



Exploring the Impact of the Stigmatization on Women's Career Development in the 20th Century

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Abstract. The issue of gender equality is significant among the developed and developing countries. From the beginning of the foundation of the People's Republic of China, marital policies and anti-prostitution policies are set to protect women's rights in a relative infant stage of future world power. In the case of China, an investigation into whether early communist policies affect a generation's understanding of women's rights was launched, while simultaneously proposing new ideas for solutions and dismantling traditional thinking that had affected generations of Chinese for thousands of years. This paper aims to explore the impact of stigmatization on women's career development. It is useful for people to understand policies in contemporary China. Based on the theoretical foundation of Marxist-Feminism and Socialist Feminism, this research used the methods of both the case analysis and the in-depth interview. In the end, this paper concluded that early policies did contribute to bringing rights to female groups but didn't have the momentum to continue their influence within the 21st century.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Liberation, Class Conflict, Workplace Discrimination.

1 Introduction

Since its foundation in 1949, China has progressed greatly due to its rapidly growing productivity in its first 30 years, and the Reform and Opening Up movement since 1978. As a result of this, the Chinese people have been paying closer attention to issues regarding human rights and gender equality, which has pointed them on a path to becoming an open and modern society. In the 1982 Constitution of the People's Republic of China, women were granted the same rights as men. The state protects marriage, the family, mothers, and children. Both the husband and wife in a marriage are expected to be equally.

Historically, China was a solidly patriarchal society where men made all of the decisions. This idea laid the foundation for Chinese men to view women as inferior to them. This, along with regulating women to the low classes of Chinese society, created

a mentality that was cemented into their minds for thousands of years. One of the biggest complications in modernizing Chinese society has been the minds of the older generations; at no fault of their own, gender discrimination has been engrained into their everyday lives (despite the changes brought about by foreign influences and Chinese revolutions). A Chinese philosopher named Cheng Yi who lived in the Northern Song Dynasty believed that "It would be better for a woman to die of starvation than to lose her virtue by remarrying". The twisted saying placed an incredible amount of pressure not only on a lot of widows but also on those who are faced with unhappy marriages. If the husband's family did not want to support the woman, or she was childless, the woman would sometimes be pushed as far as suicide [1,2].

The research conducted within this paper has multiple meanings in different dimensions. During the 20th century, both western and eastern countries has experienced certain degrees of social issues. Numerous western media has continuously reported on how American women were actively fighting against racial discrimination and gender inequality. However, what is still less well known in the western world is how the position of Chinese women have advanced. Therefore, uncredited reports and data has appeared to accusing China with human rights issues; which clearly has caused great reputation concerns to China. Similar themed essays "Women's Empowerment and Fertility Change" and "Women Existing for Men: Confucianism and Social Injustice against Women in China." written by LY PHAN and Xiongya Gao brought up how women acquire higher decision-making powers through economic opportunities, and possible negative impacts Confucianism can bring to the Chinese society around the 19th century that forms a strong stereotype towards women as they're accused to become possession of their husbands. From building on previous works, this essay analyzes women's role in society in China as reflected in the works of Mao Zedong and the Communist Party of China (CCP). By considering various policies, the Chinese Government has been prioritizing women's rights as a major social issue since the foundation of the PRC in 1949. From the case study, there are six experimenters from three age levels answering several questions from their perspective on gender equality and women's rights, trying to prove correlation between past policies on women's rights with the status of women in our current society. The findings suggest the importance of cultural and governmental influences on the liberation of women in China during the last half of the twentieth century [3, 4].

2 Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Marxism & Marxist-Feminism

Marxism is an economic and social system based upon the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. One of the essential features of Marxism was the differentiation between two groups of people in society: the proletariat, and the bourgeoisie. According to Marx, the bourgeoisie exploited the labor of the proletariat for profit. Under capitalism, the proletariat or "the people," own only their capacity to work; they have the ability only to sell their own labor. According to Marx, a class is defined by the relations of its members to the means of production. He proclaimed that

history is the chronology of class struggles, wars, and uprisings. Workers under capitalism are paid a bare minimum wage or salary and alienated because he has no control over the labor or product which he produces. Capitalists sell the products produced by the workers at a proportional value as related to the labor involved. Surplus value is the difference between what the worker is paid and the price for which the product is sold.

Marxist Feminism is a philosophical variant of feminism developed from the ideas of Karl Marx. It is commonly defined as “a form of feminism which believes that women’s oppression is a symptom of a more fundamental form of oppression.” and argues the main cause of women’s oppression is capitalism. The disadvantaged position of women is seen to be a consequence of the emergence of private property and their lack of ownership of the means of production. From a Marxist Feminist perspective, the traditional nuclear family only came about with capitalism, and the traditional female role of housewife supports capitalism – thus women are double oppressed through the nuclear family and capitalist system. For Marxist Feminists, their approaches to the solution of gender inequality include paying women for childcare and housework, while stronger solutions include the abolition of Capitalism and devoting themselves to Communism. However, they are more sensitive to differences between women within the ruling class and proletarian families [5].

