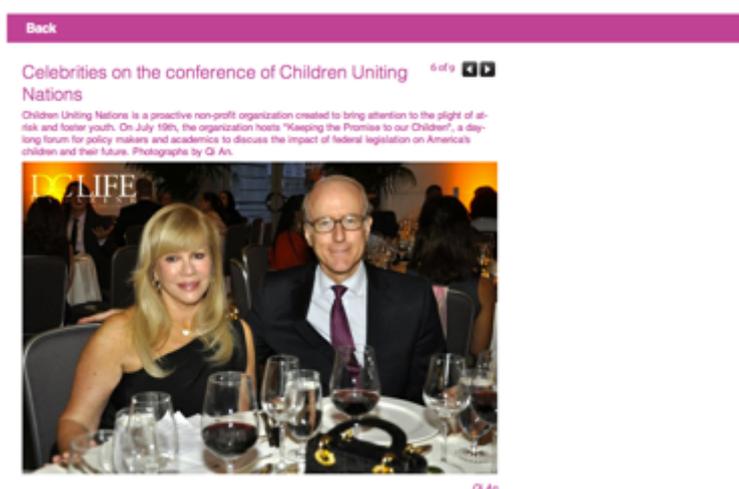


In fact, I did not know this event until I went to shoot the Ethiopian Festival. This concert happened just one block away from the Ethiopian Fest. So I was actually did the two stories at the same time, running back and forth between the two blocks. The

staff at The Bridge were very nice and enthusiastic. They told everybody I was a photographer and asked the audience not to stand in my way.

When editing this story, I liked the street painter picture but was not satisfied because the background was distracting. I blurred the people in the background through Photoshop and it turned out much better. But was it ethical to do so?

## 29. Children Uniting Nations Gala Dinner



<http://www.dclifemagazine.com/downloads/slideshows/celebrities-on-the-conference-of-children-uniting-nations/slides/0/index.html>



This was probably the most boring assignment I received from DC Life. My editor wanted to get portraits of celebrities who attended the dinner, but I did not know

anybody who might be famous enough. Luckily I met two photographers who pointed the celebrities to me, including TV series actress and singers. Thanks to their help I finished this event. But something else made me reconsider photographers' code of conduct in public: when all of us were trying to get pictures of the celebrities on the stage, I intentionally kept three or four feet distance from the stage because I thought if I got too close, it would be difficult for other photographers to shoot the subject without containing me in the frame. But two other photographers just stepped forward and got as close as they could. The result was that I could not get a good composition without them in it. One of the photographers even used her elbow to push me aside when she thought I was in her composition. I really want to know is it that I should be more aggressive, or is it that the other two acted a little bit rude? The dinner was a high brow event in which everybody wore casual business and behaved nicely. Can photographers be the only ones who are not polite? Or as a photographer is my only duty to get good pictures, even if I may affect others doing their job? I am not complaining about these people. They were kind people and they were nice to me when they helped me by telling me who I should take pictures of. I am just confused.

### 30. Five Places Most Worth Visiting in DC





My editor told me there would be an article in next issue about “5 Places Most Worth Visiting in Washington” and they needed pictures of these 5 places, including the National Zoo, the Tomb of Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery, the National Mall (from Lincoln Memorial to World War II Memorial, the Washington Monument all the way long to the Capitol), the National Archives, and the Museum of American History. There happened to be a lot of rain recently, so I took a sunny day to try to finish them all in one day. Thank goodness I walked all the way from Arlington, Virginia to Washington Capitol Hill (as most of the places were along Constitution Avenue, if I took buses, I would have to get off every three blocks). I was proud that I successfully did it in one day because the next day it began to rain again. One of the Washington Monument pictures was used as the magazine cover of the 2012 June issue.

### 31. Studio Work

I got an opportunity to spend 7 hours in Union 206 Studio shooting studio pictures with a team of DC Life magazine, including art director, light person, make-up and hair stylist, and models. I was the only photographer and shot about 1,800 pictures that day. Pictures we took in the studio included electronic covers for the DC Life magazine and advertisement pictures of some brands (handbags, Tees, and a hair salon).

The light person, Lauri, taught me how to set up lights for a high-key portrait, and I helped her moving and adjusting the lights, taking test shots and deciding which light shall be stronger / dimmer.

Except lighting techniques, another important thing I learned that day was to coordinate with the models. When the model kept changing different poses and facial expressions, as photographer I needed to control the pace and tell them “go on” “keep moving” “come one step forward / backward” or “please slow down a bit” (the lights were set to be slaved, so if I clicked too fast, the flashes would not follow). All the models were amateur, and sometimes they were nervous and did not know how to do in front of the camera. At first I kept silent and simply clicked and clicked, until our art director told me “you have to encourage them, praise them, let them know how well they are doing”. So I began to tell the models “chin up,” “head down a little,” or “relax your shoulder and turn it to me” because I was in the position and nobody knew better than me how the picture looked in the viewer.

In the last two weeks of my internship I spent most of my time doing post-production of the studio pictures. It was required that I change the background to pure white, adjust the brightness, remove scratches and footprints, and glamorize skin tone.



## 2. Best Shots from the internship



2012 Asia Heritage Festival, May 14, on Constitution Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> street, Washington DC. The Triplets Dancing Club provides an afternoon of dancing, and this belly dance attracts many people. The dancers are from South Korea.



On June 23, 2012, In order to celebrate the 60 anniversary of Washington and Bangkok becoming sister cities, the Georgetown Thai Village festival is held in Georgetown, Washington, DC. The Thailand ambassador gives a speech to open the celebration. People enjoy Thai cuisine, as well as a cultural performance of Muay Thai (Thai boxing), “waist drum” music, and dances. The Thai dancers are inviting audience members to join their line dance.



The Smithsonian Museums in Washington organizes an annual event called Smithsonian Fork Life Fest on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012. This year's festival themes are "Campus and Community", "Citified" and "Creativity and Crisis". Eighteen universities take part and put together exhibitions and experiments of natural and industrial science. People have opportunities to participate and interact.



Alena Maria, 4, waves the national flag with the beat of music coming from the huge stage in front of Capitol Hill. Her grandmother takes her to the annual Capitol Concert on Memorial Day, 2012.



On July 4<sup>th</sup>, crowds of people stand along Constitution Avenue to watch the Capitol Parade. The temperature is 100 degrees, but that does not stop people from coming to the scene and sharing the happiness of the celebration.



The 257<sup>th</sup> Army Band performs at the World War II Memorial, Washington DC, for the coming 4<sup>th</sup> of July. The band claims that their primary mission is to provide musical support to the troops.



The 2012 Ethiopian Fest is held on July 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Veterans Plaza in downtown Silver Spring, Maryland. It is the second year for this event and Blessed Coffee and is sponsored by Minew Shewa Entertainment company. The festival features educational, cultural and contemporary components including fashion show, music and dance performances, and a coffee making presentation.



Capitol Pride Fest is an opportunity for people to support the LGBT community. The idea is all love is equal and should be treated the same. The 2012 Pride Fest is held on June 10<sup>th</sup> at Pennsylvania Avenue. In the festival, people wear (or do not wear) anything they like; many wore rainbow colors or were half naked to celebrate the gay pride day.



July 13rd is “Mars Day” at the Museum of Air and Space in Washington, DC. The museum organizes various hands-on activities for children, including observing Mars rocks through 3D glasses, learning the construction of a Mars spacecraft, drawing their imagined Mars creature, and listening to space scientists talking about human adventure on Mars. In this picture a child completes a simulated Mars exploration by driving the “spacecraft” through a given path during the “Mars Discovery” game.

### **3. Fashion Project**

I focused my project on the local fashion in Washington DC. Originally, I planned to discover how people dressed themselves in different situations on the street. I did street photography, picking subjects at random on the street and documenting their clothing style. Later in DC I got many opportunities to photograph fashion shows and communicate with people who worked in the fashion industry. Thus, I enriched the project by adding pictures of models on and behind the runway.

The shooting project has two parts. Part One is about street fashion, which includes pictures I took on the streets of Washington DC. By taking pictures of the unknown passers-by, I tried to discover their feelings about things that were going on around them. Part two is a mini documentary of models in Washington DC. The pictures come from fashion shows I photographed and a studio project in which I acted as the only photographer. The pictures do not only present the runway performances, but the models' preparation behind the stage and in front of the camera.

Part 1: Fashion In Streets



Downtown Washington DC, May 19, 2012



National Mall near the World War II Memorial, July 3, 2012



Out of the gate of Union Station, May 25, 2012



Union Station, July 14, 2012. The ladies were going to a wedding.



Bethesda Lane, Bethesda, MD, June 2, 2012. The lady was acting as a model for a recently-opened clothes shop, and there was another photographer taking pictures of her.



Constitution Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, July 24, 2012



Georgetown Shops, Washington DC, June 23, 2012



Georgetown Shops, Washington DC, June 8, 2012



Pennsylvania Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, June 10, 2012. The man dressed himself in pink for Capitol Pride festival, an annual festival to show support to the LGBT community. He said people usually regarded pink as a feminine color, but by wearing pink he showed no was longer concerned about sexual stereotypes in others' eyes.

## Part 2: Fashion On And Behind The Runway



Greenbelt, Maryland, May 20, 2012. The picture was taken at a benefit dinner organized by Ivy League in order to thank their donators for supporting excellent students to continue their education. The fashion show was part of the event.



