



Gendered Portmanteaus: Negotiating Feminist Identities in Twenty-Tens Weibo

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Abstract. This paper focuses on flux and reflux in misogynistic words and verbs in twenty-tens. In the paper, I evaluated the development of the feminist movement in China from 2012–2019. First, this paper discusses the morphology of newly emerged allegations of Chinese feminists, their connotations, and their indications of fast-evolving social reality. Second, this provided columns that indicate the popularity changes of each allegation over a ten-year span. In sum, this paper seeks to provide quantified data for the increasing momentum of the feminist movement in a local Chinese context and the polarization of attitudes towards it in accordance with the pervasion of social media.

Keywords: Chinese Feminism · Misogyny · corpus-study

1 Introduction

Research background:

Chinese Feminism has gone through radical changes through the years and continues to proliferate in China in various forms. Women’s Federations followed the “top-down” official directions for equity-based equal rights throughout the Maoist era. However, the Gender Equality scheme under the government’s propaganda was meant to benefit the state by assigning females to previously designated male jobs in service of the state [1]. Following the Maoist collectivist era, feminist consciousness emerged. Feminism was quick to climatize the more liberal atmosphere brought about by China’s shift to the market economy system. As China commenced the post-socialist era, individualism pervaded, and so did “female subjectivity.”

The new China, in some ways, engendered a new structure of power that played against the concept of “women holding up half the sky,” which flourished under the socialist context [3]. In the new era, “female independence” and “economic dependence on husbands” became two contrasting themes. The mass media, particularly in the Internet era, has unleashed a surge of female discontent in response to varied news, television shows, entertainment news, and tales [4].“

On the Internet, various terms that define Feminism have recently emerged. Both feminists and anti-feminists exploit the terms to narrow, blur, distort, extol or accuse Feminism, leaving a mess of quantifiable data behind. The paper sorts out seven contentious terms that make clear Internet users’ stands and counts each one’s frequency

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through SegmentAnt and AntConc, a multi-purpose corpus analysis toolkit [5, 6]. Our study consists of two parts. First, framing the research from 2012 to 2019, we study the changing frequencies of each selected term to unveil the intensification of feminism-related discourses in a considerable time span. Second, we examine the implication of five hundred feminism-related blogs from two corpora, each consisting of more than 5 million blogs, to determine the extent of opinions polarization [7]. The research extracts data from Weibo, China's biggest microblogging platform.

2 Literature Analysis

2.1 Scope and Objectives of the Research

Past research on modern Chinese Feminism offers a critical analysis of its catalysts (as introduced in the Introduction) and categorization. Wu and Dong reveal, in 'What is made-in-China feminism(s),' that Chinese feminism is bifurcated into two. The "entrepreneurial" strand of Chinese feminism encourages women to give up traditional female homemaking obligations like passivity and self-sacrifice. They practice autonomy in the domestic sphere and seek marriages that help them achieve maximum returns. There is also a "non-cooperative" strand, which values the full empowerment of female sexuality and views their financial standing not as an end in itself but instead as a means to an end [8].

Several papers trace the origin of widespread terms used in this research, including Zhang's study on 'Chinese pastoral feminist (tian'yuan'nv'quan [9])' and Yao, Xiang's study on different translations of 'feminism,' 'female-ism (nv'xing'zhu'yi)' and 'female-right-ism (nv'quan'zhu'yi).' These studies offer a broadly acknowledged definition of the terms and alludes to their users' identity [10].

Most studies, however, are limited to unquantifiable observations. Therefore, the paper chooses to examine two representative Weibo corpus with more than 5 million blogs in each to corroborate past hypotheses. Corpus studies are done on news media that influence the mass, leaving a gap for studies on emerging grassroots feminism and its acceptance [11].

2.2 Platform Choice

Information sharing and dispersion among scattered individuals were made possible by technological affordances and networked telecom infrastructure. As a result, the media has been breeding more online firestorms [12]. Weibo, twitter's Chinese counterpart, now dominates micro-blogging services in China. Weibo started to gain popularity in 2010 [13]. The number of monthly active users reached 129 million in 2013. The number grows steadily, hitting 516 million at the end of 2019 [14]. Geographically, the majority of tweets were circulated across provincial borders.

A study in January 2018 monitored the occurrence of "Feminism (nv'quan)" in Weibo, Wechat, public forums (Lun'tan), and other major media. Weibo statements accounted for the highest proportion, 34.26%. Among the major social media platforms, no significant disparity was observed in trending topics and words, the geographical

distribution of active users, and article categories. The major difference is the platforms' emotional climates. Specifically, public forums are characterized by extreme emotions, and most "We-Medias" are comparatively neutral. Weibo's emotional climate is the closest to the average, which renders it the most representative platform.

3 Data

Corpus is used as the base of the data. We know that each morpheme, word, phrase, or clause is intricately relevant to its context. Thus, we retrieved nouns that are, on their own, emotionally tendentious. For example, if users refer feminists to Feminist whores, it is most likely that they hold a negative view since "feminist whores" are recognized as profanity, making it suitable for trolling.

The paper uses open-sourced Leiden Weibo corpus to retrieve random blogs posted in 2012. The search for the word *Feminism* (both 'nv'quan'zhu'yi' and 'nv'xing'zhu'yi') yielded 191 occurrences (the size of the corpus: 5,103,566 blogs). The paper uses corpus from Hanks to retrieve blogs posted on May 18 in 2019. The search for the word *Feminism* yielded 2544 occurrences (the corpus size: 22,534,008 blogs). The frequency of occurrence of 'Feminism' increased by more than three folds in eight years.

