Infused with the spirit of May Fourth critique of the enfeebled Chinese body politic of the past, a young Mao Zedong joined the chorus of intellectuals calling for renewed personal and national strength. In his 1917 essay “A Study of Physical Education,” Mao stated, “There is a saying: ‘Civilize the mind and make savage the body.’ This is an apt saying. In order to civilize the mind, one must first make savage the body. If the body is made savage, then the civilized mind will follow.” He elaborated on these views on the interconnectedness of mind and body as he argued against the notion that persons with strong minds had weak bodies and those with robust bodies had deficient mental capacities. According to Mao, what was needed for perfection of body and mind was physical transformation that could elicit reconstitution of the mind. This dialectical relationship between body and mind advocated by Mao, albeit in pre-Marxian language, foreshadowed practices of body and education central
to the political culture of the People’s Republic of China in the 1950s and 1960s.

Beyond body and mind, Mao peppered his commentary concerning why students of his generation disliked physical education with references to clothing. He wrote, “Our country has always stressed literary accomplishment. People blush to wear short clothes.” Mao explained students’ reluctance to engage in physical activity in terms of sartorial and societal expectations. “Flowing garments, a slow gait, a grave, calm gaze—these constitute a fine deportment, respected by society. Why should one suddenly extend an arm or expose a leg, stretch and bend down?” He continued by advising May Fourth readers on the proper relationship between clothing, body, and exercise: “The best way is to exercise twice a day—on getting up and before going to bed—in the nude; the next best way is to wear light clothes. Too much clothing impedes movement.” Mao’s comments configured clothing, mind, and body as a socially embedded complex central to one’s identity and one’s ability to contribute to the new society. Mao argued that change in consciousness could not occur unless accompanied by an understanding of the minimally clothed savage body as fundamental to vitality, civilization, and modernity. For Mao, the corporeal and cerebral occupied distinct yet mutually constituted spheres, with one offering strength and the other refinement in a continuous process of redefinition.

It seems but a small leap from these early comments by Mao to the images of socialist realist art dominant in 1950s and 1960s China. In poster art of the Maoist period, male and female bodies acquired biologically unrealistic proportions as specific body parts symbolized the strength of workers and peasants united. Forearms and hands commandeered canvases as they represented metonymically the power of “the people” in the new socialist state. The idealized figures of the People’s Republic followed Mao’s earlier advice: socialist citizens did not blush at wearing short clothes, nor did they respect a restrained gate. Their clothing encouraged and showcased bold movement.

These socialist citizens embodied peasant and proletarian resistance to domestic and international hegemonies in political, economic, social, cultural, and sartorial realms. Despite populist and egalitarian ideals, the iconography and cultural artifacts of Mao’s China displayed in subtle manner a differentiated proletariat. A discourse of proletarian dress and body emerged
out of extensive media images and texts concerned outwardly with the work practices and political values exemplified by model workers. These materials publicized vestments and modes of dress deemed conducive to socialist China. In Mao’s China, dress and body discourses constituted fundamental components of a political-aesthetic ideal in which proletarian subjectivity became aestheticized, and identificatory signifiers were internalized, desired, and displayed.6

As in all mass media systems, a complex relationship existed between images, internalization of messages, political practices, state policies, and appropriation of everyday culture. The purpose of this article is not to explain the mechanics of this interaction but to explore the multilayered meanings of white working clothes as they passed through the media prism. I am interested in the complex of representations, interpretative arenas, and practices surrounding the wearing of white working clothes, the bodily coverage afforded by these clothes, and the working body itself.7 A focus on white shirts, aprons, sleeve covers, caps, and laboratory coats highlights the ways in which body and clothing accrued meaning to each other within intertwined sociopolitical and aesthetic frameworks.8 Moreover, it shifts our gaze from the green and blue clothing conventionally associated with Maoist China. Analyses of the Mao suit and variously colored clothes also reveal problematic relations of body, gender, work, and hidden stratification in Mao’s China, but white working garments were most directly embedded in the difficult relationship between proletarianization and modernization, and its attendant body-dress complexes.

Consideration of white shirts, jackets, and accessories worn by workers of different occupations draws attention to social practices of the body and clothing in a national narrative preoccupied with consolidating a proletarian identity. At the same time, white clothes signified discontinuity with the past through themes of professionalization, modernization, and technical expertise that effectively divided the proletariat according to the type of work performed. If we approach body and clothing as a symbolic system, “a prismatic construct,”9 then the simultaneous mobilization of potentially contradictory clothing practices and imagery surrounding proletarian whites can be understood as integral to a Maoist aesthetic. The existence of a series of tensions
demonstrates both the desire for and limitations on alternative visions of subjectivity within a modernizing proletarian nation.

In this article I explore the tension between the muscular exposed forearms and calves of peasants and workers and the white-shirted and -smocked bodies of the skilled worker or technician. This focus reveals several other competing lines constitutive of the prismatic construct of the working body-dress complex: (1) transformation of the entire populace into workers versus privileging of particular forms and spaces of modern hygiene and rationality; (2) security and stability of male presence in the workplace versus processes of change necessary for women’s entry into the same workplaces; (3) expression of childhood/youth in the next generation versus aspirations to emulate the adult proletarian bodies; and (4) diversity of minority bodies versus their absorption into the Han national body via occupational norms and modernization. In each instance, the paired processes shaping the body-dress complex assume a dialectical, not antagonistic, relationship. Moreover, the various lines intersect, reinforce, and challenge one another.

For workers who wore white daily, the form, care, and relationship to the body of their dress reflected sartorial conventions deemed appropriate to their respective occupations. The style and manner in which the white garments were worn uncovered different parts of the body so as to produce not only a fragmented individual body but also a fragmented national body politic. The fractured national body reflected the uneasy but central relationship in Maoist political aesthetics between proletarian politics and modernization goals. Despite the Central Committee’s oral rhetoric, which called for unity between models, People’s Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers, and “all workers, peasants and other sections of the people,” visual vestimentary rhetoric surrounding proletarian whites emphasized fault lines between segments of the people. Analysis of these fault lines reveals the contradictions inherent in Maoist ideals that simultaneously produced alternative visions while locating alternatives within hierarchical structures.