Greenbelt, Maryland, May 20, 2012. The models were waiting to go on the runway.



Union 206 Studio, Alexandria, Virginia, July 1, 2012. This picture and others below come from the studio project I did with the team of DC Life magazine. We needed to shoot some advertisement pictures for several clients, including hair salons, handbags and T-shirt. The model, Coco, had been waiting for 20 minutes in her high heels. She had to stand there until the light person adjusted each light to the proper strength.



Union 206 Studio, Alexandria, Virginia, July 1, 2012. The models had their make-up redone before standing in front of the camera. In hot weather without air conditioning in the studio, the models were sweating and needed to redo make-up again and again.



Union 206 Studio, Alexandria, Virginia, July 1, 2012



Union 206 Studio, Alexandria, Virginia, July 1, 2012. The art director Lauri and her assistant were adjusting the pins to fix the white sheet around the model's hip. It was an advertisement picture of a hair salon that required a simple white background to emphasize the model's black hair.



Union 206 Studio, Alexandria, Virginia, July 1, 2012. In order to save time, several people worked on the model spontaneously, adjusting her hair and accessories, making her chin up or head lower a bit, turning her body to a better angle, even adding color to her lips or re-painting her eyelashes.



Rockville Town Square Rooftop, Rockville, Maryland, May 25, 2012. The picture was taken at a fashion show, which was part of a fashion workers' connection party.

## Chapter 5

### The Professional Analysis

#### Introduction

This summer I did a three-month internship in a community magazine *DC Life* in Washington DC. In these three months I had several opportunities to photograph fashion shows and fashion workers, and the pictures were used for the magazine's fashion section. For my analysis component, I went over the fashion content in the back issues of *DC Life* and other two local magazines, *Washingtonian* and *Washington Life*. By detailed analysis of the fashion pictures, I found they had many things in common, including the models' appearances and the photos' photographic characteristics. On the other hand, they differentiate in style and ways of expression.

Thus, I came up with the research question: what are the stereotypes in fashion pictures of Washington community magazines?

Originally the question was "how the magazines visually define female beauty". But after deeper study I realized "female beauty" is abstract and does not have a set of standards to measure or judge. Everyone may have his / her own understanding about what is "beautiful". Even in the field of fashion magazines, different editors pick up different factors to visualize a beautiful female. However, some characteristics of

those pictures can be generalized, such as what type of models are most preferred by fashion magazines, how photographers and photo editors visually present these models, and in what ways these fashion pictures look attractive. In this sense, it is difficult to “define” what is considered by fashion magazines as a beautiful female, but it is possible to discuss the similarities and differences of fashion pictures.

General similarities and differences form stereotypes. According to Paul Lester’s definition, stereotype “is a shorthand way to describe collective, rather than unique, characteristics” (Lester and Ross, 2003, p2). Lester believed that a stereotype “imposes rigid molds on the subject and encourages repeated usage” (Lester and Ross, 2003, p16). In his theory, the news media does stereotyping because “typically they portray members of diverse cultural groups within specific content categories...and almost never within the categories of general interest, business, education, health, and religion” (Lester and Ross, 2003, p3). And their readers, as human beings, naturally clarify what they see in their own heads. This makes them accept the media’s classification and then respond to the meanings attached to those stereotypes. In this sense, a stereotype is actually “an artifact of common belief” (Lester and Ross, 2003, p24).

Lester gave the example of entertainment media that typecast actors by their gender, ethnicity, age, dress and race; similarly, in this case of fashion pictures, they stereotype by selecting models of same race and similar appearance, applying similar dress codes and facial expressions, and photographing them in similar ways.

## Literature Review

Few studies have been conducted specifically on photographs in fashion magazines. However some previous research have deal with fashion magazine's photographic preferences, most of which have a concern with the magazines' representation of female and female beauty.

Moeran's research discovered that fashion magazines were both cultural products and commodities. Magazine production was characterized by a 'multiple audience' property, which includes readers, advertisers and the fashion world itself; this determined that fashion magazine's photographic choices were reflections of readers' needs and preferences, advertisers' pressure, and the aesthetic standards given by the fashion world as well (Moeran, 2006, p725).

A previous study shows many of fashion magazines' pictures were of attractive females, and audiences' cognition and attitude towards attractive female figures in magazines were usually positive (Kamins, 1990, p4-13). Physical attractiveness of a communicator determines the effectiveness of persuasive communication, and influences marketing outcome as well, so it has always been a significant issue for fashion media to build physically attractive female images in order to achieve better persuasion effect and financial interest as well (Patzer, 2006).

A study by Gayatri mentioned that sexual visual contents appeared more often in men's and women's magazines than general magazines; women were usually portrayed in a more sexually explicit manner, and female models were usually

sexually attractive and dressed more sexually than in general magazines (Gayatri, 2008, p48-49). A study by Strautman also suggested that when women appeared in magazine covers, they were portrayed as “flawless skin, endless legs, C cups, seductive stares, raunchy subtitles, and revealing clothing” (2009, p3) in order to present sex appeal at its greatest. Gizycki also mentioned in her research that more suggestive and provocative portrayals of female in magazines were usually sex-related and likely to contain nudity and be body revealing (2009, p11). She argued that it was a stereotypical media frame that women were portrayed as decorative / sex object roles.

In a study on *Esquire* magazine, Sheehy studied a regular feature of the magazine called “Women We Love” from 1987 to 2006, in which the magazine gave portrayal of ideal women of the magazine’s choice. The study found that the magazine’s framing of ideal women changed over time under influences of political environment as external and magazine editorship as internal. According to the author, *Esquire* editorial staff sought to “constitute consumption as a new arena for masculine privilege by launching in text and image what amounted to an oppositional meta-commentary on female identity” (Sheehy, 2007, p3). The study found that images of females were often depicted with a focus on their sexuality and that gender stereotype became a definition of female beauty. As time went on, the images of featured women tended to be more traditional, while the occupational range of featured women became less diverse and more focused on the entertainment category,

which was more likely for female to use the female beauty definition to present self values.

Studies also have shown that as more and more women participate in the media industry, female depiction in public media has changed to a large degree, which also reflects a change of feministic expectations in society (Lin, 2008, p409). The author spent months with Taiwan fashion magazine's photographers and photo editors to study what kind of pictures they took and published. She found a common rule of Taiwan fashion magazine's photography: There was too much attention paid to female nudity and physically attractive celebrities, which might create a misleading interpretation of women as sex objects in the public. However, according to other research conducted also in Taiwan by Chen, in contemporary context, as more women with higher educational backgrounds joined the media and fashion industry, the expectation of female beauty changed to become an image that not only possessed feministic attraction but was able to present some masculine qualities such as tough-minded, independent, self-controlled and confident in life and career (Chen, 2008).

A study by Sarah Wood focused on the relationship between female portrayal and fitness and diet in fashion magazines. She used framing theory basis and content analysis to find out how dieting and fitness were framed in teen and women magazines, and she found that by using pretty, thin, airbrushed models, those magazines visually presented ideal female images and thus shaped people's interpretation on thinness, healthiness and beauty. Those thin models usually applied

poses that emphasized their good shape, as well as body languages that showed confidence (Wood, 2006, p53-56). In another study of women's body language and self-perception, the author also did a content analysis study on women magazines' appearance frames (the authors defined "appearance frames" as "do something in order to look better) versus health frames (the authors defined "health frames" as "do something in order to feel better), and suggested that appearance frames were just as prevalent as health frames even in health section in those magazines (Aubrey, 2010, p60).

Based on Goffman's framing theory foundation, Kang (1997) studied seventeen symbols of women's body languages that appeared in magazine pictures, including height relationship, using fingers and hands to cradle or caress objects, self-touching, serving other people, instructing role of male, conducting superior role, lowering oneself physically, bashful knee bend, body cant or head cant, lying or sitting on bed or floor, expansive smile, hand covering mouth or face, head or eye gaze aversion, withdrawal gaze from scene at large, maintaining telephone conversation, body-revealing clothes or nudity, independence and self-assertiveness. The study showed that through photographs that stereotyped posing of female pictures in magazines, female depiction in fashion media was not necessarily how they actually behave, but how we think women behave (Kang, 1997). Furthermore, this depiction served the social purpose of convincing us that this is how women are, or want to be, or should be. According to Kang's study, using women was a sexist tone in fashion magazines that had profound social implications; if the media did mold expectations,

opinions, and attitudes, then the audience might accept the way that females were visually described as reality, and believed they themselves should be like that. In this sense, the author argued that the portrayal of female in fashion magazines actually reflects contemporary women's own perception of themselves.

## **Theory Framework**

The study is based on framing theory.

Goffman founded the framing theory by coming up with the idea that interpretive designs constitute central elements of cultural belief systems, and he called these interpretive designs "frames" that we use in our day-to-day life to make sense of the world (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009, p407). In their book, Littlejohn and Foss explained that traditionally, the meaning of the world is perceived by individuals based on their beliefs, experiences and knowledge; contemporarily, mass media communication creates powerful frames of perception that challenges and renegotiates individual interpretation (2009, p408).

