

LIU, XIAOYAN

Dissertation Project Title

The Front Line of Women's Education in China:

A Study on the Past and Present of Shanghai No.3 Girls' Middle School

My dissertation is a study on two American missionary schools in Shanghai, Shanghai St. Mary's Hall (1881 - 1952) and Shanghai McTyeire School (1892 - 1952), and their successor, the only public key school for girls in contemporary China, Shanghai No.3 Girls' Middle School (1952 - ), with an aim to disentangle the twists and knots in St. Mary's Hall and McTyeire's transition from bourgeois elite schools to a public school in Socialist China. Collectively, the study is a social, cultural and political analysis of a middle school for girls that started in imperial China as Protestant missionary schools and which survived into the People's Republic and experienced state interference, warfare, economic depression and revolution; its ups and downs paralleled China's ills and fortunes during the search for emancipation, modernity and prosperity. By bringing together three historical periods, late imperial, the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China, and their respective political regimes into one project, I trace the continuities and discontinuities in terms of education between the Nationalists and Communists. Drawing on internal publications, archival documents, openly available materials, and interviews, it scrutinizes both epoch-making events as well as the quotidian within the cultural and social-political context of modern Chinese society. Their school histories mirror the trajectory of Chinese modern history in miniature, display the journey Chinese women had had for self-enlightenment, and moreover, reveal the passion and hardship in Chinese search for an ideal education that would benefit both national and personal purpose. Neither a monumental study to reclaim credit for either St. Mary's or McTyeire, which raised a group of distinguished Chinese women whose legacies are still cherished domestically and internationally, nor an antiquarian investigation into previously neglected insider stories, it is a critical study on a class of privileged Chinese women, whose stories add to the understanding of the development of Chinese women from tradition to modernity.