Creating and Clothing the Proletarian Body

Post-1949 textual and visual rhetoric explicitly distinguished peasant and proletarian bodies of Maoist China from laboring bodies of the past. As
ordinary people became models of the new China, they did so as a complex
of body-dress-mind that embodied China’s proletarian future. Redefinition
of the body as a starting point for reform comprised a central theme in stories
of the model worker genre, particularly for women who moved into new
areas of work. In the domain of the peasants as well as the male proletariat,
where continuity of dress across 1949 was most evident, materials empha-
sized changes in the body wearing the clothes. Forms of dress indistin-
guishable from pre-1949 work clothing thereby assumed different appearance
and meaning during the Maoist period as a result of the re-formed physical
body under the clothes and the type of work being done by the wearer.
This ensured that sartorial continuity was not confused with sociopolitical
continuity.

Slogans that highlighted forging and tempering the body frequently ap-
peared. People were encouraged to “build up a good physique to defend
the country” (duanlian shenti baowei zuguo), “build a good physique for so-
cialism” (weile shehui zhuyi jiji duanlian shenti), and “temper oneself through
manual labor” (laodong duanlian). The verb choice duanlian (to temper
do) reinforced the desirability of an “iron body.” The accompanying
visual rhetoric featured arms lunging forward from shirtsleeves and can-
vases in a manner that suggested both were too small for the new form of
China. Workers rolled up the sleeves of their white shirts to bare powerful
arms, while peasants pushed trousers above the knee to exhibit well-formed
calves. Workers’ clothing, with its casual and pragmatic form, enthusi-
stically showcased the newly released vigor of the liberated body at work.
White shirts worn beneath overalls appeared to be accommodating the
expansive proletarian body; body and clothes together participated in the
rhythms of manual labor. Clothes drew attention to muscular forms and, in
celebratory fashion, created a spectacle of distinct parts.

Clothing depended on climate and location but generally included printed
cotton top or padded jacket worn with darker trousers for females and white
button-down shirt with trousers or overalls for male workers. Newspaper
photographs that more closely captured the everyday clothing of workers
echoed these stylized representations. Women’s sleeves often extended to just
below the elbow, while men’s were rolled to the elbow. Similarly, women’s
pants often stopped above the ankle, while men pushed theirs to the knee.
At one level, we could conclude that physical labor made it practical to push up shirtsleeves and pant legs for ease of movement and maximum comfort. Yet such an analysis misses how mode of dress forged a newly authorized body-dress complex that reinforced the mutual articulation of rebuilding the body and creating a socialist nation.\textsuperscript{16}

In a 1952 article about China’s first female train dispatcher, Sun Xiaoju, the author remarked, “From [Sun’s] stalwart body [and] robust arms, I saw the form of new China’s women.”\textsuperscript{17} The author recounted that initially Sun’s body was not strong enough to undertake the work of transferring engines
between trains. In order to transform her female body into a proletarian one, she strengthened it through work and in confrontation with natural forces.\(^\text{18}\) Sun faced temperatures of minus twenty degrees Celsius. Despite frostbite, she refused to let physical pain affect her. The overt message of perseverance and individual resolve glorified voluntarism in socialist nation building.\(^\text{19}\) However, an equally important message also emerged: socialism demanded reshaped bodies.\(^\text{20}\)

Propaganda materials featuring women who were officially recognized as the first to perform traditionally male occupations regularly discussed transformations of the body into hardened work machines.\(^\text{21}\) However, few if any references were made to the clothing worn or the appearance of the body as anything more than fragmented parts of hardened hands, feet, and arms. Fragmentation in this context suggested empowerment rather than disintegration or weakness.\(^\text{22}\) Visual and print media jubilantly proclaimed the progressive nature of the fragmented body as its parts displayed a robustness that could not be contained within the physical parameters of clothing or artwork. Moreover, as female bodies entered male workplaces, the highlighting of arms and legs facilitated women’s inclusion. Because the emphasis was on body parts common to men and women, fragmentation presumably empowered women. But this empowerment, while challenging strict gendered delineation of occupational space, was based on a universalization of desexualized body parts and an implicit masculine ideal.\(^\text{23}\) These troubling gender dynamics also resonated with historical precedence in which metonymic deployment of body and dress marked the progressive tradition. Since the early twentieth century, liberated body parts represented new sociopolitical and gendered visions of China, but these visions tended to be imagined on the bodies of women by male intellectuals or masculinized political parties.\(^\text{24}\)

What distinguished the fragmented empowered body of the post-1949 period from earlier deployments was the insistence that both male and female bodies must be liberated, even as the idealized form implicitly invoked male body parts.

A wiry, resilient body formed through forced labor imposed by feudal or capitalist oppressors became a vibrant body tempered through work undertaken as a result of membership in the new China. Artistic representations of the healthy, liberated body illustrated this transformation by dramatically
increasing the physical size of the body. In lived experience such a dramatic increase was not necessarily the norm as food shortages and economic recovery after eighteen years of war marked everyday life. Thus, in addition to size, a happy radiant countenance completed the strong working body that wore the clothes of socialist China and represented the benefits of liberation to citizens. This combination of facial and physical change in representations of China’s workers became the first step in creating proletarian body-dress complexes that reflected the vision of Maoist China. Propaganda promoted the new body as the end result of a triumphalist narrative in which the worker and peasant united unproblematically as leaders of China.

**Locating Working Bodies on Socialist Soil**

Unity and leadership of peasant and worker could not be easily sustained within the framework of the dual goals of modernization and proletarianization, however. The ways in which fragmented body parts came together as idealized peasants and workers created various dress-body prisms with different locations in the national narrative. On a general level, manual workers appeared in clothing that highlighted muscular arms and legs, while skilled workers donned clothing that contained orderly, disciplined bodies. A developmental trajectory linked these together. The robust arms and hardened appendages of the model women workers and their male counterparts described above were presented as the first step in transforming oppressed individuals into socialist citizens. This body placed old clothes on new soil as the body-dress complex explicitly exhibited the will for reform unleashed by socialist liberation. Further development of a socialist mind to accompany the “red body” subsequently created opportunities for the new body-dress complex to enter work spaces where the body did not require physical display.