According to Tewksbury and Scheufele, news frames serve as structures according to which individuals organize information and build their own interpretation; and frames can "exert a relatively substantial influence on citizens' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors" (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2009, p17); a frame

becomes influential because “it resonates with popular culture or a series of events, fit with media routines or practices, and / or is heavily sponsored by elites” (Scheufele and Nisbet, 2007, p257).

Entman (1993, p52) stated that to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation for the item described”. Tewksbury and Scheufele explained this statement as a powerful frame should encourage audience to make associative connections between an issue and particular considerations relevant to its definition, causes, implications and treatment (2009, p24).

Entman (1993, p54) also stated that media framing involves the selection and salience given to various pieces of information, allowing certain attributes to be highlighted and others to be excluded in a communication context; by selecting certain perspective and increasing the salience given to it, media manage to guide audiences’ opinions and impressions; by omitting certain issues and decreasing given salience, on the contrast, audiences’ attention will be diverted or they will even remove some pieces of information from memory.

Tewksbury and Scheufele also listed factors in their book that determine how journalists frame a certain issue, including larger social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, external pressures from interest groups and other policy makers, professional routines, and ideological or political orientations of journalists (2009, p23).

In the visual framing field, Messaris and Abraham argued in their book that because of three distinctive properties of visual images – their analogical quality, their indexicality, and their lack of an explicit propositional syntax, visual framing is less obtrusive than verbal framing; they believed visual framing may convey meanings that would be more controversial or might meet with greater audience resistance if they were conveyed through words (2003, p215). Borah explained these three qualities in her research individually. She explained the analogical quality refers to the fact that associations between images and their meanings are based on similarity, or analogy. Indexicality means differentiating photographs from other images. The lack of an explicit prepositional syntax refers to the fact that visual images do not have a set of conventions for making propositions such as cause-effect relationships (Borah, 2009, p50).

Schwalbe described visual framing as “a continuous winnowing process. It begins with the choice of events to cover, followed by the selection of what pictures to take, how to take them (angle, perspective, assumptions and biases, cropping, and so forth), and which ones to submit” (Schwalbe, 2006). According to him, the process of visual framing does not stop at the ideological level, but continues in the newsroom with decisions about which images to publish, what size to make them, and where to position them on the page.

## **Methodology**

The research method used in this project is qualitative and quantitative content analysis.

Content analysis is defined as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matters) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p18); this method can be used to deal with research questions that are answerable by examinations of a body of text or other matters (2004, p32). In his book, Krippendorff also points out that the advantages of content analysis are providing new insights based on accessible materials in a certain context, increasing a researcher’s understanding of particular phenomena, and informing practical actions (2004, p19).

Berger wrote in his book that media content analysis is “a means of trying to learn something about people by examining what they write, produce on television, or make movies about” (1998, p23). He believed that content analysis could reveal media workers’ behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes as they decided what to publish (1998, p23).

Mayring (2000) listed four advantages of content analysis: fitting the material into a model of communication; following rules of analysis step by step, putting different aspects into categories in the center of analysis, and comparing results based on criteria of reliability and validity.

In Macnamara’s research, he came up with three steps of sampling for media

content analysis: selecting media forms, selecting issues or dates (the period), and sampling relevant content from within those media (2011, p13). The content analysis research should meet the following standards: objectivity / intersubjectivity, intercoder reliability, validity, generalizability and replicability (Macnamara, 2011, p8-13). He also argued that using qualitative research methods “is required to fully understand the potential meanings (manifest and latent) for audiences and likely effects of texts” (2011, p14).

Macnamara also pointed out in his paper that images such as photographs and icons are key signs in media texts (2011, p16). He used an example that a photograph of a man holding a baby suggests fatherhood, family commitment, gentleness and caring. It may contain several other signs, such as the man cradling the baby’s head in his hand and/or gazing at the baby with a kind and caring expression (signifying love and protection), or holding the baby with outstretched arms away from his body and peering quizzically at the infant (signifying confusion and aversion).

Many scholars in the photojournalism field have used content analysis method in their research. In Jenkins’ study of tourist photojournalism, the author used various measurements to analyze photographs of tourists’ destinations, and came up with the result that photographs of destinations would influence a tourist's travel decision-making, cognition and behavior at a destination, as well as satisfaction levels and recollection of the experience (Jenkins, 1999). In another study of photographic presentation of public journalism, the authors analyzed photographs in American newspapers during the 2000 election season; by observing both contents and

techniques of the campaign photos, they found that visual elements were important and widely used for public journalism to convey issues and analysis (Coleman and Wasike, 2004). There is also a study that used content analysis on lifestyle journalism; the authors did both quantitative and qualitative content analysis to study pictures in lifestyle, cultural and consumer reporting. By counting the numbers of pictures in each topic and analyzing those pictures' subjects, contents and styles, the authors found that the boundary between lifestyle, cultural and consumer journalism had blurred and the styles of photographs used in these topics were both distinct and similar to each other (Kristensen and Frome, 2012).

In my study, I use content analysis to study local community magazines' fashion pictures. The samples are from three different magazines: Washington Life, Washingtonian, and DC Life.

All the magazines are divided and discussed by seasons. December, January and February issues are discussed as winter fashion; March, April and May as spring; June, July and August as summer, September, October and November as fall. I pick up one issue of each magazine from each season to study their fashion pictures. For Washington Life and Washingtonian, I select 2011 April, 2011 July, 2011 September and 2011 December. DC Life magazine did not regularly publish until the year 2012, so the studied issues of this magazine are 2011 Summer, 2011 Fall, 2012 January and 2012 March.

I define "fashion pictures" as photos that are used for fashion-and-beauty-related articles, and advertisement images of apparel and accessory brands, retailers or outlets.

Only pictures that have female model's participation are considered in this study. Pictures of products and male models, though also used for fashion articles, are excluded.

The pictures are analyzed in both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The qualitative characters are studied basically in two aspects: contents and techniques.

### **Contents:**

Overall appearance of the models, white or black, pale skin or tanned skin, long hair or short hair, tall or petite, over-sized or slim?

Do the pictures include full body shots or only faces (or possibly show only other parts such as hands and feet)?

Are the models fully clothed or half naked? Is there cleavage or other body parts revealing?

Do the models smile, or not, or they have other facial expressions?

What are popular body poses and gestures in those pictures?

Do the models directly gaze into the camera or look somewhere else?

### **Techniques:**

Technical factors, including lens choices, possible focal length and shooting distance, physical angles of photographer, and depth of field.

Possible light sources, quality of lighting, high key or low key.

The overall dominant hue of pictures, warm or cool tone.

Backgrounds of pictures: are the models put in a realistic environment, or there is a faked background created by photo manipulation technique, or only white or black

background color.

The qualitative characters are then discussed in quantitative method. I count each character's percentage in total and based on the statistics, conclude the similarities and differences of the fashion pictures.

### Detailed Analysis of Samples

#### Washingtonian, 2011 April



Fashion pictures: 11

- All models are white and have long hair, nine curled. Hair colors vary from gold, brown to black, no unnatural color, no hair dye.
- Seven of them are the model's whole body, the other four are half body.
- All the models are fully dressed with only part of arms/legs exposed, with only

one exception that the model is half naked only with bra. Four models wear dresses and high heels, four wear pants/cargos, one shirt and one business casual jacket.

- Nine models have calm facial expressions; the other two have happy, wide smile.
- In six of them the models look directly at the camera, and in the other five the models do not have eye contact with viewer. None of the pictures is candid shot.
- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion.
- Four pictures have mild, warm natural light and very little shadow can be seen. Three pictures have balanced indoor light and medium contrast. Other four pictures are shot under studio light, the lighting is generally soft and flat, sharp-outlined shadow can be seen only in one picture.
- Seven pictures give the models a certain background, including living room, bookshelf, ancient antic, jeep and bushes. One picture has obviously faked background. Others have clean gray studio backdrop, either evenly or unevenly lightened.

**Washingtonian, 2011 July**



Fashion pictures: 5

- All models are white and have long hair.
- Two of them are the model's whole body, one has half body, one shows only from the breast to hip, one is a close-up of a bare hand with colorful nails.
- In the two full body pictures, the models are fully dressed with only part of arms/legs exposed. One of them wears a red, long dress with a straw hat; the other is a wedding dress. None of them shows cleavage.
- In the other two pictures of half body, both models wear bikini and expose shoulder, cleavage, and waist.
- In all the three pictures that show faces, the models have restrained smile. All of them stands facing the camera and have direct eye contact with viewer. None of the pictures is candid shot.
- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The backgrounds (if they have) are blurred and the focus of every picture is on the model's face. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.

- All pictures are high-key and have balance, flat lighting. No hard light is used in any of the pictures.
- Three of the pictures have simple studio background (two pure white and one pure gray). The other two have outdoor background (one in a garden and one on a beach).

### Washingtonian, 2011 September



### Fashion pictures: 20

- All models are white. Three models' hair is above their shoulders; all other models have long hair, seven of them have curled hair. Hair colors vary from gold, brown to black, no unnatural color, no hair dye.
- Eleven of them are the model's whole body, three of them are cut by the knees, four are half body shots, the other two are head-shoulder.
- Among the eighteen pictures that show half or whole body, the models are fully dressed with only part of arms/legs exposed. None of these pictures shows cleavage. All of the models wear dresses / skirts and high heels, except three of

them, in which the model wear pants.