2.2 Socialist Feminism

Socialist Feminism arose in the late 1960s, attempted to produce a creative synthesis of debates raging in the feminist community in the 1970s about the roots of the oppression of women. The core of socialist feminist theories was the thought of understanding that there was not just one system of oppression, but a combination of systems related to race, social class, gender, sexuality, and nation existing in the society. Therefore, dealing with just one of these without concurrently dealing with the others, will not lead to liberation. As a result, socialist feminists focus on a full range of oppressions.

2.3 Relationship between Marxism & Feminism

The feminist theory strongly relates to Marxism by linking the division of labor to the division of labor in traditional households. In some societies, it is the role of women to give birth and nurture the children while the responsibility of men is to offer financial support to the family. In this circumstance, men can be viewed as the bourgeoisie while women are the proletariat. Due to men’s superior position within the family, they have the responsibility and the ability to redistribute the earnings to the other family members. Similarly, the ruling class in the Marxist theory owns the means of production thereby oppressing the working class by extracting the surplus profits rather than redistributing them to the workers.

Both Marxist and feminist theories advocate a revolution. Radical feminist claims that sexism is a primary weapon that men use to oppress women. Subsequently, radical feminist advocates certain change within their society. Through revolution, feminists seek to abolish male supremacy in both economic and social contexts. More radical actions include the attempt to remove the gender equality barriers created by sexual

objectification and the traditional definition of women's roles in society. Towards the end, it has widely encouraged women to raise their voices against abusive social structures enacted by men and refuse reproduction responsibilities.

3 Case Study

On June 28, 2015, Ms. Liang from Guangzhou saw a company's advertisement for recruiting kitchen apprentices on the 58.com website and designated a location for an interview at a hotel. Ms. Liang went to the hotel to apply for the job the next afternoon. After filling out the recruitment form, the staff said that the trial work would be notified at 5:00 pm, but at 4:00 pm on the same day, the staff said that the recruitment was full. On July 16, 2015, Ms. Liang discovered that the company's job advertisement had revised its requirements to only recruit male candidates. Ms. Liang went to the hotel to inquire on July 22, but the staff told her that even if she had a chef certificate, women would not be accepted [6]. This incident fully shows that many people subconsciously think that men can bring more money benefits than women. In order to gain more benefits, many capitalists will choose to refuse to recruit women. This incident not only shows the gender conflict in society, but also shows the class conflict in today's society.

However, as Western neoliberalism thoughts sweeps the globe, many young people in China consider gender equality in a brutal way since they often blame all the men for almost all of the problems women encounter and they often neglect class conflicts. A couple years later, the standard to judge whether a person is good or bad on some Chinese social websites like Weibo even depends on a person's gender, and many men complained about why they should pay for the sins committed by the minority in the male group. In fact, the idea that a lot of feminists in China believe that middle-class women or bourgeois women should have the same rights as middle-class men or bourgeois men. What's more, a lot of feminists believe that women's rights can be achieved by becoming a bourgeoisie (such as a capitalist or a politician). Many feminists may be keen to shout slogans or hold events while presenting ideas like blaming men in order to propagate feminism. Sadly, none of these measures have anything directly to do with the liberation of the large number of proletariat women. [7, 8].

4 In-depth interviews

This section will mainly be a report on a survey of people's perceptions of the women's liberation movement, feminism, and Marxism. This report will mainly analyze from three aspects.

A total of 75 people participated in the survey. Participants over the age of 51 are referred to as generation X (Gen X), those between the ages of 31 and 50 are referred to as generation Y (Gen Y), and those between the ages of 18 and 30 are referred to as generation Z (Gen Z).

Gen X: 10; Gen Y: 23; Gen Z: 42

In the survey, the most intuitive changes are the changes in people's thinking and ideology.

Table 1. Representative questions in this survey

Number	Questions
1	Do you believe that women's liberation is inseparable from class struggle?
2	Do you believe that the vast majority of women and the vast majority of men are oppressed by a minority (bourgeois)?
3	What do you think of the feminist movement around the world today? An opportunity for women to fight for their rights? Or is it a tool of the bourgeoisie to cover up class contradictions?
4	Do you believe that the society is made up of different classes of people?

In Gen X, 70% chose “yes” in the first question, 80% chose “yes” in the second question, only one 60 years old man chose “tool” in the third question, and 50% chose “yes” in the fourth question.

In Gen Y however, only 39% chose “yes” in the first question, 43% chose “yes” in the second question, 13% chose “tool” in the third question, and 43% chose “yes” in the fourth question.