The distinction between the displayed body of the peasantry and proletariat and that of the covered body of technocratic elites draws attention to the tension between manual and mental labor. Mao exalted the former while recognizing (but remaining suspicious of) the latter. This tension is particularly evident in white working clothes because the accompanying body-dress
Figure 2 “Zhongguo gongchandang sanshi nian” [Thirty years of the CCP], Zhongguo Qingnian bao, 26 June 1951
complexes represented specific occupations and gendered norms of appearance: male peasants and factory workers; female or male educated youth, scientists, and medical practitioners. Here mental labor was differentiated from manual labor and the proletariat from the peasantry, while gendered representations of each category also contributed to the heterogeneous body-dress complexes in circulation. In Chinese Communist Party (CCP) iconography, the male worker dressed in white shirt under blue overalls stood at the center of the peasant-worker-soldier triumvirate, with female peasant and male soldier on either side. These gendered representations coexisted with the Maoist insistence on the revolutionary potential of the peasants alongside assertions of the proletariat as the revolutionary class, as per orthodox Marxism. In this context, the white shirt, as standard dress for the model proletarian, acquired cultural capital via gendered and occupational difference. It signified a privileged body vis-à-vis the peasant body.

An association of the white shirt with the male proletariat did not preclude its appearance in agricultural settings. The significance lies in how white shirts when located in the fields distanced the wearer from the peasantry. Here the connotations of the white shirt moved beyond that of privileging the proletariat over the peasantry. It also drew on conventions of dress associated with education. In cases where photographs depicted women wearing white shirts to labor in the fields, the women tended to be educated youth who opted to serve the nation by going to the countryside. In the photograph accompanying a 1960 article recognizing five young women for their “red and expert” work at Yunshan, each wore a short-sleeved, white, button-down shirt. The women’s clothing contrasted with the printed top of the young female peasant whose photograph shared the page. The combination of photographs illustrated an authority attached to white shirts even as they appeared in the countryside on bodies engaged in agricultural work.

The white shirt, when worn by educated youth, suggested an urbane dress-body complex. It was capable of engaging in manual labor but brought to this work external knowledge that offered improved efficiency. The short-sleeved white shirt of educated youth displayed the competency of the working body, but it did not showcase muscular arms, like the pushed-up sleeves of the ideal male peasant or worker. When women wore short-sleeved white shirts that displayed their forearms, a fashioned body emerged rather than
one whose movement and strength demanded modification of the clothes. Short-sleeved shirts failed to create the same effect of “smallness” as did long-sleeved shirts with pushed-up sleeves. Photographs and texts centered around educated youth thus created a more controlled relationship between body, labor, and clothing. A 1958 photograph of two university youth engaged in manual labor in conjunction with the Great Leap Forward illustrates how this sartorial convention was adapted to the rural context.29 The young woman, covered in mud, combined the peasant practice of rolled-up pant legs with the white short-sleeved shirt characteristic of educated youth.30 As opposed to peasant and proletarian models who altered their dress as their bodies and minds allowed them to occupy new subject positions within the Chinese nation, educated youth adapted their clothing for work in the fields, but it was not transcended by peasant attire. Consequently, visual and print media promoted the white shirt as the clothing of advanced red and expert elements of society, clothing that when hybridized in this manner assumed value.

The dual emphasis in Maoist politics and aesthetics on physical strength and knowledge reflected a socialist path of development that sought to narrow the “three gaps” (between city and countryside, mental and manual labor, and peasant and worker). At the same time, however, the shift in the dress-body complex away from display of the body as physical form reflects a discourse of civilization and modernity in which the “savage body” ideally is inseparable from the trained mind, rendering the body more than a working machine. In agricultural work, this ideal required that nonpeasant dress-body complexes appear in the fields. When we concentrate on white working clothes and the attendant dress-body complexes, the appearance of these alternative bodies participated in a developmental trajectory that distinguished women with robust arms and muscled legs from female bodies in short-sleeved white shirts. The former embodied peasant power, while the latter modeled Maoist modernization.

Cover photographs of Xin Zhongguo Funü [New Chinese women] reinforced this distinction. Women wearing white to work in the fields lacked the organic ties to the soil of women dressed in characteristic patterned tops. In 1954, volume 2 featured a young educated youth wearing a pair of trousers with a white shirt under a long-sleeved cardigan that extended
to her hands. Holding a pen and paper, she squatted to examine cotton crops. The photograph deployed signifiers of literacy and expertise while the woman physically was positioned above the crop. In the same year, volume 7 showed on the back cover a photograph of a young peasant woman encircled by vines with arms raised for the task of filling her large woven basket. She wore a straw hat and printed cotton top with toggled closures. The collar and cuffs of a white shirt emerged from under the printed top.
But unlike that of the educated youth, the peasant’s collar sat unevenly and slightly askew. Moreover, the cuffs were turned back over the sleeves of the printed top, and both were pushed up to reveal the mid-forearm. These photographs augmented discourses of body and dress that positioned individuals differently depending upon how the clothing sat on the body, even in similar settings.

Moving Away from Corporeality: Hygiene and Proletarianization

While educated youth tempered their white-shirted bodies in the countryside, the CCP encouraged others to participate in redefinition of work and work spaces that entailed a move away from the corporeality of the dress-body complex. The importance of new clothing in these instances appears most prominently in practices associated with redefining women’s work. In textile work, housekeeping, and child rearing, the CCP presented communal work environments including factories and neighborhood and village associations as progressive stages of development. A 1952 full-page composite of photographs and posters published in 

Zhongguo Qingnian bao

[China’s youth] celebrated the accomplishments of three years of political reform work. One photograph showed women in a courtyard vigorously scrubbing furniture. The caption distinguished communal cleaning from pre-liberation work by presenting it as a patriotic effort. The women participated in the nationwide movement to defeat bacteriological warfare ostensibly perpetrated by the American imperialists. An accompanying photograph also linked the new society to sanitary conditions, communal property, and the health of the masses and nation. In each of these photographs, the women’s clothing reflected two important themes: (1) an emphasis on scientifically informed cleanliness portrayed by white caps and arm covers worn by all the women in the courtyard, and (2) an emerging public worker identity promoted by uniformity in attire that contrasted women’s domestic roles.