- Thirteen of the twenty models have pleasant smiles; no stronger emotion is expressed. Other seven have cool face.
- In eleven of the pictures the models look directly at the camera, and in the other nine the models do not have eye contact with viewer. The smiling pictures and the eye contact pictures prove to be almost the same ones with only a few exceptions.
- Models' poses include standing, sitting, leaning to the table and walking with their heads turning to another direction. None of the pictures is candid shot.
- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.
- All pictures have balance, flat lighting, and very light shadow or no shadow at all. Only in one picture light shadow can be seen on the model's face. In all the others the models' faces are lightened evenly. No hard light is used in any of the pictures.
- Fourteen pictures give the models a certain background; thirteen of them are set indoors and only one puts the model in front of natural background. There are also three white backgrounds and three gray backgrounds.

**Washingtonian, 2011 December**



Fashion pictures: 11

- All models are white. In ten pictures that show model's head, all models have long hair, nine curled. Hair colors vary from gold, brown to black, no unnatural color, no hair dye.
- Five of them are the model's whole body, four are half body, one is a close-up of the face, and one only shows a pair of naked legs.

- Among the ten pictures that show half or whole body, the models are fully dressed with only part of arms/legs exposed. None of these pictures shows cleavage. All of the models wear dresses / skirts and high heels, with only one exception in which the model wear coat and legging.
- Among the ten pictures that show models' faces, eight pictures have calm facial expressions; only in two pictures the models are laughing with their mouths wide open. Three pictures suggest strong emotion of happiness through laughter and delightful body language. These three pictures are the advertisement photos of apparel and accessory brands, and they prove to have more elegant backgrounds. Others have cool face or restrained smile.
- In seven of them the models look directly at the camera, and in the other four the models do not have eye contact with viewer.
- Models' poses include standing, sitting, cat-walking and leaping like in a ballet dance. None of the pictures is candid shot.
- All pictures except the bare leg are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The backgrounds (if they have) are blurred and the focus of every picture is on the model's face. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.
- All pictures have balance, flat lighting, and very light shadow or no shadow at all. No hard light is used in any of the pictures. All the face close-up and half body pictures are high-key with flattering, soft light.
- Seven pictures give the models a certain background; all of them are set indoors

with only one exception that the model is put in front of snow-covered mountain and gold meadow. The bare leg photo and the face close-up have nothing but a white background. Another two pictures put their models on a pure gray background.

### Washington Life, 2011 April



Fashion pictures: 12

- All models are white. Except for one short hair, everybody has long hair. Hair colors vary from gold, brown to black, no unnatural color, no hair dye.
- Six of the pictures are whole body shots, other six are half body. All the models are fully dressed with only part of arms/legs exposed, with only one model wears a deep V neck short dress and exposes cleavage and laps, and two models have sleeve-less dresses which bares the shoulder. Dresses and skirts are mainstream; only two models wear jean shorts.
- All models have calm facial expressions and body poses. No smiles, laughs or poses other than standing, sitting and leaning.
- In five pictures the models look directly at the camera, and in the other seven the models do not have eye contact with viewer. None of the pictures is candid shot.
- All pictures are shot basically from eye level, with two slightly from lower and two slightly higher. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. Two pictures use tilted composition.
- All pictures have low contrast and overall balanced lighting. Mild shadows can be seen around eyes and under noses, so that the facial outlines are not washed out by flat light.
- Five pictures are taken outdoors and have different backgrounds. The natural light adds a warm tone to these pictures. One picture is set indoors and backlighted, with a light pinkish tone. Three pictures are on the runway and have even light and weak shadows. Other three have simple white background.

## Washington Life, 2011 July



Fashion pictures: 8

- All models are white and have long hair.
- One of them are the model's whole body, one cuts at knees and others are half body shots.
- Three models are fully dressed and others wear swimming suits or bikini. Six models show cleavage, seven show bare backs, shoulders, waists and/or laps.
- All the models have calm facial expression and no smile. Four have direct eye contact with viewer and others do not. Except for simply sitting and standing, in three pictures the models have hand actions, including hands under the chin, touching face and using hands to support the upper body. All these three pictures

are swimming suits or bikini ones, with most bare skin. None of the pictures is candid shot.

- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.
- All pictures have balanced, flat lighting. No hard light is used in any of the pictures. Contrast is low and backgrounds appear to be simple solid color (two white and one gray). Five pictures are taken at swimming pool and either use gradual blue tones or blurred pool to suggest the theme.

### Washington Life, 2011 September



Fashion pictures: 11

- All models are white. Hair colors include gold and black, no unnatural color, no hair dye.

- Six of the pictures are the model's whole body, four are half body shots, the other is head-shoulder.
- All the models are fully dressed except the head-shoulder portrait in which the models do not have anything to cover neck and shoulder. None of these pictures shows cleavage, but in three pictures the model wear sleeve-less dresses and expose shoulders and partial breasts. All of the models wear dresses / skirts.
- Every model has cool face without smile. Nine of them look directly at the camera, and in the other two the models do not have eye contact with viewer. Models' poses including sitting, standing, leaning, and in only one picture the model uses her right hand to cover one of her eyes. No more gestures are found in other pictures. None of the pictures is candid shot.
- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.
- Five pictures are taken on stage and have runway background. Five pictures give the models an indoor background. In the other one, the background is pinkish dark brown.
- In the five stage pictures the models are evenly lighted without obvious shadow. In the five picture that have indoor background, mild contrast can be seen on models' faces but overall lighting is bright enough. In two of them the background is dark but filling lights are used to lighten the models. The head-shoulder is the only one that has strong contrast, strong highlight on one



Fashion pictures: 15

- All models are white. In six pictures the models' hair are above the shoulders; other models all have long curly hair. Hair colors vary from gold, brown to black, no unnatural color, no hair dye.
- Ten of them are the model's whole body, other five are half body shots.
- All the models are fully dressed with two pictures exposing cleavage and two pictures exposing bare waist. Two models wear pants and one model has jeans; all others wear dresses / skirts and high heels.
- All models have calm facial expression without smile. In eight pictures the models' hands are positioned at waist, below breast, under chin or around head. Other body poses include simple standing, sitting, leaning and cat-walking.
- In eight pictures the models look directly at the camera, and in the other seven the models do not have eye contact with viewer. None is candid shot.
- All pictures are shot from eye level except one picture from lower (the model lies in a bed with one arm supporting her upper body, and camera is approximately as low as her elbow) and one from higher angle (the model sits in a chair and camera is approximately two feet higher than her head). No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.
- All pictures have balance lighting, and very light shadow can be seen. No hard light is used in any of the pictures.
- Two pictures are taken on the runway. Four pictures have ordinary indoor setting.

Four pictures have colored background (one pure white, one gray, one dirty brown with texture, one red). The other five pictures are taken in studio and have a fabric background.

### DC Life 2012 March

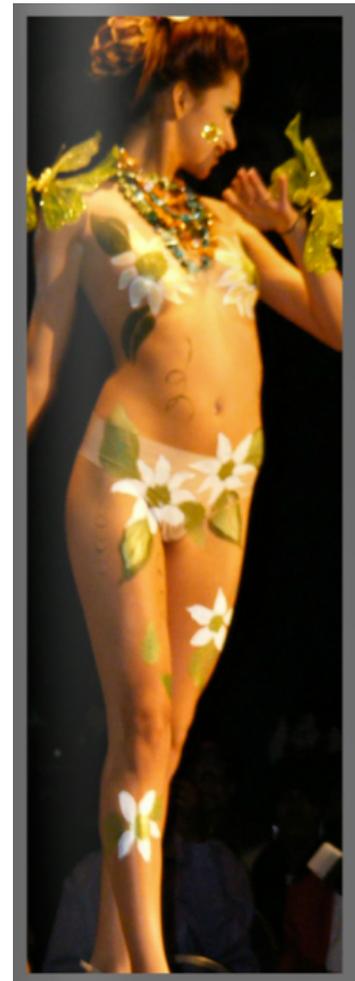
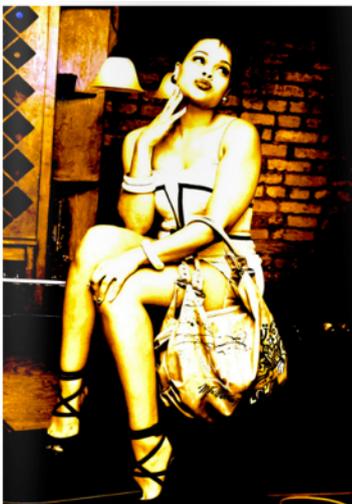


## Fashion Picture: 32

- Three of the pictures contain black models. All pictures show the models' faces; six are full body shots; two head-shoulder shots; and others are either half body or cut by the knees. All models have long hair and all make elegant hairdo rather than casually thrown on the shoulder. Hair colors vary from gold, reddish brown to black, no unnatural color.
- Two pictures are back-stage candid shots from a fashion show. Others are all posed.
- All the models are fully dressed. Five of these pictures show cleavage; one picture shows bare skin on the model's back. In nine pictures the models wear sleeve-less tops or dresses and expose whole arms and shoulders. Dresses / skirts are still mainstream except three pictures in which the models wear casual pants and blouses.
- In all the pictures the models have calm facial expressions and emotionless body poses, with only one exception that the model make a dance-like leap and show big smile with all her hair flying in the air. This one picture is an advertisement of a women-clothing brand.
- In seven of them the models look directly at the camera, and in the others the models do not have eye contact with viewer.
- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.