In Gen Z, only 35% chose “yes” in the first question, 61% chose “yes” in the second question, 21% chose “tool” in the third question, and 38% chose “yes” in the fourth question.

In the first 30 years of the PRC, the main national policy was still class struggle, which was clearly reflected in its education and culture. In addition, because of the women's liberation movement that was in full swing in the first 30 years of the People's Republic of China, many people would tend to associate women's liberation with class struggle. People from Gen X generally go through that period in their teenage years and youth, so the idea they receive is naturally class struggle.

“Before 1949, days were pretty tough.” Said Mrs. Wu, an old lady in Jiangxi, *“Even though my family and I live in the country and are not affected by the war, life is not as colorful as it is now since we don’t have a lot of entertainments or different kinds of food. In the 1950s, the family was not so worried about food and clothing, and I didn't feel that there was a big difference in the status compare to other men. Later, after more than ten years of marriage, my husband passed away, and it was I who raised four children in the family. Now I am an 85-year-old grannie and I’m the oldest person in the family. My sons and daughters look up to me and visit me every weekend.”*

With the reform and opening up in 1978, China no longer regarded class struggle as its primary goal, and society gradually turned its attention to economic development and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The ideological education that Gen Y received from childhood was mostly nationalism rather than Marxism. In addition, due to the globalization of neoliberal ideology in the 1980s, many people in China were also exposed to this ideological trend, which led to the fact that most of the political leanings in this generation were neoliberal or nationalist, and they had no regard for women. What’s more, since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the international communist movement has fallen into a trough and Marxism began to be seen as outdated.

“I think the status of women today has improved a lot compared to the 1930s and the 1940s,” said Mr. Zhang, a 45-year-old professor of engineering at a university in Jiangxi. *“I don't think my wife's family status is lower than mine, sometimes even higher*

than me. I think my life is getting better and better since the Reform and Opening-Up movement. At present, I have a stable job, and my hope is that my family is happy and the country is prosperous."

However, due to China's thousands of years of history and traditional thinking ways, there are still quite a few people from Gen Y who are conservative in their thoughts since some people from Gen X often have some conservative thoughts like "women should belong to the family" or that "society depends on the survival of the fittest" when educating the next generation.

"My father used to tell me society should be determined by the strong or the rich, and I think it works. Men may be better than women in some places, which is actually understandable, and I don't really care about that. I think my life today is pretty good and my husband really loves me. But I don't know much about feminism and Marxism and I'm not interested in it," said Mrs. Xu, who lives in Guangdong and is now 49 years old this year.

After 1990 (especially 1995), a new generation of people began to appear on the social stage, and that is Generation Z. Due to the booming Internet industry in the past 30 years, the Chinese of Gen Z have become "Internet natives". And because of the global nature of the Internet, Gen Z people are more influenced by global culture, and their minds are more open and active than Gen X and Gen Y.

In addition, after more than 40 years of reform and opening up in China, resources and wealth has been basically monopolized by a small number of people, and the gap between the rich and the poor has become wider and wider. Some people from Gen Z began to think about why Chinese social development led to this result, and turned to Marxism again to solve the status quo. Gen Zers generally agree more with the theory of class struggle than Gen Y, but few of them turn to the Marxist women's liberation movement for help in resolving conflicts between men and women.

"My brother works in a private internet company and he often tells me that his boss comes every day to encourage them to work hard for the company to do more, but after working for several years my brother's life is OK but hasn't gotten any better than before. On the contrary, his boss can make a lot of money without doing anything. I heard that my brother's company has bonus incentives as long as employees work hard, but it seems that their basic salary is not high. When the company treats pregnant women, although the basic salary is paid, the bonus is not paid. I think this Internet company should increase the base salary and reduce the bonus, otherwise it is very unfair to some woman. Speaking of feminism, many feminists in China's social network always blame men for anything, as if I am a boy and I'm born guilty to woman. I haven't heard my brother say that there are incidents of sexual harassment in their company, but this phenomenon definitely exists in society. But anyway, I'm afraid I'll be exploited like my brother when I grow up." Said Hu, a 17-year-old high school boy.

Surprisingly, however, none of the groups in the test considered women's social status as necessarily housewives. Of the total number of people tested, 72.4% believe that women have no specific standards and can live according to their own wishes, while 27.6% believe that women are modern women with both career and family.

Today's Gen Z should not only be aware of the decline of women in some fields, but also the class contradiction behind the gender contradiction. This means that people need new ways to achieve equality.