The introduction of “modern” socialist concerns and identities for women entailed reconstitution of the relationship between body and dress. In contrast to the partially exposed arms of peasant women, arm covers and white caps concealed rather than revealed the body. The accessories presumably protected the wearer from bacteriological invasion and prevented her from
becoming an inadvertent accomplice in the spread of invisible evils. In the courtyard as workplace, bare arms and loose hair did not express vitality, youth, and productivity; rather, exposed skin rendered the nation and individual vulnerable to attack. The arms of patriotic women approximated those of scientific and medical professionals instead of peasants, proletariat, and sent-down youth. Despite the arduous work, shirtsleeves extended to the wrist under a second layer of white cloth. Like the bared arms of peasants and male proletariat, this drew attention to arms strenuously engaged in labor. The physicality of the dress-body complex, however, disappeared with production of an image of public health and sterile work conditions.

The CCP considered higher health standards a goal of socialist modernization, integrating hygiene into discourses informing the dress and body of urban women workers. Hygiene, however, was not the only realm in which arm covers and caps had meaning. Written texts explained that the women had taken all the furniture out of their homes for cleaning. Rather than engaging in housework as individuals, these women moved furniture into the courtyard, donned specific white clothing, and participated in a national campaign. The caps and arm covers, in this setting, acted as uniforms signifying the transformation of the courtyard into a recognized arena of work and of the women within the courtyard into workers. In particular, the white caps approximated the work attire common to female factory workers in light industry. Through specific accessories, the women thus acquired the identity of workers and transformed the ambiguous space of the courtyard into that of a work unit with political relevance.

**Clothing, Gender, and the Rationalization of Work**

The factory floor was not an ambiguous work space, but it, too, required reconfiguration of women’s clothing in conjunction with the modern rationality of the space. Unlike the proletarian body associated with heavy industry that dressed to stress the corporeal nature of travail, women working in light industry and textiles reflected different ideals. The clothing worn by women highlighted the ideal of women as workers who benefited from opportunities for training and education as well as rationalization of the workplace. In the case of the stocking section of a state-run knitting...
factory, ordinary female workers photographed in 1956 wore three supplemental garments when at work: white cap, arm covers, and apron. Yet even as the move away from corporeality suggested the insertion of women into processes of modernization, rationalization, and professionalization, a concomitant feminization of the covered body occurred. As members of the proletariat, these women stood alongside male factory workers dressed in white shirt and overalls. A gendered differentiation of the proletariat emerged and complicated the developmental trajectory that linked decreased physicality to progress and privilege. Unlike the women who entered heavy industry and transformed their bodies to meet masculine norms, women in light industry appeared as distinct body-dress complexes.

In socialist iconography, the body-dress complex of the male proletariat occupied a secure location. For a woman, however, shifting identities required that dress and body signify the space and activities in which she engaged. The inside cover of the October 1954 edition of Xin Zhongguo Funü provides compelling pictorial evidence of the role of clothing and gender as signifiers of inclusion in the modern rationalized workplace. A series of pictures depicted workers employed at the new state-owned number one model textile factory in Beijing. The top photograph showed hundreds of young people, the large majority of whom were women, cheerfully streaming into the factory. Most of the women wore light-colored or patterned short-sleeved, button-down shirts with dark trousers. The captions for the following two photographs featuring female workers highlighted the advanced weaving machines that made “prettier” fabrics for the people. In the photographs taken inside the factory, the women wore white aprons over their clothes. Some also wore white caps ensuring that long hair did not dangle over the machines. The pictures created the illusion of an orderly workplace. One photograph captured a training session, while the other provided an overview of the factory floor with machines stretching back to the wall in straight lines under the high ceilings of a well-lit and clearly regulated space. The woman at the forefront of the picture displayed concentration as she stood behind the machine in a white apron over a short-sleeved, patterned button shirt. Her slender bare arms guided the machine with measured action. The young woman delivering spools to the machines wore similar
clothes, and her body movements appeared equally disciplined and confident. The clothing and deportment of the women at work contrasted sharply with their appearance in the final photograph taken after completion of the “intense” workday. Five young women gathered to relax. One played the accordion, and the others casually sang along. They had replaced white cap and arm covers with knee-length dark skirts, checkered jackets, or cotton buttoned shirts and dark trousers. Those with long hair allowed their plaits to fall freely down their backs.

The summary text presented this new factory as exemplary of China’s modernization. A year previous a straw hut stood at this location, and the young women featured in the photo-story were students or country girls (nongcun guniang), not woman-workers (laodong funü). Now a factory existed that ran day and night and featured the latest equipment. These
captions mobilized modernization as a means to proletarianization. The commentary presented the young women’s movement from countryside to city and their employment in a modern factory as progress. The phrasing of the text, with explicit juxtaposition of space, occupation, and identity in temporal terms, suggested an evolutionary development of society that rested on the dual process of creating modernized workspaces and modern workers out of the raw materials of the Chinese nation. The white smocks and caps worn by female textile workers thus signified their new location within the national subject as well as their association with the modernization of Chinese industry and nation. Propaganda materials tied white work garments to a socialist teleology of national modernization that refracted in new ways the body and clothing of textile workers.

In modernized textile factories, the relationship between short-sleeved shirt and body resembled that of the educated youth in the field. In each case the shirt was associated with bodies in the process of becoming red and expert. Educated youth in the countryside, however, were developing their physical form to match their knowledge. The newly created proletarian body of the textile worker from “country girl,” in contrast, emphasized training and mastery of machinery. The musculature of the body and exposed forearm therefore differed considerably. The pictorial representations and written text showed that the machines and the training involved rendered the work less physically demanding. Unlike women involved in heavy industry, transformation of the body of the textile worker did not figure into the reconstitution of her identity. Rather, the text and pictures recognized the mental effort expended to perform the work. For model textile workers such as Hao Jianxiu, her transformation from poor laborer before liberation to educated skilled worker by 1953 was reflected in the coveralls, white jacket, arm covers, and cap worn as she operated various types of machinery. For female textile workers, the skill of the hands and arms acquired prominence over bodily strength. The overall sartorial image suggested a professional workplace occupied by disciplined bodies, dress, minds, and machines.