- Most pictures have a slight over-exposure tendency. Models' skin texture cannot be seen and look basically more pale than normal except the two candid shots. But the overall lighting is bright and even, without obvious shadows.
- Eight pictures are taken at the scene of fashion shows so they have the background of runway or back stage make-up room. One picture is given an outside background of garden and truck. Other pictures are all taken in studio, with six high-key, white background and seventeen low-key dark gray background.

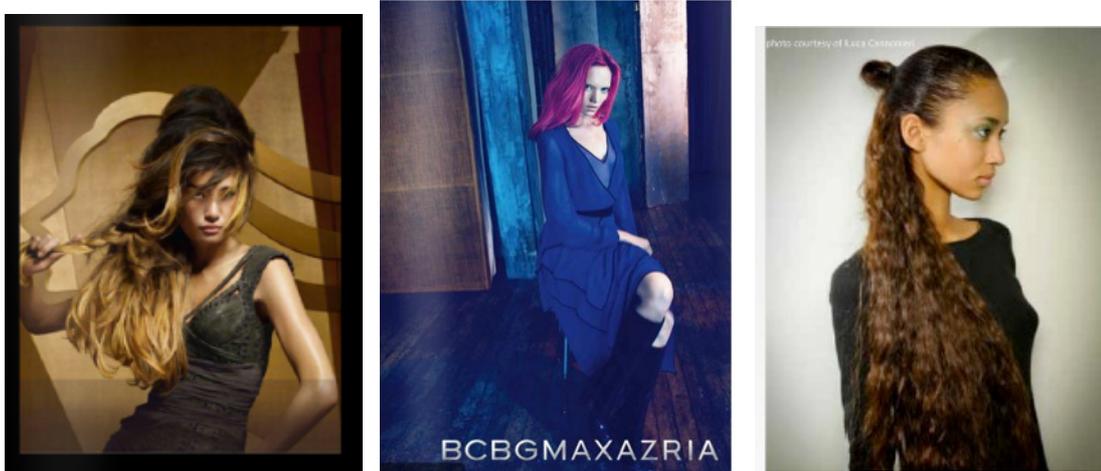
### DC Life 2011 Summer



Fashion Picture: 15

- Two of the pictures contain black models. All pictures show the models' faces; three face close-up, one head-shoulder, five half body and six whole body shots. Hair colors vary from gold, reddish brown to black, no unnatural color.
- Only in one picture the model wears bikini suit; all the models are fully dressed. Three of these pictures show cleavage; four pictures show bare skin of shoulders and upper back. Dresses / skirts are still mainstream.
- In all the pictures the models have calm facial expressions and emotionless body poses. In five of them the models look directly at the camera, and in the others the models do not have eye contact with viewer.
- All pictures are shot from eye level or slightly lower. One picture has tilted composition. No super wide angle or long lens is used. Only one picture has obvious distortion, supposed to be a result of inappropriate post-production. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.
- Four pictures have an obvious over-exposure tendency and very high contrast. Models' skin texture cannot be seen and the highlight parts in these pictures are completely white-out. Hot spots of flash light can be seen on models' faces. These pictures also have either warm or cold color tones.
- Five pictures are taken at the scene of fashion shows so they have the background of runway. In other six pictures, backgrounds include nightclubs and streets, walls, and ordinary room. Four pictures including all close-up face shots are taken in studio with pure clean background and even light.

## DC Life 2011 Fall



### Fashion Picture: 8

- One of the pictures is black model. Seven pictures show the models' faces; three are full body shots; three half body and one head-shoulder portrait. Another one is from shoulder to waist. All models have long hair with only one exception in which the model has a male-like short haircut. In only one picture the model has unnatural hot pink hair.
- In the seven pictures that show models' faces, all the models are fully dressed. None of these pictures show cleavage or any other bare skin except arms and necks. Dresses / skirts are still mainstream except only one shorts and boots.
- In all the pictures the models have calm facial expressions and emotionless body poses. All pictures are posed. In four of them the models look directly at the camera, and in the others the models do not have eye contact with viewer.
- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The model also takes up most of the

composition in each picture.

- The lighting is bright and even, without obvious shadows. Only in one picture slight shadow can be seen on model's face.
- Five pictures have indoor background with warm or cold color tone. One is taken outside with autumn landscape that matches the clothes of the model. Other two pictures are taken in studio, with white or light gray background.

### DC Life 2012 January



Fashion Picture: 10

- Two of the pictures are black model. Nine pictures show the models' faces; seven are full body shots; one head-shoulder and one face close-up. The other one only shows an eye. All white models have long curly hair with no unnatural color. The two black models are almost bald.

- All the models are fully dressed. Two of these pictures show cleavage, one shows laps, and others only have normal exposure of arms, legs and necks. Dresses / skirts are still mainstream with no exception.
- In all the pictures the models have calm facial expressions and emotionless body poses. All pictures are posed. In nine pictures that show models' faces, five of them the models look directly at the camera, two models do not have eye contact with viewer, and in the other two the models close their eyes.
- All pictures are shot from eye level. No super wide angle or long lens is used, based on that there is no obvious distortion. The model also takes up most of the composition in each picture.
- In most of the pictures the lighting is bright and even, without obvious shadows. Only in three pictures mild contrast between shadows and highlights can be seen on model's face.
- Two pictures are taken on the runway. Two pictures have indoor background. Other six pictures are taken in the studio and have pure background (three white and three light gray). One picture has prevailing rosy tone.

## Discussion

### Appearance:

- Pictures of white models participate are used much more than black. Of the 158 studied pictures, only eight pictures are of black models, and all these eight pictures are from DC Life magazine, which is located in Virginia. According to the USA Census Bureau, by 2011 black people comprised 50.7% of the population in the District of Columbia. While in Virginia only 19.8%. In this sense, the percentage of black models in community magazines does not match the percentage of local black people.
- Models with long hair are used more than short hair. Only in nine pictures the models have hair above their shoulders. Unnatural hair dye is hardly used.
- All models are slim and slender with curves through breast, waist and hip. No plus-size models are used.
- When the models are standing, they usually have a 1:8 proportion of head and whole body, sometimes even 1:9 with the additional height of high heel shoes.
- Most models do not expose cleavage or too much bare skin. Among the 158 pictures, only in thirteen pictures the models expose their cleavage. Exposure of shoulders, waist, back and laps is also very rare.
- In only eight pictures models wear bikinis. Summer issues are most likely to have pictures with half naked models.
- Models usually have pleasant skin tone, either pale or tanned, possibly achieved

by post-production. Eye shadows and lip colors are used in some pictures to add color diversity. No dramatic makeup is used.

### **Clothing:**

- Blouses, dresses and skirts are mainstream. Only nine models wear pants in these fashion pictures, five jeans or jean shorts, one legging. Others all wear various dresses or skirts. The overall style of clothing is elegant, colorful and feminine. Pure black and pure white do not appear frequently. Business casual shirt and jacket only appears once. T-shirts that can be worn by both male and female are not seen in any of the three magazines. Non-gender specific shirts are also very rare. Sports clothes and shoes are not seen at all except swimming suits.
- Washington Life magazine pictures have more clothes that are vintage, elaborate, and usually not the clothes people will wear in daily life, such as a satin maxi dress with super big volume. The other two magazines introduce more clothes that people can wear at dinner party, to workplaces, or in daily life.

### **Expressions and poses:**

- The general stereotype is emotionless. Among 158 pictures, nineteen pictures have smiling models and in only two pictures the models laugh. Even in those smiling pictures, the smile is usually restrained with no teeth showing. Most models do not smile and keep cool expressions.
- The general body language is still emotionless. Most models simply stand or sit, or walk through the runway. Only in a few pictures the models have their hands under their chins, aside their heads or on their waists. Other pictures do not have

any expressive gesture.

- Eye contact is not necessary, even though most pictures are taken from eye level. Pictures with and without eye contact with viewer are approximately half and half. The models exposing more bare skin are more likely to have eye contact with viewer.

**Photography technique:**

- There are very few candid shots in these 158 pictures. Most pictures are posed except only a few shots backstage at fashion shows.
- Most pictures are taken from eye level. Only a few shots are from a lower angle to make the models look taller and legs longer. Also a few shots are taken from higher angle when the models have the posed sitting or lying.
- No super wide angle or super long lens is used. Most pictures have estimated focal length between 50 and 120. The model is always the main subject and the focus point. Backgrounds may be blurred.
- There is no extremely high contrast in any of the 158 pictures. Generally the lighting is even and bright without hard shadows and no hot spots. Usually the models' faces are evenly lightened. Only in several pictures obvious shadows can be seen on the faces, but the shadows remain thin and mild.
- DC Life magazine has the tendency to over-expose while other two magazines always use pictures that are correctly exposed. DC Life magazine sometimes also adds warm or cool tone to the pictures while the other two keep the original color without additional overall tones.

**Background:**

- Washingtonian and DC Life use pure white or gray studio shots and runway shots; Washington Life have more pictures that use a certain background to set up a scene and express a feeling. Advertisement pictures in all three magazines are most likely to use real / faked backgrounds rather than simply white.