Chinese gender studies were gradually systematized in the 1980s, and Feminism was standardized as 'nv'quan'zhu'yi' and 'nv'xing'zhu'yi.' Though both derive from 'feminism,' 'nv'quan'zhu'yi' and 'nv'xing'zhu'yi' are not identical. The direct translation of 'nv'quan' is female rights, female power, or female superiority, as the opposite of chauvinism. Therefore, the milder version, 'nv'xing'zhu'yi,' went more popular. Its direct translation is female-ism, which is close to femininity, A term criticized for catering to the gender binary. Quoting Jingyuan Zhang, 'nv'quan'zhu'yi' emphasizes the struggles for equal rights promoted by the early women's movement; "nv'xing'zhu'yi" focuses on women's gender identity that encompasses gender power relations.' The contrast between the two makes it worth mentioning that 'nv'xing'zhu'yi's comparative popularity decreased from 15.7% to 4.8, meaning that 'nv'xing'zhu'yi' went nearly off stage, and the pursuit of women's equal rights has become the bone of contention.

During the past decade, the frequency of derogatory terms, Feminist Fist ('nv'quan,') Feminist whore ('nv'quan'biao,') and Pastoral feminist ('Tian'yuan'nv'quan,') skyrocketed. With every seven occurrences of Feminism, there is about one occurrence of derogatory terms. The terms could be generalized as pseudo-feminists.

Pastoral alludes to isolation and localness. However, pastoral Feminism indicates its roots in domestic culture and is attached to a derogatory meaning. Pastoral feminists

Table 1. The data (Owner-draw)

	extreme feminist (Ji'duan'nv'quan)	Feminist (Nv'quan'zhu'yi)	Feminist (Nv'xing'zhu'yi)	Feminist Fist (nv'quan)	Pastoral feminist (Tian'yuan'nv'quan)	Feminist whore (Nv'quan'biao)
2012	1	161	30	0	0	0
2019	23	2423	121	171	124	30

are labeled as neoliberal: hypocritical, money-worshipping, and irresponsible. Anti-feminists claim that American and European women succeeded in the first and second feminist movements by adhering to “true feminism,” a pursuit of equal rights, interests, and obligations. They accuse pastoral Feminism of provoking gender antagonism. The distinction between true and false seems to help put China’s Feminism back on the right track, but in fact, the term has never been clearly defined and has often been cast as a slur. By labeling feminists as Pastoral, they Force society to recognize the stigmatized Feminism.

‘Feminist Fist’ (‘Nv’quan’) is a variant of Feminism (‘nv’quan,’) which is pronounced the same and spelled differently. Fist implies that feminists lost their femininity and resorted to masculinity. Feminist Fists are depicted by anti-feminist as violent, un-intellectual, and vulgar. Anti-feminists exploit the term ‘feminist fists’ like they exploit ‘Pastoral feminists,’ as Pierre Bourdieu claims, “through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling.” In the context of the paper, these allegations give an advantaged man an opportunity to grasp the logic of domination. In this game, both the dominant and the dominated, man and woman, are aware of the symbolic principles the allegations function by. Such terms put women in a subordinate position and construct the identities of feminists.

According to the corpus of 2019, ‘pastoral feminists,’ ‘feminist whore’ and ‘Feminist fist’ appeared respectively 124, 30, and 174 times, outnumbering the term ‘extreme feminist,’ the only pre-existing term in 2012.

In tandem with the theory just mentioned, we chose a feminist interpretive strategy for content investigation. For Neutral nouns, nv’quan’zhu’yi, and nv’xing’zhu’yi, the paper analyzes their meaning in the context. The paper sifts through all the 161 blogs that include ‘nv’quan’zhu’yi’ in the 2012 Leiden corpus, and the first 161 blogs include ‘nv’quan’zhu’yi’ in the 2019 corpus. The results are as follows.

In 2012, Weibo users formed a primitive image of Feminism. 16% of the posts are explicitly positive about Feminism, and 11% disapproved of Feminism. Many (11%) offered their definition of Feminism. However, most posts remain neutral and use Feminism as titles, for example, of celebrities.

Feminism, as perceived by a striking proportion of Weibo users, no longer revolves around women’s rights. Debates upon Feminism are scrambled with other conflicts, patriotism, social status, and so on. A Feminist is reckoned as a person that’s characteristic in various aspects, instead of merely a title.

The underlying cause of conflicts is found deep within the social-economic level. The concept of Feminism, which is frequently perceived as an import, has prompted incredulity and animosity. The result could, to some extent, be explained by Chinese

Table 2. The results (Owner-draw)

	Positive	Neutral/indiscernable	Negative
2012	16%	74%	11%
2019	27%	53%	20%

feminists' emphasis on meritocracy and earned positions in the class hierarchy. Feminists' class-based attitudes discomfort men, particularly those in "disadvantaged class positions." Therefore, the paper's study of corpus evidences a concurrence between gender antagonism and class antagonism.

4 Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

Discussions about Feminism increased in popularity from 2012 to 2019. Weibo users formed opinions on Feminism, though not towards a consensus, but polarization. Simultaneously, a proportion of debates on Feminism escalated into torrents of abuse. Many negative terms derived from 'feminism' and gained momentum. 'Feminism' also grew out of its initial definition. Feminism is incorporated into the Chinese context, no longer strange to Chinese citizens. Some anti-feminists construct a rounded identity for 'feminists,' women that wield their sexual attractiveness for money and despise Chinese culture and fire the 'feminists' they picture.

4.2 Limitation and Future Study

Admittedly, the author's limited knowledge constrained the paper from delving deeper into the root cause of the phenomenon. The author could not guarantee that interpretations of the data are unbiased since the intents of the posts are determined by the users, not the author of the paper. The databases for comparative studies across time were insufficient, making it impossible to quantify the pace of each term's evolution. Future studies could prioritize the contexts of feminism-related terms' emergence, which helps determine their aims.

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