The clothing associated with female textile workers further participated in an evolutionary framework applied to incorporation of minorities as subjects of the Chinese nation. Propaganda promoting a socialist aesthetic of dress and body presented extension of CCP leadership to remote areas and
minority peoples as important to the liberation and maturation of these people and the nation. Accordingly, a 1958 photograph of a young Mongolian woman at a weaving machine mirrored those of the Han women of the early 1950s discussed above.40 Dressed in plaid padded jacket under a white apron with hair held under a white cap, the Mongolian woman carefully monitored the threads as they passed through the spinning machine. The photograph did not distinguish her from Han textile workers by dress or other external markers.41 The caption, however, explicitly praised the newly opened wool-spinning textile factory in Inner Mongolia because it employed minority peoples. Not only was the factory capable of advanced production, it also trained different ethnic groups, including Mongolians, Han, Manchus, Hui, Daur (Tahur), Koreans, and seven other minorities. The image and text simultaneously recognized and erased ethnic markers. Instead of portraying multiethnic socialist China through images of a nation dressed in colorful multicultural costumes, pictures such as these tied identity to occupation.42 The photograph invoked a dress-body partnership for the young Mongolian that prioritized her identity as textile worker. In a fashion similar to that of the young women in the model Beijing factory, minority women in Inner Mongolia became full members of the Chinese nation as they met industry standards of dress, body, and training. But they did so within a gendered triangulation of “the people” with the male proletariat at the head.

In Mao’s China, the farther a worker moved along a continuum of manual to mental labor and outdoor to indoor work space, the greater the coverage of the body by white garments. Arm covers worn in the national antibacterial campaign as well as white aprons and caps of female textile workers were accessories that substituted for full garments. As technical knowledge increased, white jackets that fell to the hips or knees frequently appeared on male and female scientists, technical experts, and medical professionals. Two varieties appeared in posters and photographs: a longer laboratory coat with four buttons and a collar opened to reveal the neck, and a hip-length white jacket. The sleeves on each extended below the wristbone, and the clothing underneath disappeared from view. The coverage of the body afforded by the generous cut of this garment disengaged the clothed working body from the physically constituted body and drew attention to hands and head.
At an even further remove than technical experts from the toiling body-dress of peasant and proletariat stood bureaucrats and national leaders neatly attired in pressed white dress shirts with sleeves buttoned at the wrist. The white shirt conventionally appeared under the Mao suit, but in notable photographs and pictorial representations Mao sported a white shirt only. Pictorial representations of Mao in the white shirt usually commemorated visits to the countryside, suggesting that this attire brought Mao closer to the people. However, the fastened sleeves, superior styling, and pressed fabric imaged a very different dress-body partnership than that of the white-shirted worker. White shirts worn by the leader and others occupying political and bureaucratic positions of power downplayed the physical body as an instrument of work. In Mao’s case, a covered body reminded us that the thought of Mao Zedong was more important than his laboring body.

Despite the centrality to socialist realist aesthetics of the physical proportions of proletarian and peasant bodies, elitism and hierarchy figured prominently to distinguish workplaces and appropriate dress-body complexes. Imagery rendered bodies associated with manual labor less valuable in some settings than those associated with mental labor. But while these impulses in Maoist politico-aesthetics must be recognized, a more nuanced understanding of the competing images returns us to the body wearing the clothes. Unlike intellectuals, whose physical form was questioned by representations of them as thin and bespectacled, written texts frequently reminded the reader that model skilled workers and China’s leaders reached their position following adequate tempering of their bodies. Their bodies had already been “made savage.” For skilled workers, media accounts of their personal histories erased suspicion of a weak body hidden under an authoritative white coat.

Model workers associated with scientific and technological occupations tended to have backgrounds that included manual labor and little access to education. In September 1955 the cover model for Xin Zhongguo Funü was electricity substation shift manager Tang Sumei. She wore a white jacket with three pockets and long sleeves that fastened at the wrists. Her accessories included a red armband with the characters zhibanzhang (shift manager), a red pin with a star, and a pen clipped over her left breast pocket. Her hair was pulled back in a casual but restrained manner that complemented her
posture. The picture showed Tang confidently adjusting a knob with one hand while holding the other behind her back. The setting, structure, and clothing all distinguished Tang Sumei from her laboring counterparts, as her movements were more restrained and less physically demanding. The descriptive text elaborated on Tang’s rise to this privileged position from that of “peasant girl.” She entered the electricity station in Beijing in 1952, even though she could not understand any of the equipment around her. As a result of concerted study and individual resolve, in 1953 she assumed a
managerial role and in 1954 was selected as a municipal and national model. The written text further emphasized her perfect record for safety and her ability calmly to apply what she had learned to emergency situations. Visual and print media established the dress-body of Tang Sumei as a desirable ideal in socialist China. Her model status invoked narratives of individual and national improvement rooted in education, training, safety, and professionalization provided by the CCP and its politicosocial reform. Her white jacket summarily represented these aspects of socialism and its attendant aesthetic while subtle accessories such as the pen clip and pin demonstrated literacy and political loyalty, respectively.

As photographs and posters depicted workers in professional garb operating technologically advanced equipment, the written text emphatically contrasted past and present and provided the contextualization deemed necessary by the CCP for proper understanding of working models. An uneducated toiling body was juxtaposed with an educated skilled worker in these general narratives. In everyday practice, public narration, and representation, commitment to study and training begot new work spaces and occupation-appropriate clothing that removed the already tempered body from the fields. The covered dress-body of the skilled technician did not supersede the physically tempered body; it reportedly emerged from this body.

The Formative Power of the White Shirt: China’s Good Sons and Daughters

The ways in which white working clothes participated in differentiating the populace created sartorial ideals rife with tensions. Thus far I have considered the implications at the individual and national levels for individuals contributing to early socialist transformation. But by the late 1950s those raised in Communist China, the successor generation, further problematized the sociopolitical and aesthetic meaning of white clothes. For these youth, the relationship between dress and body shifted away from the developmental trajectory traced above that saw first the body and then clothing refashioned as individuals assumed proletarian identities as semiskilled or skilled workers. For the next generation, white clothing contained the young body in order to sculpt the body’s maturation.
In photographic and poster representations, “Mao’s children” tended to wear colorful clothing similar to that of the peasantry. Children who assumed status commensurate with model workers, however, donned a white shirt. This clothing item occupied an important place in select children’s wardrobes as part of the full uniform of the Young Pioneers. The Young Pioneers’ white shirt completely covered the upper body: long sleeves fastened at the wrist, and the red kerchief was tied under the collar of the fully buttoned shirt. The resultant relationship between the body and dress was one in which attire guided the development of the body for service to the socialist nation.