**Conclusion**

All the three magazines tend to use white, long-haired, tall and slim models for their fashion pictures. The models do not wear much make-up but must have pleasant healthy skin tone. They do not smile or laugh very much, also usually do not have poses other than calmly standing or sitting. But the way they stand or sit is relaxed, graceful and looks confident.

Dresses / skirts with high heel shoes are considered as a symbol of female fashion rather than pants. Colorful clothes are obviously more welcomed than black and white. Non-gender specific clothes such as T-shirts, jeans and canvas shoes do not appear very frequently in these magazines.

In terms of photographic techniques, the ways photographers shoot fashion pictures for these three magazines are traditional and ordinary. No super wide or super long lens, no dramatic lighting or high contrast, no special background except studio, common rooms and outdoor places.

Almost all pictures are shot from eye level and the models look just calm and relaxed. When the shooting angle is low and the model looks at the camera, she looks arrogant and strong-minded. When shooting from high perspective and the model looks at the camera, she looks more affable and friendly.

Almost all pictures do not have harsh shadows, especially not on models' faces. Slight over-exposure is sometimes preferred in order to make the skin tone pleasant and the whole atmosphere mildly romantic.

All these three magazines present female fashion in a way that is traditional and easy for readers to accept. The models are white, blonde, wear sparse make-up and have beautiful body curve. The clothes can be afforded by ordinary people and worn by them in real life, not those that are only suitable on runways. The lighting is bright and flat. And the background is either pure color, or some scenes people can see in their daily life, such as living rooms, gardens, or parties. Everything matches people's universal conception of a common pretty lady. As local community magazines in Washington DC, *Washingtonian*, *Washington Life* and *DC Life* do not try to create specially artistic atmosphere in their fashion pictures. Unlike internationally famous fashion-focused magazines such as *Elle* and *Vogue*, which have the trend to use more artistic and dramatic fashion pictures, these magazines create female figures that cater for common people's normal aesthetics, in other words, they visually present the women that people may see, meet, even become themselves in their daily life. It may be an interesting topic for future research to make comparison between this kind of magazines and *Elle*, *Vogue*, etc.

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## Article

### Taking a look at fashion pictures

Hilary Clinton and Michelle Obama are probably two of the most famous women in the world. Although they are known for their political actions, there may be as many people who care about how the two First Ladies dress. Hilary Clinton usually appears in public in serious suits and looks like a strong-minded, astute politician. Michelle Obama, on the other hand, often looks more fashionable and popular. The first time I saw her on TV, the hot pink shiny sequined long dress impressed me, as it seemed that she was ready for the Oscars. Different dressing styles result in different public impressions. “You are what you wear” is true to world-famous celebrities, as well the general public.

This summer I did a three-month internship at the community magazine *DC Life* in Washington, DC. The magazine had fashion sections in each issue and sometimes published advertisement pictures of clothes, accessories and hair salons. In three months I had several opportunities to photograph fashion shows and fashion workers, which allowed me to improve my understanding of this industry. The best part of my internship was that I took part in a studio project, shooting advertisement photos for the magazine’s clients. This was my first chance to work as a fashion photographer and take a peek at the fashion industry. It was fun, and based on what I saw in

Washington, I found it quite interesting to compare American and Chinese fashion pictures and fashion concepts.

### **What kinds of girls go inside magazines?**

It seems to me that nearly every Chinese girl wants pale skin color because people think white means beautiful. Perhaps American fashion editors may have the same idea about it. In local fashion shows and in studio projects, I met both white models and black models. However, interestingly, pictures that use white, blonde models are much more common than those that use black models. I reviewed the fashion content in back issues of *DC Life* and two other local magazines, *Washingtonian* and *Washington Life*. In their fashion pictures, over 90% of the models are white. According to the USA Census Bureau, by 2011, black people comprised 50.7% of the population in the District of Columbia and 19.8% in Virginia. In this sense, the percentage of black models in community magazines does not match the percentage of local black people.

Other facts about the models' appearance in the studied magazines include long hair, above-average height and an elegant body curve. Models with long hair are used more than models with short hair. Unnatural hair dye is hardly used. All models are slim and slender. The models usually have pleasant skin tone, either pale or tanned. Eye shadows and lip colors are used in some pictures to add color, but no dramatic makeup is used.

Another interesting thing is that the general stereotype of facial expression is

emotionless. Among 158 pictures I studied, nineteen pictures have smiling models and in only two pictures the models laugh. Even in those smiling pictures, the smile is usually restrained with no teeth showing. Most models keep cool expressions and do not often look at the camera. Although most pictures are shot from eye level, only half the models make eye contact. The body language also carries little emotion. Most models stand or sit, but in a way that looks calm, relaxed and confident.

When I shot the models in studio for *DC Life* magazine, I noticed that our art director did not tell the models to smile or look at the camera. Instead, she asked the models to relax and twist their bodies freely. It was like a solo dance of the model, and as photographer, I just kept clicking and the model never knew which moment I shot. However, when I received feedback from my editors, I found that clients preferred those pictures in which models had a little smile, neither too nervous to make the viewer uncomfortable nor too happy to distract the viewer's attention from the clothes.

### **What do the models wear?**

Since I came to the U.S. from China in 2010, I have had the impression that American ladies have two keywords in their style of dress: simple and comfortable. T-shirts, jeans, sneakers and sports shorts are the clothes that I see most frequently on the streets. However, in magazines they rarely appear, especially non-gender specific tees and sports apparels. Blouses, dresses, skirts and high-heel pumps are mainstream. Only nine models wear pants in the 158 studied pictures, five jeans or jean shorts and

one legging. Pure black and pure white seldom appear. Business casual shirt and jacket only appears once. Others all wear dresses or skirts and most of them are colorful. It appears that colorful dresses and skirts are symbols of feminine beauty.

Although the magazines emphasize feminine beauty by using typical female clothes, they do not achieve this goal by exposing many body parts of the models. To my surprise, most models do not wear clothes that expose cleavage or too much bare skin. Among the 158 pictures, the models expose their cleavage in only thirteen pictures. Exposure of shoulders, waist, back and laps is also very rare.

Why do the local magazines choose not to visually present sexy bodies? My understanding is that all the three magazines focus their readers' group in local communities, and they want to express the idea that "you do not have to be super hot or super rich (unlike in *Elle* or *Vogue*, brands such as Chanel and LV do not appear in these magazines at all), but you can still be as lovely as the girls you see in our magazine." In this sense, they create female figures that look beautiful but still familiar and affable, and they wear clothes that are acceptable by most people and can be worn in real life, not those that can only be seen on the runway.

One interesting difference between American and Chinese fashion magazine is the way they present the clothes. American fashion gives viewers presentations while Chinese fashion teaches lessons. In the three magazines I reviewed, most fashion pictures only put models and clothes in a scene and show them to the readers with few comments. However, in a Chinese fashion magazine, it is highly possible that the editor will be patient enough to introduce the clothes one by one, telling their readers

which top can go with which jeans, and why a gray scarf cannot match a green shirt.

### **How the photographers shoot the pictures:**

In my experience of viewing fashion pictures and shooting them myself, I find the way photographers shoot fashion pictures is usually quite traditional. They use no super wide or super long lens, no dramatic lighting or high contrast, and no special background except studio, common rooms and outdoor places.

Most fashion pictures are shot from eye level. It does not cause distortion and the models look calm and relaxed. But this is not a rule carved in stone. I shot several local fashion shows in Washington, and when shooting the runway the angle was often lower and the focal length bigger. In this way I found the model looked confident, even arrogant, and strong-minded. The longer lens helped reach the subject and remove the background. But when I shot advertisement pictures in the studio, my editor made me stay on a ladder and shoot from a higher angle because from a high perspective the model appeared cute and friendly. Also, I used a relatively smaller focal length so that I could stay closer to the models in order to better communicate with them.

Generally the lighting is balanced and flattering, without hard shadows or hot spots. Usually the models' faces are bright and lit evenly. Slight over-exposure is sometimes preferred in order to make the skin tone pleasant and the pores invisible. Super big apertures create a shallow depth of field and blur out everything in the background. This is same in Chinese fashion magazines, but the difference is that in

American fashion photography, shallow depth of field, evenly lit, slightly over-exposed pictures are merely one kind of the variety. In Chinese fashion photography, this style is the mainstream.

From my experience, Chinese fashion magazines are divided into two main parties: American / European style vs. Japanese / Korean style. “American / European” means graceful, elegant, impressive, confident and strong-minded; while “Japanese / Korean” means cute, lovely, soft and warm. Affected much more by Japanese / Korean fashion, Chinese fashion pictures have the tendency to use young, petite models who have very good skin tone and straight long black hair, applying flat light and making the pictures slightly over-exposed. They also use extremely shallow depth of field to “melt” the background like melting butter and cream. In Chinese language, we call these kinds of pictures “sugar water” because they are sweet and do not carry much meaning except a romantic, comfortable feeling. “Sugar water” pictures are not a mainstream in American fashion magazines, and I believe this to some degree reveals aesthetic differences between western and eastern values. American people may prefer the bold, confident, sexy beauty. Chinese people usually like those “neighbor’s daughter” girls who looks nice, kind, pure and clean.