There have been many practitioners to promote feminism and women's independence in various ways, including holding petty bourgeois feminist-themed art exhibitions; condemning an artwork or an entertainment product for not having female characters or female characters being too beautiful; or exaggerate an incident in which women were treated unfairly, blame all men, and vent their emotions meaninglessly on the Internet. For example, on June 10, 2022, two women in Tangshan, Hebei were provoked and beaten by several men while eating barbecue. Later, the police investigated the case and found that the suspects had a criminal record. Such a violent incident that may occur in any country has been exaggerated by some Chinese feminists as discrimination against women in the whole society. These remarks were immediately dissatisfied by many men on the Internet, who complained about why men should be blamed by the whole society when sexual violence against women is carried out, and men are not supported by society when women are violent against men since in April 22, a 4-year-old boy was brutally murdered by a 17-year-old girl by using a glass and a stone in Guangdong, Jieyang.

There are also some incidents that seem to explain that a considerable number of feminists are bribed by the governments of other countries to ideologically infiltrate and subvert the Chinese regime. For example, before 2019, a user who often provoked conflicts between men and women and often referred to men with sexist words was active in the Chinese online community - Civet 7777, what's more, this user has also repeatedly tweeted hatred of the Chinese government and racist content. But after July 7, 2019, the user from Chengdu, Sichuan never sent a single tweet. On July 24, 2019, the U.S. embassy in Chengdu was closed, and since then the user's parent company in Chengdu, "Heroine Interactive Culture Communication Chengdu Co., Ltd.", was also cancelled without any omens. These things happened so simultaneously and so bizarrely that it was hard for many Chinese citizens not to link them together.

In a word, emotional catharsis may make the public aware of some of the unfair treatment of women today, but these are not enough to promote social change. There are still many proletarian women in society who are just as exploited by the bourgeoisie as proletarian men, or worse. It's time to think of ways to fundamentally solve these problems. According to this research report, actions can be started from the bottom of society.

5 Implications

5.1 Why must the Emancipation of Women be linked with the Emancipation of the Proletariat?

As we all know, a capitalist society is a patriarchal society, and patriarchal society is also one of the class societies that has ruled human society for thousands of years. What the proletarian revolution wants to do is to break this class society and bring it into a communist society in which everyone does their best, distributes according to one's

needs, and everyone is equal. However, in today's global capitalist society, in order to stop gender oppression and provide a platform for achieving complete gender equality, it is necessary to first eliminate patriarchal society and class oppression, that is, eliminate capitalism. Therefore, it is important that gender conflict should link with class conflict.

5.2 Differences between the Demands of Proletariat and the Marxists

The needs of most of the proletariat women are possibly to seek equal pay for equal work, stay away from sexism and sexual harassment, and increase their wages. As for the Marxists, their demand is that workers should have proletarian consciousness and eliminate exploitation, eliminate capitalism and eventually start a world revolution in order to achieve communist society.

Compared with the illusory grand goals of the latter, it is clear that solving the real needs of the moment is the top priority since the former group knows little about Marxism or women's equality and most of them don't understand what the latter really wants to do. What progressives can really try to do is to do class research and work with the proletariat when their theoretical foundations are sufficiently rich. Progressives must first be students and friends of the proletariat men and women, and then truly understand the needs of proletariat and provide theoretical knowledge to the proletariat. Only through this process can the proletariat (especially proletarian women) gain a clear self-knowledge of Marxism, women's equality and class struggle, and then the latter can have a chance to fulfil their needs.

5.3 Other Thoughts on China Communist Party (CCP)'s Women's Liberation Movement

Some scholars believe that the CCP's women's liberation movement requires women to do things from a male perspective and misinterprets the propaganda slogans such as "men and women are equal" and "women hold up half the sky" as masculinizing women. However, there have been many outstanding women in the CCP Since its establishment, many of them are even the founders of the CCP. Representatives of them include Xiang Jingyu, Miao Boying, Deng Yingchao, He Xiangning, etc [9, 10].

No matter what, the CCP's women's liberation movement has undoubtedly played a great role in achieving Chinese women's rights in the 20th century. CCP has also achieved equality between Chinese women and men in many fields such as politics, education, economy, and society since its foundation.

6 Conclusion

In general, the PRC's women's liberation movement has been quite successful in Chinese history. Although some people considered this movement was led by men and it is not a conventional feminist movement, the final effect is excellent. It also told the world that a gender movement guided by Marxism is feasible. In today's society, most

Chinese, especially those of Gen Z, will no longer consider a person inferior just because she is a woman.

During the development of a world power within decades of years, some loss in women's voice in the society was inevitable. But more and more social media from all over the world has pointed out the importance of the Communist policies that not only maintained homeostasis within the society and communities but also signified the start of the road of women's liberation movements in China. As society advances, stereotypes formed during that period of time will fade as the result of a new era. A new generation will be fighting but it cannot be expected to happen overnight since the ultimate enemy they will face will be capitalism and the traditional ideas that have ruled China for thousands of years.

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