In written texts, children reportedly coveted the red kerchief of classmates, as they recognized its importance as an aesthetic signifier of membership within the nation. For example, since she was seven years old, Jiao Nianzhen had eagerly awaited the day she could wear the red handkerchief she saw on third-grade Young Pioneers. As Jiao neared the appropriate age, an older child taught her the meaning of the Young Pioneers’ fashion, including fearing neither physical harm nor death when serving the people. After her entry into the Young Pioneers, Jiao continued to study the heroic deeds of national models such as Lei Feng and Liu Hulan, who considered their bodies to be “cogs in the machine” of socialist development.

Media and CCP terminology emphasized the act of tying on the red scarf even as the white shirt worn with the scarf acquired prominence in visual representations of Mao’s children. As opposed to those who tied the red scarf over their everyday colorful tops, model Young Pioneers donned a combination of red on white. The overall look produced a stark contrast between top and tie that simultaneously emphasized the red handkerchief and drew attention to the white shirt. The shirt appeared as a sartorial marker that carried with it connotations of adult authority now performed by the young bodies of the next generation.

When worn on the bodies of Young Pioneers, the white shirt fused a variety of meanings. Generally, the shirt covered the body of the Young Pioneer in a manner similar to the full coverage of the white clothing of technical experts, political leaders, and bureaucrats. At the same time, the shirt matched that of the proletarian worker worn under overalls. Again the distinction between mental and manual labor determined the relationship between
garment and body. Young model Jiao Nianzhen’s portrait, as included in press materials, resembled a school photograph. Here full coverage reflected her commitment to studying the writings of Mao Zedong. Drawings of her act of martyrdom, in which she ran to help a worker knocked out by an electric wire, however, depicted her with the sleeves of her white shirt rolled up to her elbows. Movement, physical engagement, and self-sacrifice altered how she wore her Young Pioneer uniform to reinforce sartorial and physical conventions underpinning the Maoist aesthetic. A properly fostered socialist mindset led Jiao to shed the confines of one mode of dress for another in which clothing accommodated the active body.

Additional photographic evidence suggested that coverage of the body afforded by the white shirt was only temporary. Regardless of the honor accorded to a young body, like women model workers and educated youth, Young Pioneers were expected to undergo a period of physical conditioning as they came of age. Clothing, in this instance, conditioned the body: a subsequent public projection of a desirable body reflected internalization of the Maoist aesthetic. Dress played a complicit role in both the externalization of inner drives and the understanding that to accomplish these goals, the body must be made to fit the fashions it modeled.

Two smiling Young Pioneers from Beijing whose photographs were published on the front page of the 8 January 1956 edition of Zhongguo Qingnian bao can be seen as youths whose dress and bodies participated in this combined exteriority and internalization. The third-grade boy and girl displayed the fresh, healthy appearance and unformed upper bodies of prepubescent children. The children appeared at the moment of their induction and were photographed completing the knots on their red ties. Their white shirts were slightly big on their immature bodies. These youth looked forward to a future that entailed strengthening their bodies and subsequently contributing to Chinese nation building. In their case, however, the process began with the study of Mao Zedong’s thought rather than the physical labor of model peasants and workers as emphasized for those not born under the “Red Flag.” Media presentations concerning model youth outlined a process through which the children gained inspiration from the intellectual exercise of study, which, in turn, encouraged physical exercise and development. For these
young successors, politically desirable clothing preceded bodily reform. The socialized mind made the body savage rather than vice versa.

As the young children featured in this 1956 article became adolescents, they likely participated in the sent-down youth campaigns of the 1960s that physically moved bodies around the country in an effort to narrow the three gaps. In the clothing aesthetic associated with these programs, the body emerged almost fully formed. The media presented young men and women in their teens and early twenties as committed citizens who enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to introject themselves into a nationwide proletarian identity. In the process, shirtsleeves moved above the elbow and bodies set to work.

One of the most interesting examples of enactment of the physically revealing proletarian dress-body complex by the successor generation is a 1965 poster, “Chairman Mao Is the Sun in Our Hearts” [“Mao zhuxi, women

**Figure 6** “Mao zhuxi, women xinzhong de taiyang” [Chairman Mao is the sun in our hearts], *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 1 July 1965.
The poster is predictable in its layout and subject matter. But when compared with other posters, the bodies of these youth lack the muscular definition of workers and peasants in socialist realist depictions. The worker at the apex has pushed his sleeves back to reveal disproportionately large arms and hands, yet he lacks an aura of strength. Similarly, the young woman appears in the midst of rolling up her sleeves. Her actions demonstrate willingness to jump into work wherever Mao deemed necessary, but her musculature is undefined. The youth embraced an aesthetic that uncovered the body, but in this case it is a precursor to, rather than display of, a fully formed proletarian body. Proletarianization of the next generation thus involved returning the white shirt to the field and factory. Bodies initially clothed in too-large white shirts came of age not solely through study of Mao Zedong’s thought but when they physically grew out of childhood white shirts and into the body-dress complex of the manual worker.

Conclusion: The Malleability of Proletarian White and Its Limits

The importance of the body-dress complexes of peasant and manual laborer in the development of youth return us to the contingency of the multiple bodies populating the new Chinese nation. While I have traced a continuum from a revealed to a concealed body that suggested, in some instances, a privileging of mental over manual labor, the Maoist aesthetic consistently embraced both trajectories and their idealized forms. Covered bodies, however, lacked organic ties to the people and thereby rendered the coupling of modernization to proletarianization problematic. Distrust of those engaged in mental labor combined with gendered dynamics that feminized concealed proletarian bodies. As a result, the male proletarian body remained at the forefront of the people in such a way that physicality became an essential, if not sufficient, condition of socialist subjectivity, even as this subjectivity required different levels of undress for expression.

A striking feature of the plethora of dress-body complexes evident in a study of proletarian white is their dependency on one another for meaning, and the subsequent combination and hybrid styles that emerged. Sartorial hybridity was embedded within Maoist sociopolitical programs and ideals.
that despite the diversity of bodies insisted on the potential for integration of all into the proletariat. Therefore not all styles, even if they mobilized elements of accepted proletarian white fashion, found a place in the iconography of the period. Jiang Qing’s 1973 effort to create a hybrid fashion that stressed order and rationality provides an apposite example of the limits of sartorial malleability.
In 1973 the honor guard of the Shanghai People’s Militia marched onto the streets outfitted in, to use W. F. Jenner’s words, “theatrically proletarian” style. The slim young women wore dark overalls and white shirts reminiscent of proletarian iconography. But their pressed white shirts fastened at the collar and sleeves extended exactly to the wristbone. The overalls, too, assumed a tailored form as opposed to the loose, pragmatic coveralls of workers. The form of the clothing and its relationship to the body revealed the uneasy fit between this subsection of the People’s Militia and the people. The accessories of bayonet and artillery belt further created a distance between the uniforms and the proletarian aesthetic that inspired it.