In the three months I spent in Washington, I met and talked with many fashion workers. To my surprise, they were not always as “fashionable” in their daily lives as I thought before. The fashion photographer I met at a party looked just like a very common middle-aged man. I asked him “Phil, no offense, but you do not look like an

artist.” He laughed and asked me, “why should I look like one?” And my favorite street fashion photographer, Bill Cunningham, always wore a blue plain jacket. In a documentary film about him and his career, Bill Cunningham even wore the blue jacket to some high-brow dinner party and photograph stars and celebrities.

In China, fashion is a trend, and people follow what is popular in the public eye. In the U.S, fashion is more like an attitude, and people decide how to dress themselves based on individual preferences and personalities. I would not say which is right and which is wrong, especially as in the contemporary world “fashion” is a concept shared by all people without limitation of ideology.

Personally, I prefer to treat fashion as the way one treats one’s life. It reveals many things about you, such as what you cherish, what you treasure, what you pursue, what you like and dislike. By choosing what you wear today, you have decided how you will express yourself to everyone else. “You are what you wear”, don’t you think so?

## Query Letter

October 9, 2012

Qian Zou

Editor, *Lens Magazine*

Chaoyangmenwai Avenue, Fanli Plaza 19<sup>th</sup> Floor,

Beijing, China, 100020

Dear Mr. Zou,

As a modern photography magazine that concentrates on documentary picture stories, has *Lens* ever published a story about the fashion industry?

This summer I did a three-month photography internship at *DC Life* magazine in Washington, DC. Since I shot fashion pictures for the magazine, I had the opportunity to take a close look at the fashion photography industry. Based on my own experiences and observations, I wrote this article, and I think it would be interesting for *Lens* magazine to publish a story about fashion photography, including a discussion of stereotypes of women in fashion photographs and a comparison of American and Chinese fashion pictures.

The story is an analysis of fashion pictures in three local magazines in Washington DC. I studied 158 fashion pictures from the angles of both content and technique, and found some visual stereotypes in the fashion photography. As a subscriber and weibo-follower of *Lens* magazine, I know that *Lens* seeks in-depth, appealing, visually strong stories, and I tried to achieve these goals in my writing. I would be glad to provide samples of the analyzed pictures from the three magazines, as well as my own fashion pictures taken during the internship.

Thank you for considering my story. I look forward to further discussion with you.

Best,

Angie

# **Appendix**

## **Project Proposal**

### Introduction

Fashion issues have always been a hot topic in many public media, and fashion workers are a group of people who have been quite accustomed to cameras and spotlights. With all the attention that has been given to this area, is there still another perspective from which we can look at fashion issues? As a fashion fan who spends hours reading fashion magazines and subscribes to online media every month, I am curious about how the media define “fashion” and how they convey the definition to the public. In terms of the fashion magazines, as a photojournalism student, I pay a lot of attention to their pictorial representations of fashion issues, such as what pictures they use for specific topics, what photographic styles do they apply in their magazines, and what do the models they believe to be beautiful look like. Since most of the fashion media market is to young females, how do the magazines represent women in the fashion area, and how do they educate their young female readers about beauty?

I think these questions are worth researching because they may reveal the relationship between the modern media and the fashion industry, which is an industry relying so much on visual presentation. The word “fashion” is not as simple as perfect Barbie doll faces, or weird clothes that are too eye-catching to wear any place other

than the shining stages of New York fashion week. People's understanding of fashion comes from the information media give them, and this is a complex process in which the media have great control. This project will explore the role that traditional media play in people's cognitive process of fashion, in a visual perspective.

Both my professional project and my research project are based on two years' professional training as a photojournalist in the Missouri School of Journalism. The photojournalism classes have taught me how to do a photo story focusing on a specific group of people. In several professional classes, such as Fundamentals of Photojournalism, Advanced Techniques in Photojournalism, and Picture Story and Photographic Essay, I learned how to find a story idea, what to include as content, what techniques can be used, and how to photograph picture stories myself. Those experiences have prepared me for my own project in the summer.

This project, if done well, will be the first step of my future career as a professional photographer. I plan to become a magazine photographer in the U.S after graduation, and I hope after a few years I will get enriched professional knowledge that will enable me to go further in magazine photography. Eventually I want to become a photo editor or art director in a fashion or lifestyle magazine. This is why I plan to shoot a documentary on the fashion industry, which is often a magazine topic, and why I plan to do a study on photo selection, which is usually the job of photo editor. By doing this project, I expect to gain a better understanding of magazine photography and the work done by magazine photographers and photo editors, which I believe will be greatly helpful in my future career.

## Professional Skills Component

I will participate in the Washington DC program and will be working at DC Life magazine as a staff photographer. It begins on May 14<sup>th</sup> and ends on August 31<sup>st</sup>, during which period I will be working a minimum of 30 hours per week. The executive editor of DC Life magazine, Gigi Smith, will be my supervisor and in charge of arranging my assignments and supervising my behavior at work. She will write an evaluation of my work at the end of the project.

As a staff photographer in the magazine, I will shoot assignments that the magazine gives me, which will be mostly art, music, entertainment, fashion and lifestyle events in communities in Washington DC. At other times, when no task is assigned to me, I will mostly look for features and photograph what I think newsworthy for the magazine, as well as working on my own project.

The project I propose is an essay on everyday fashion in Washington DC. The project itself is not in the form of fashion photography; instead, it will be in the form of street photography to record how people dress in their daily life. Inspired by the documentary “Bill Cunningham’s New York,” which was done by street photographer Bill Cunningham in 2010, I plan to do my project similarly and make it a record of Washington DC street fashion. Depending on where they live and work, in what activities they are participating, and what personalities and characteristics they have, people have different interpretations of fashion. Their interpretations have direct impact on the ways they dress. This is the focus of my project. The project will

contain 20 to 30 still photographs, mainly street shots, juxtaposed by pictures of window displays, advertisements, and possibly fashion shows in DC.

I work four days per week at DC Life magazine, which will allow much time to work on my project. I plan to go to different communities around Washington DC to shoot people of different genders, ages, and occupations. Locations of shooting may include DC streets, metro and train stations, parks and cafes. I may shoot in Capital Hill, Georgetown and other areas in DC. There will be a topic for each day / week I go out and shoot, just for a few examples: Monday I may shoot the theme of “black” which means I look for people wearing fashionable black clothes, Tuesday “red”, Wednesday “leopard print”, rainy day “colorful rain boot”, sunny day “hats” or “sunglasses”, hot day “bare shoulder”, etc.

I will arrive in Washington on May 12 and begin working on May 14. I will spend approximately 9 to 10 weeks taking pictures and 2 to 3 weeks editing. During this period I will write weekly field notes and send them to my committee. By August 20 I will have come back to Columbia with a draft version of the project. Hopefully I will have the project completed and have an oral defense in September.

## Analysis Component

I will be doing the professional analysis option. My research question is: How do Washington DC fashion magazines visually define female beauty?

The study is based on three Washington magazines' fashion sections: *DC life*, *Washingtonian* and *Washington Life*. All three magazines have fashion in each issue, and the contents contain many pictures. These pictures will be studied through qualitative content analysis method in order to find common stereotypes of fashion pictures in magazines. The results will be compared with previous studies to prove their conclusions.

## Theory Framework

The study is based on framing theory.

Goffman founded the framing theory by coming up with the idea that interpretive designs constitute central elements of cultural belief systems, and he called these interpretive designs “frames” that we use in our day-to-day life to make sense of the world (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009, p407). In their book, Littlejohn and Foss explained that traditionally, the meaning of the world is perceived by individuals based on their beliefs, experiences and knowledge; contemporarily, mass media communication creates powerful frames of perception that challenges and renegotiates individual interpretation (2009, p408).

According to Tewksbury and Scheufele, news frames serve as structures according to which individuals organize information and build their own interpretation; and frames can “exert a relatively substantial influence on citizens’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors” (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2009, p17); a frame becomes influential because “it resonates with popular culture or a series of events, fit with media routines or practices, and / or is heavily sponsored by elites” (Scheufele and Nisbet, 2007, p257).

Entman (1993, p52) stated that to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation for the item described”. Tewksbury and Scheufele

explained this statement as a powerful frame should encourage audience to make associative connections between an issue and particular considerations relevant to its definition, causes, implications and treatment (2009, p24).

Entman (1993, p54) also stated that media framing involves the selection and salience given to various pieces of information, allowing certain attributes to be highlighted and others to be excluded in a communication context; by selecting certain perspective and increasing the salience given to it, media manage to guide audiences' opinions and impressions; by omitting certain issues and decreasing given salience, on the contrast, audiences' attention will be diverted or they will even remove some pieces of information from memory.

Tewksbury and Scheufele also listed factors in their book that determine how journalists frame a certain issue, including larger social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, external pressures from interest groups and other policy makers, professional routines, and ideological or political orientations of journalists (2009, p23).

In the visual framing field, Messaris and Abraham argued in their book that because of three distinctive properties of visual images – their analogical quality, their indexicality, and their lack of an explicit propositional syntax, visual framing is less obtrusive than verbal framing; they believed visual framing may convey meanings that would be more controversial or might meet with greater audience resistance if they were conveyed through words (2003, p215). Borah explained these three qualities in her research individually. She explained the analogical quality refers to

the fact that associations between images and their meanings are based on similarity, or analogy. Indexicality means differentiating photographs from other images. The lack of an explicit prepositional syntax refers to the fact that visual images do not have a set of conventions for making propositions such as cause-effect relationships (Borah, 2009, p50).