Even though this fashion incorporated styles from the various dress-body complexes discussed in this article, it failed to unify worker, peasant, and soldier. Jiang Qing’s appropriation of various styles disregarded the ways styles associated with working whites were informed by and addressed the tension between proletarianization and modernization. As a result these young, immature female bodies highlighted the nonproletarian function and location of the people’s militia. Jiang Qing’s uniform lacked reference to struggles to narrow the three gaps evinced in the white shirts of educated youth or bureaucratic leaders in the agricultural landscape. The mode of dress suggested rationalized workplaces and skilled labor, yet these bodies appeared ill equipped for either. This combination of white shirt, overalls, and body coverage constrained the body in a way that appeared to preclude development in the physical or mental realm. More than any of the styles examined in this article, Jiang Qing’s effort at an integrated proletarian body produced bodies impeded by clothing.

In Jiang Qing’s attempt at theatrical proletarianism, as well as the counterexample of “Chairman Mao Is the Sun in Our Hearts,” we witness the struggle in the late Maoist period between championing and controlling proletarian and peasant power. This Cultural Revolution struggle marked a historical moment different from the pre–Cultural Revolution period. In the earlier period, Maoist aesthetics promoted proletarian and peasant bodies as leaders of socialist modernization. This program introduced gendered, locational, occupational, and age-based tensions into CCP iconography and its sartorial practices. Specifically, the relationship between white clothing, coverage of the body, and work created a political discourse around contingent
dress-body complexes. The parallel projects of modernization and proletarianization interpenetrated, informed, and contradicted each other as they found expression in clothing practices and ideals. It is important, however, that not all dress-body complexes were equally possible, nor were value and location consistently evident when we consider the multiple lines constitutive of dress and body as prismatic constructs.

In their respective realms, each of the dress-body complexes I have examined combined a mind civilized according to Maoist precepts with a body made savage through work. But the ways clothing and body were combined reveal that body-dress was overdetermined by location, occupation, training, and gender. Wearing white to work in Mao’s China entailed adapting the garment to fit one’s physical and discursive location within the nation. The red and expert educated youths remained urban bodies despite temporary relocations to the countryside. They continued to wear the slightly fitted, short-sleeved shirt even as they pushed up pant legs in an effort to condition their bodies as per the peasant ideal. Textile factory workers and technical experts began with the tempered bodies so heavily praised in socialist realist iconography but moved from the spaces in which these bodies were comfortably displayed to ones in which sanitation, modernization, and control demanded covered bodies in pristine white. The diversity in white working clothes, bodily coverage afforded by these clothes, and the mental or manual work performed by model bodies created numerous viable enunciative positions from which one could insert oneself into the Chinese nation. However, the fragmented nature of the national body rendered each of these positions fraught with tension as white working clothes acquired meaning by refraction through the unstable categories of city, countryside, worker, peasant, mental work, and manual labor.

Mao’s preoccupation with producing alternative forms of modernization and the desire to narrow the three gaps thus created numerous possible sartorial, social, and political designs out of proletarian white. Each fashion forged an industry standard, but none assumed hegemonic status in a nation that glorified proletarian dress and bodies while striving to modernize in a way that required these bodies to be subsumed by more orderly and rationally disciplined fashions. Mao envisioned a nation led by the muscular arms and legs of hardened peasant and proletarian bodies. Accompanying
the dramatic political rhetoric, however, a quieter but equally as entrenched media voice preferred clothing that offered full coverage. This seemingly contradictory stance resulted not from fashion fickleness but from the supplementary meanings proletarian white garments forged in an unstable teleology of national development in which body, clothes, and mode of dress sutured and segmented the national body politic.

Notes

I would like to thank Peter Carroll, Adele Perry, Paola Zamperini, and two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

2 Ibid., 121.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 123.
7 Here I draw on Roland Barthes’s categories of image clothing (the photograph or drawing), written clothing (the text accompanying the image that constructs a narrative of its own), and real clothing (the concrete item the first two types represent) and the ways they are inextricably linked.
8 Scholars examining dress and body as cultural artifacts of Communist China address aesthetics, visual culture, clothing, and representation as well as bodily discipline and sport. The relationship between body and clothing in Maoist sociopolitical imagery has not received the same attention, however. See Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., Picturing Power in the People’s Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); Stefan R. Landsberger, Chinese Propaganda Posters (Amsterdam: Pepin, 1995); Julia F. Andrews and Xiaomei Chen, eds., “Visual Culture and Memory in Modern China,” Modern Chinese Literature and Culture 12, no. 2 (fall 2000); Susan Brownell, Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People’s Republic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Mao’s preoccupation with narrowing the three gaps (mental/manual labor, worker/peasant, and urban/rural) often took the form of sending intellectuals and urban youth to the countryside to experience proletarian living. Also relevant is thought reform through labor.

In contrast, uniforms derived from the zhongshan zhuang (Sun Yat-sen suit) invoked revolutionary continuity with pre-Communist moments featured in CCP historiography. For the military, bureaucracy, and technocracy their uniforms symbolized the new order and revolution. Reporting deemphasized physical reform.

A poster of two young javelin throwers posed against an industrial factory used the second slogan (Zhongguo Qingnian bao, 1 September 1955). Also, the photograph of a soldier lifting a barbell was accompanied by the caption, “Only if you have a healthy body can you protect the nation” (Zhongguo Qingnian bao, 9 January 1958).

A survey of photographs from a variety of memoirs, photo-histories, and historical texts of life from the 1920s to the 1950s indicates that these forms of clothing appeared on workers before 1949.

Lee Wright refers to this phenomenon as “smallness.” Wright argues that clothing that appears to be “too small” singles out parts of the body for display. She reminds us that “the smallness of a garment not only accentuates the body size and shape but can create an image of it being bigger. The iconoclasm is that smallness equals more not less, i.e. one gesture or detail can resignify the whole, and as such is a powerful and manipulative motif” (Lee Wright, “Outgrown Clothes for Grown-up People: Constructing a Theory of Fashion,” in Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader, ed. Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992], 53).


The struggle with nature also is a common theme in reforming male bodies in the 1950s, particularly PLA and Chinese People’s Volunteer soldiers (see Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanyun [Chinese People’s Volunteer Army], A Volunteer Soldier’s Day [1956; rpt., Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1961]) and for workers involved in reclamation projects (see “Zhengfu shahuang de yingxiongmen” [Heroes who conquered the sandy wastelands], Zhongguo Qingnian bao, 22 December 1955). This theme continues as official policy with Mao’s “down to the countryside” movement. Educated youth were to become better socialist citizens by working alongside manual laborers.

20 The emphasis on physical fitness as a measure of belonging characterizes CCP practice beginning with the Jiangxi Soviet. Fan Hong cites the memoirs of female soldiers that tell of exercise, sport, and training in their everyday lives, and she concludes that the “equality demanded by men required women to be fitter” (Fan Hong, *Foothbinding, Feminism, and Freedom: The Liberation of Women’s Bodies in Modern China* [London: Frank Cass, 1997], 160–161).


22 Cavallaro and Warwick, *Fashioning the Frame*, 55. note that while metonymic devices in fashion photography and advertisements can splinter the body and render it a “powerless object,” when specific body parts acquire autonomous meaning they also assist in critical interrogation of the interplay between body and dress.


26 Informal interviews with women who were sent-down youth in the late 1960s and 1970s indicate that they internalized substantial body size as desirable. A number of women proudly told me that they weighed approximately 150 pounds and had a healthy appetite. Interviews conducted by the author in 1997 in Beijing.

27 As represented in the media, women rarely wore the white shirt and overalls characteristic of male peasants and workers. Women in overalls and white shirts are occasionally found in posters or drawings concerned with the theme of heavy industry, but their shirts are
usually buttoned to the wrist. Given the confluence of heavy industry, male bodies, and overalls and shirt as male vestments, female bodies in these posters do not challenge the masculinization of the spaces but, rather, alert us to gendered norms governing women’s integration into specific workplaces and their sartorial practices. See the first stamp in the September 1954 People’s Congress commemorative series, Postage Stamps of the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1954 (supplement to China Reconstructs, April 1955); poster covers of Zhongguo Funü, “Yanzhe geminghua daolu fenying qianjin” [Follow the revolutionary road, forge ahead courageously], 1966, and “Geming de nüzhanshi shengchan de hongqishou” [The revolution’s female soldiers, production’s red-banner pacesetters], 1965.

There is also a professional past for the white shirt. The white shirt worn with Western suits is most relevant to bureaucratic and intellectual fashion rather than proletarian fashion. With the desired proletarianization of all people, including intellectuals, it is possible to interpret the multiple meanings of the white shirt as an intermixing of intellectual, proletarian, and elite scripts. I would like to thank Peter Carroll for bringing this to my attention.

Pictorial representations of Mao Zedong deployed similar sartorial markers to indicate his closeness to the peasants. In “Chairman Mao’s Rural Investigations in the Jinggang Mountains” [“Mao zhuxi zai Jinggangshan nongcun diaocha"] (Beijing, 1971), Mao wore a blue shirt with red tabbed collar, dark trousers rolled to just below the knee, and straw sandals. The uncovering of feet and lower legs offset the authority of the shirt to symbolically integrate leader and people. Poster reproduced in Evans and Donald, Picturing Power in the People’s Republic of China, pl. 30.


While arm covers suggest sanitation benefits, their effectiveness remains unclear. I could not find texts explaining the purpose or emergence of arm covers or the frequency or standards of washing them. However, the continued use of arm covers through the 1990s indicates their desirability. Arm covers protected women’s clothing and, for certain occupations, protected old books, modern machinery, or other items sensitive to dirt. We can understand them as similar to the smock worn by textile workers and the garb of scientific technicians.

Also see “New Year’s Eve in a Collective Household” [“Jiti hu zhi chuxi zhi ye”] (Shanghai, 1977), reproduced in Evans and Donald, Picturing Power in the People’s Republic of China, pl. 10.

CCP policies in the 1950s subjected housework to continual recategorization. In reference to women in towns, the First National Congress of the Women’s Federation in 1949 referred to women in the town as laodong funü (working women). This category included woman

36 The proportion of women in light industry was 30 percent and in the textile industry 75 percent in 1960; in the iron and steel industry, 15 percent, and in the machine building industry, 15 percent, in 1958; and in the railway system (passenger service), 50 percent in 1962. See Davin, *Woman-Work*, 179.


38 “Xinjian de guoying beijing diyi mofang zhichang” [The recently opened state-run Beijing number one textile factory], *Xin Zhongguo Funü* 11, 1954, 2.


41 Often dress highlighted ethnic identity to illustrate how various minorities acquired new skills under the leadership of the CCP. *Zhongguo Funü* 7, 1963, featured a young woman in ethnic costume peering into a microscope.


43 For example, “Mao Visits an Experimental Farm” [“Mao zhuxi canguan shiyan tian”], printed in *Zhongguo Qingnian bao*, 16 January 1965, as well as “Chairman Mao Inspects the Guangdong Countryside” [“Mao zhuxi shicha guangdong nongcun”], reproduced in Evans and Donald, *Picturing Power in the People’s Republic of China*, pl. 31.

44 “Jiao Nianzhen zhen shi ge hao shaonian” [Jiao Nianzhen is truly a good youth], *Zhongguo Qingnian bao*, 4 November 1965.


46 Changing the ways clothing covered the arms was a trope in pictorial depictions of children as it was for adults. See “Joining the Young Pioneers” [“Ru dui”] (Shanghai, 1980), pl. 24, in which the children wore fitted long-sleeved white shirts, and “People’s Liberation Army Uncles Are Working Hard” [“Jiefangjun shushu zai da gan”], pl. 26 (Shanghai, 1978), in which the child has sleeves pushed back as he tugs on a crate. Posters reproduced in Evans and Donald, *Picturing Power in the People’s Republic of China*.

47 “Mao zhuxi, women xinzhong de taiyang,” *Zhongguo Qingnian bao*, 1 July 1965.

48 The bodies in these posters should be compared with those of model women workers publicized in the early 1950s who generally also were between ages sixteen and twenty.