Schwalbe described visual framing as “a continuous winnowing process. It begins with the choice of events to cover, followed by the selection of what pictures to take, how to take them (angle, perspective, assumptions and biases, cropping, and so forth), and which ones to submit” (Schwalbe, 2006). According to him, the process of visual framing does not stop at the ideological level, but continues in the newsroom with decisions about which images to publish, what size to make them, and where to position them on the page.

## Literature Review

Few studies have been conducted specifically on photographs in fashion magazines. However some previous research have deal with fashion magazine's photographic preferences, most of which have a concern with the magazines' representation of female and female beauty.

Moeran's research discovered that fashion magazines were both cultural products and commodities. Magazine production was characterized by a 'multiple audience' property, which includes readers, advertisers and the fashion world itself; this determined that fashion magazine's photographic choices were reflections of readers' needs and preferences, advertisers' pressure, and the aesthetic standards given by the fashion world as well (Moeran, 2006, p725).

A previous study shows many of fashion magazines' pictures were of attractive females, and audiences' cognition and attitude towards attractive female figures in magazines were usually positive (Kamins, 1990, p4-13). Physical attractiveness of a communicator determines the effectiveness of persuasive communication, and influences marketing outcome as well, so it has always been a significant issue for fashion media to build physically attractive female images in order to achieve better persuasion effect and financial interest as well (Patzer, 2006).

A study by Gayatri mentioned that sexual visual contents appeared more often in men's and women's magazines than general magazines; women were usually portrayed in a more sexually explicit manner, and female models were usually

sexually attractive and dressed more sexually than in general magazines (Gayatri, 2008, p48-49). A study by Strautman also suggested that when women appeared in magazine covers, they were portrayed as “flawless skin, endless legs, C cups, seductive stares, raunchy subtitles, and revealing clothing” (2009, p3) in order to present sex appeal at its greatest. Gizycki also mentioned in her research that more suggestive and provocative portrayals of female in magazines were usually sex-related and likely to contain nudity and be body revealing (2009, p11). She argued that it was a stereotypical media frame that women were portrayed as decorative / sex object roles.

In a study on *Esquire* magazine, Sheehy studied a regular feature of the magazine called “Women We Love” from 1987 to 2006, in which the magazine gave portrayal of ideal women of the magazine’s choice. The study found that the magazine’s framing of ideal women changed over time under influences of political environment as external and magazine editorship as internal. According to the author, *Esquire* editorial staff sought to “constitute consumption as a new arena for masculine privilege by launching in text and image what amounted to an oppositional meta-commentary on female identity” (Sheehy, 2007, p3). The study found that images of females were often depicted with a focus on their sexuality and that gender stereotype became a definition of female beauty. As time went on, the images of featured women tended to be more traditional, while the occupational range of featured women became less diverse and more focused on the entertainment category,

which was more likely for female to use the female beauty definition to present self values.

Studies also have shown that as more and more women participate in the media industry, female depiction in public media has changed to a large degree, which also reflects a change of feministic expectations in society (Lin, 2008, p409). The author spent months with Taiwan fashion magazine's photographers and photo editors to study what kind of pictures they took and published. She found a common rule of Taiwan fashion magazine's photography: There was too much attention paid to female nudity and physically attractive celebrities, which might create a misleading interpretation of women as sex objects in the public. However, according to other research conducted also in Taiwan by Chen, in contemporary context, as more women with higher educational backgrounds joined the media and fashion industry, the expectation of female beauty changed to become an image that not only possessed feministic attraction but was able to present some masculine qualities such as tough-minded, independent, self-controlled and confident in life and career (Chen, 2008).

A study by Sarah Wood focused on the relationship between female portrayal and fitness and diet in fashion magazines. She used framing theory basis and content analysis to find out how dieting and fitness were framed in teen and women magazines, and she found that by using pretty, thin, airbrushed models, those magazines visually presented ideal female images and thus shaped people's interpretation on thinness, healthiness and beauty. Those thin models usually applied

poses that emphasized their good shape, as well as body languages that showed confidence (Wood, 2006, p53-56). In another study of women's body language and self-perception, the author also did a content analysis study on women magazines' appearance frames (the authors defined "appearance frames" as "do something in order to look better) versus health frames (the authors defined "health frames" as "do something in order to feel better), and suggested that appearance frames were just as prevalent as health frames even in health section in those magazines (Aubrey, 2010, p60).

Based on Goffman's framing theory foundation, Kang (1997) studied seventeen symbols of women's body languages that appeared in magazine pictures, including height relationship, using fingers and hands to cradle or caress objects, self-touching, serving other people, instructing role of male, conducting superior role, lowering oneself physically, bashful knee bend, body cant or head cant, lying or sitting on bed or floor, expansive smile, hand covering mouth or face, head or eye gaze aversion, withdrawal gaze from scene at large, maintaining telephone conversation, body-revealing clothes or nudity, independence and self-assertiveness. The study showed that through photographs that stereotyped posing of female pictures in magazines, female depiction in fashion media was not necessarily how they actually behave, but how we think women behave (Kang, 1997). Furthermore, this depiction served the social purpose of convincing us that this is how women are, or want to be, or should be. According to Kang's study, using women was a sexist tone in fashion magazines that had profound social implications; if the media did mold expectations,

opinions, and attitudes, then the audience might accept the way that females were visually described as reality, and believed they themselves should be like that. In this sense, the author argued that the portrayal of female in fashion magazines actually reflects contemporary women's own perception of themselves.

## Methodology

The research method used in this project will be qualitative content analysis.

Content analysis is defined as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matters) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p18); this method can be used to deal with research questions that are answerable by examinations of a body of text or other matters (2004, p32). In his book, Krippendorff also points out that the advantages of content analysis are providing new insights based on accessible materials in a certain context, increasing a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, and informing practical actions (2004, p19).

Berger wrote in his book that media content analysis is “a means of trying to learn something about people by examining what they write, produce on television, or make movies about” (1998, p23). He believed that content analysis could reveal media workers' behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes as they decided what to publish (1998, p23).

Mayring (2000) listed four advantages of content analysis: fitting the material into a model of communication; following rules of analysis step by step, putting different aspects into categories in the center of analysis, and comparing results based on criteria of reliability and validity.

In Macnamara's research, he came up with three steps of sampling for media content analysis: selecting media forms, selecting issues or dates (the period), and sampling relevant content from within those media (2011, p13). The content analysis research should meet the following standards: objectivity / intersubjectivity, intercoder reliability, validity, generalizability and replicability (Macnamara, 2011, p8-13). He also argued that using qualitative research methods "is required to fully understand the potential meanings (manifest and latent) for audiences and likely effects of texts" (2011, p14).

Macnamara also pointed out in his paper that images such as photographs and icons are key signs in media texts (2011, p16). He used an example that a photograph of a man holding a baby suggests fatherhood, family commitment, gentleness and caring. It may contain several other signs, such as the man cradling the baby's head in his hand and/or gazing at the baby with a kind and caring expression (signifying love and protection), or holding the baby with outstretched arms away from his body and peering quizzically at the infant (signifying confusion and aversion).

Many scholars in the photojournalism field have used content analysis method in their research. In Jenkins' study of tourist photojournalism, the author used various measurements to analyze photographs of tourists' destinations, and came up with the

result that photographs of destinations would influence a tourist's travel decision-making, cognition and behavior at a destination, as well as satisfaction levels and recollection of the experience (Jenkins, 1999). In another study of photographic presentation of public journalism, the authors analyzed photographs in American newspapers during the 2000 election season; by observing both contents and techniques of the campaign photos, they found that visual elements were important and widely used for public journalism to convey issues and analysis (Coleman and Wasike, 2004). There is also a study that used content analysis on lifestyle journalism; the authors did both quantitative and qualitative content analysis to study pictures in lifestyle, cultural and consumer reporting. By counting the numbers of pictures in each topic and analyzing those pictures' subjects, contents and styles, the authors found that the boundary between lifestyle, cultural and consumer journalism had blurred and the styles of photographs used in these topics were both distinct and similar to each other (Kristensen and Frome, 2012).

In my study, I will use content analysis to study three Washington city magazines' fashion pictures. I will select four print copies of each magazine's 2011 issues, one from each season of the year. By "fashion pictures" I point to only pictures that have human models, those pictures of clothing without a human are not in consideration.

In the studying process, I will look for the following things in two aspects: contents and techniques.

Contents:

Do the pictures include full body shots or only faces (or possibly show only other

parts such as hands and feet)?

Are the models fully clothed or half naked? Is there cleavage or other body parts revealing?

Do the models smile, or not, or they have other facial expressions?

What are popular body poses and gestures in those pictures?

Do the models directly gaze into the camera or look somewhere else?

Techniques:

Technical factors such as lens choices, possible focal length and shooting distance, physical angles of photographer, and depth of field;

Possible light sources, quality of lighting, high key or low key;

The overall dominant hue of pictures, warm or cool tone;

Backgrounds of pictures: are the models put in a realistic environment, or there is a faked background created by photo manipulation technique, or only white or black background color.

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